

Posture of INDOPACOM and USFK In Review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY24 and the Future Years Program

April 20, 2023

U.S. Senate - Committee on Armed Services

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jack Reed (D-RI) [presiding]

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Dan Sullivan (R-AK)

Kevin Cramer (R-ND)

Rick Scott (R-FL)

Tommy Tuberville (R-AL)

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Eric Schmitt (R-MO)

WITNESSES:

Admiral John C. Aquilino, USN - Commander, United States Indo-Pacific
Command

General Paul J. LaCamera, USA - Commander, United States Forces Korea

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

This is a critical time for our forces in the Indo- Pacific. **China's** ambition in the region continues to grow, as does its aggressive behavior. **Chinese** leadership seeks greater power influence around the world, and it is leveraging a wide range of military, economic, and political pressures against its neighbors to advance these goals.

As our defense leaders have made clear, the United States does not seek conflict with **China**, and strategic competition is not an inevitable march to conflict. America has long been a pacific nation, and we have deep economic and security interests in the region.

During today's hearing I look forward to discussing how our forces can continue to improve our military posture and capabilities while also supporting whole-of-government efforts to compete effectively in the region.

To that end, the Defense Department recently raised its Joint Concept for Competing, which makes clear the objective of **China** and our adversaries is to, in their words, "win without fighting." The concept warns that if we do not adapt to the realities of long-term competition, the United States risks ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage while preparing for a war that never occurs. I am interested to hear from our witnesses how they plan to utilize the joint capabilities in the **Indo-Pacific** and Korea to address these challenges.

Recognizing the challenges in the **Indo-Pacific**, President Biden has requested a considerable funding increase for **INDOPACOM** in the fiscal year 2024 budget. This includes \$9.1 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, or PDI, to strengthen the posture, infrastructure, and capabilities of our forces. In addition, this PDI investment will help build the capabilities of our allies and partners through military-to-military training exercises, freedom of navigation operations, and infrastructure improvements. The PDI request is a subset of broader department-wide investments to modernize and equip the force, much

of which is focused on **China** as the Department's pacing challenge.

Our comparative advantage over **China** remains our network of allies and partners in the region and globally.

I am encouraged by the progress made through AUKUS, our military partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom, which is serving as an important test case for potential future partnership. The maturation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, involving the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, also presents a valuable framework.

Further, we have recently seen momentum in a number of other relationships throughout the region, including our new basing agreement with the Philippines, historic cooperation announcements between South Korea and Japan, and a remarkable transformation in Japan's new defense strategy.

It is my hope that these developments will provide more opportunities to engage other regional powers.

However, the most dangerous flashpoint that could turn our competition with **China** into a conflict remains Taiwan.

In the past several years we have seen a surge of aggressive **Chinese** military exercises around Taiwan's airspace and territorial waters, as well as an escalation in combative language from **Beijing**. The world has a right to be concerned.

To help Taiwan develop its own defense capabilities, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act included a package of security assistance tools ranging from foreign military financing to presidential drawdown authority. I understand **INDOPACOM** is continuing to help Taiwan develop its training and warfighting concepts, and I expect Congress will continue to support this effort. Admiral Aquilino, faced with these wide-ranging challenges, I would like to know your assessment of **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 conducted nearly two dozen missile tests this year, including ICBMs and cruise missiles, and has reportedly

stopped its routine military-to-military communication with South Korea. We also know that Kim Jong Un continues to view nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrence against foreign intervention, and intends to gain international acceptance as a nuclear arms state.

The 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, particular South Korea and Japan. General LaCamera, I would ask for your views on the partnership between the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and other regional partners in addressing North Korea's destabilizing activity. I would also like to know how your forces are maintaining readiness through training exercises with their South Korean counterparts.

I want to again thank the witnesses and look forward to your testimony. Let me now recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank both of our witnesses for being here today.

The Department of Defense's most pressing task remains ensuring deterrence of conflict in the **Indo-Pacific**.

Failure to prevent aggression there would have enormous consequences. But we have already seen deterrence fail in Europe. We did not deter Putin from invading Ukraine, and not doing so has cost the global economy over \$1 trillion thus far, brought untold suffering to the Ukrainian people, and heightened the threats under which our European allies live. Our intelligence community predicts that a deterrence failure in the **Indo-Pacific** would be much, much worse.

We are entering a particularly dangerous period. Xi Jinping is the most powerful and ruthless leader in **China** since Chairman Mao. We know Xi has aggressive intent, and he is rapidly increasing **China's** military capability.

His ally, Kim Jong Un, has also improved North Korea's capabilities to threaten

the continental United States and our allies. The North Korean dictator has already provided significant weaponry to Russia's failing fight in Ukraine.

We also know that Xi and Putin have signed up to a so-called "No Limits" partnership.

We have a lot of work to do. The fiscal year 2024 budget request before us is the last one in which significant programs and activities could be funded and fielded in time for 2027, the year by which Xi has told the **Chinese** military to be prepared to take Taiwan. That is less than 4 short years away.

Although a portion of the Pentagon is operating on a wartime tempo when it comes to supporting Ukraine, I cannot say the same for their focus on **China**.

Because this Committee felt that our defense strategy was not being implemented fast enough, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative was created and requires the Indo-Pacific Combatant Commander to provide an independent assessment of resources required to meet the challenge in that region.

This initiative has allowed us to start moving our policies and investments in the right direction, but this forward motion has come in fits and starts. For example, last year, Congress authorized and appropriated an additional \$100 million for planning and design activities in the Western Pacific. These funds were meant to expand our basing and logistics footprint in places such as Yap in Micronesia, Tinian in the Marianas Islands, and the Philippines, and elsewhere.

Once again, these initiatives are not fully funded in this budget. At this pace, it would take 25 years to modernize our basing posture in the Western Pacific, compared to what we did in 5 years in Europe through the European Deterrence Initiative.

Similarly, low-cost and high-value investments for allies and partners remain unfunded. We still cannot effectively share communications and intelligence with allies and partners.

These are just a few of the important enabling capabilities we need in the **Indo-Pacific**. We need much more. For instance, the Pentagon still seems unserious about building the Guam Defense System in a timely fashion.

There are key space, cyber, electronic warfare, and command and control

technologies we must accelerate as well.

This Committee recognizes the seriousness of the competition. That is why this Congress led the bipartisan charge to increase the defense budget in last year's cycle, with a set of investments tailored to our most significant operational challenges in the **Indo-Pacific**. I am hopeful we can do so again this year. We really have to do so again this year.

Allow me to repeat: the window during which this Committee can authorize significant capability to deter years away, if that is the accurate projection. And I am not convinced we have treated that date with the adequate seriousness thus far. We will need to prioritize our defense investments more effectively here in Congress.

So, I thank our witnesses. You have quite a job ahead of you. And we appreciate what you do and want to work with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

Admiral Aquilino, please.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the **Indo-Pacific** region with you here today.

I deeply appreciate your continuous support to all of our servicemembers, government civilians, and their families within the **Indo-Pacific** Command. It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve alongside these brave men and women who selflessly execute our deterrence mission and defense missions every day. Your support is instrumental in our ability to accomplish these missions, but there is more to do, and we must act with a greater sense of urgency.

Every day, US **INDOPACOM** works tirelessly to prevent conflict, not provoke it. War in **INDOPACOM** is not inevitable, and it is not imminent. However, this decade presents a period of increased risk, as illustrated by a variety of things. First, the illegal, illegitimate war by Russia in Ukraine. Second, the largest and fastest military buildup and malign behavior of the **PRC**, including their "No Limits" relationship and partnership with Russia. Third, the continuous missile provocations and nuclear rhetoric by the DPRK, and in this theater the threat of

violent extremism is also present.

Our National Defense Strategy identifies the **PRC** as the most consequential strategic competitor to the United States, and the only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capabilities to mount a sustained challenge to the rules-based international order.

"Seize the Initiative" is **INDOPACOM's** approach to execute the National Defense Strategy and accomplish our defense priorities – defend the homeland, deter strategic attacks, deter aggression, and build a resilient joint force. By design, this approach prevents conflict through integrated deterrence. It ensures we can fight and win should deterrence fail. And it provides the Secretary of Defense and the President with options for any contingency.

There are four pillars to our approach. First is a robust theater posture; second, a joint operations campaign comprised of lethal, persistent forces forward; third, technologically superior capabilities to maintain our warfighting advantages in the near, mid, and long term; and fourth, an enhanced network of allies and partners that which any of our challengers do not have. We respectfully request your continued support for these four focus areas, and recognize that any delay in one area directly affects all the others and puts the overall success of our deterrence efforts at risk.

Again, conflict in the **Indo-Pacific** region is not inevitable, but we cannot rest on our past accomplishments to secure a future peace. Security challenges threaten our very way of life as well as the peace, prosperity, and stability of the rules-based international order that has enabled that peace for over 80 years.

The investments we make today will allow future generations to enjoy the same legacy of liberty our ancestors entrusted to us, but we do not have the luxury of time. We must act now to preserve this free and open Indo-Pacific.

Chairman, Ranking Member Wicker, thanks again for the opportunity to appear today, and I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Admiral Aquilino.

General LaCamera, please.

GENERAL LACAMERA: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and the

distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the Commander of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea to discuss the current situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Korea is as important today as it was in 1950, when the international rules-based order was first challenged and successfully defended on the Korean Peninsula. Located on the Asian continent, the Republic of Korea is crucial to regional and global stability. When North Korean communist forces invaded South Korea, with the blessing and assistance of the Soviet Union and **China**, the United States, along with the 22 members of the United Nations, stood together with the South Korean people to expel the aggressors. The Korean War taught us that we must always be ready and forward- postured with our allies.

To ensure continued peace and stability on the Peninsula, I have five priorities that are nested within the **Indo-Pacific** Commander's "Seize the Initiative" approach to ensure free and open **Indo-Pacific**.

My first priority is to defend the homelands, the United States and our allies. The Korean War has not ended – we are in an armistice – and the Kim regime has developed capabilities that can reach beyond Seoul, Tokyo, Washington, D.C., and the capitals of the United Nations Command Sending States. By defending forward in this strategic location we better protect our people and the Korean people. Defending forward reinforces our iron-clad commitment to the Republic of Korea.

My second priority is to strengthen the United States and the Republic of Korea alliance. We must never take the alliance for granted. This is our center of gravity for deterring the Kim regime. The alliance has effectively deterred the Kim regime's resumption of large-scale aggression for almost 70 years, allowing security and stability to flourish and the Republic of Korea to develop into an economically prosperous, vibrant democracy.

In contrast, the Kim regime ignores the needs and rights of the great majority of its population and continues to invest its resources into developing weapons that it uses at a leverage. External leverage coerces concessions from the international community. Internal leverage maintains control of the people and ensures Kim regime survival.

My third priority is to prepare for combat. This is decisive. Our alliance alone cannot deter aggression. Our power of resistance deters. Maintaining the highest state of combat readiness is our main effort. Because readiness is perishable we must continue realistic training in order to respond to aggression and defend our homelands.

My fourth priority is to build coalitions to dissuade aggression in the region. Our network of allies and partners with common interests on the Korean Peninsula represents our greatest asymmetric advantage.

My fifth priority is to ensure our personnel are taken care of and prepared to execute our mission on the Korean Peninsula. Mission first, people always. Our people serving on the Asian continent have the extraordinary responsibility of providing security and stability throughout the Republic of Korea and Northeast Asia. Our focus remains taking care of the mental, physical, and spiritual needs of our servicemembers, civilians, and families.

Since 1953, the United States and the Republic of Korea remain ready to deter and respond to North Korean aggression. Our mutual defense treaty expresses our common desire to live in peace with all people and governments. It also expresses our common determination to defend ourselves against external armed attacks so that no potential aggressor could be under the impression that the United States or the Republic of Korea stands alone in the Pacific area.

While the United States and the Republic of Korea alliance began out of military necessity, it has evolved to become the linchpin of stability and prosperity in Northeast Asia. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, civilians, and contractors are proof of our iron-clad commitment to the alliance and ensure that the authoritarian regimes of North Korea, **China**, and Russia cannot unmake the international rules-based order.

Should the Kim regime resume hostilities, with your continued support we are ready. I am proud to serve with them and honored to represent them before you. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, gentleman.

General LaCamera, your prepared testimony states that Kim Jong Un is determined to operationalize his nuclear arsenal and is developing a credible

second-strike capability. Your testimony also states that without outside influence it is not matter of if North Korea will detonate another nuclear device but when.

In this situation, do you see **China** in any way affecting their decision-making about the inevitability of another nuclear detonation? And then what is the effect of the North Korean's having a credible second strike?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Thanks, Chairman. I think **China** can play a spoiler in this. They can be supportive or they can be non-supportive in what he is doing. What we are seeing right now, in any kind of U.N. sanctions votes in the United Nations, both **China** and Russia continue to veto that, and they continue to work against the things that we are trying to do to maintain peace and stability.

CHAIRMAN REED: And with a second-strike capability, I presume that would immensely complicate your –

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes, sir. I mean, it is clear that he has, in the last, you know, year plus, he has demonstrated a whole bunch of different capabilities, all of which could lead to a second-strike capability. I mean, he is clearly focusing on the theater ballistic missile capability, not just on the Peninsula regionally but globally.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you.

Admiral Aquilino, you have difficult steps to prioritize in terms of investments, and one area which seems critical is the electronic spectrum. I mean, to successfully conduct operations in the Pacific ideally you could disrupt the communication of our enemies and also their ISR, and at the same time, in a complementary fashion, disguise our assets and also have constant secure communication. Is that, in your view, like the number one priority?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Chairman. So if you are talking about a prioritized list, the Guam Missile Defense System remains the **Indo-Pacific's** number one priority. That is based on the homeland defense mission that is most critical. But immediately behind it, Senator, you talked about the capability to influence the electromagnetic spectrum, absolutely. We view it through this lens of decision superiority, which means we need to be able to operate in contested space, we need persistent battle space awareness of all

things going on, and we need to be able to close our kill chains with the weapons and the network that allows that to happen, and the electromagnetic spectrum is critical to that.

CHAIRMAN REED: Are we putting enough resources in this budget to accelerate that process and accomplish that task?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I am very thankful for the Department's budget. It certainly is strategy based. It is certainly focused on the **Indo-Pacific**. That said, as you know, Chairman, I have provided an unfunded list as it applies. The Secretary has got global responsibilities.

And as you have tasked in the authorization language, I am responsible to provide you with a list of what **INDOPACOM** assesses as the critical capabilities needed to both deter and defend, and we have provided both of those reports, as directed by law, to help inform.

But it has certainly been identified, and my requirements have been fed into the Department.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much. Final point, Admiral Aquilino, you point out in your testimony, this is the first time in history the United States is facing two major nuclear powers, so a lot of the theory, a lot of the institutional arrangements that we have made reflect the Cold War, which was a Soviet Union and U.S. confrontation.

Just very quickly, how has this changed, to your thinking and the thinking of your colleagues in the Department of Defense?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks again, Chairman. So certainly the No Limits relationship by President Putin and President Xi is something we ought to be watching very, very closely, and what does that mean. My partner, General Cotton, at STRATCOM, is the lead for all the strategic nuclear portions. As it applies to **INDOPACOM**, he is a great supporting partner, and that means we have to understand what does that look like as we manage escalation and delivery deterrence, both conventionally and in the strategic nuclear lens.

I think what makes sense to me, and I know he would advocate for, and that is the modernization of our strategic nuclear triad as a priority threat, to be able to compete in that new world.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much.

Senator Wicker, please.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, let me just make sure I understand. With regard to the electromagnetic spectrum, that is highly important, right up there bumping up against the Guam Initiative. Is that right?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, Senator. I would say it is in my number two kind of pile of decision superiority, behind the Guam Defense Initiative.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay. So in order for us to take care of that we are going to have to fund some unfunded requirements. Is that correct?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, for consideration again I have provided the assets and the capabilities I think I need. There are certainly some capabilities I have asked for that provide benefit in the electromagnetic spectrum in order to execute our mission.

SENATOR WICKER: Is it highly important that we fund this, vitally important?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, sir. I believe it is.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay. Let me just ask both of you, there are some people who feel our support for Ukraine is taking away from our capability and credibility in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with regard to Taiwan. Admiral, you first and then General. What do you say to that?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, I do not. The United States is the only global force capable of managing multiple threats. My partner in EUCOM is executing his mission sets.

I have not been impacted at this point as it applies to my deterrence mission. So I do believe we can do both. I believe we have to do both to maintain the peace.

SENATOR WICKER: We have to do both. Okay. General, what would Ukrainian success in this war say to the world about the situation in the **Indo-Pacific**?

GENERAL LACAMERA: For us, we are taking what is going on in Ukraine as,

you know, lessons learned, boiling it down. It does not necessarily translate to what a fight on the Peninsula would look like. I think the support that is being provided, the lessons learned coming off of that, I think it reinforces how we feel about sovereignty and a country's right to choose their future.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay. Well, let me then ask you to enlarge on that. What is it to us, what happens in Taiwan and South Korea? You spoke about an international rules-based order, and sometimes I am troubled that that terminology does not get through to the American people.

What is it to us, living in Virginia and Maryland and Mississippi and Nebraska and Arkansas that the forces of Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un not succeed in that area?

GENERAL LACAMERA: I think it is a history lesson for the American people. I mean, the blood and treasure that we put forth in World War II and international rules-based order that we established right after that was challenged in 1950. It has been bookended by what is being challenged in Ukraine right now. And I think what it is demonstrating is that we believe in the sovereignty of a nation, choosing their future. We believe in democracy, et cetera.

SENATOR WICKER: Okay. Admiral, do you see what I am saying? International rules-based order – what is it to us in Tupelo?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So what it means is freedom of navigation. So think of goods and services flowing unencumbered through wherever they need to go to get to the people of the world.

SENATOR WICKER: Our ability to purchase the products we need for everyday life.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I do not know if it is on the purchase side, but when we talk international rules-based order it is certainly on the delivery side. So two-thirds of the entire global economy flow through the South **China** Sea and the Straits of Malacca, and if you were to not have a rules set of orders and there was a country that believed they could meter, monitor, task, tax, or impact that set of prosperity, that is what it would mean to the people of America, when you talk about the international rules-based order.

The ability to fly anywhere that rules allow. The U.S.

standing in the region as it applies to being an assured partner in the vicinity. Those are kind of the stakes and what it means when we talk about the international rules-based order.

SENATOR WICKER: The value of the word of U.S. leaders, you are saying.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Absolutely.

SENATOR WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Shaheen, please.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you, and thank you both for your service and for being here this morning.

India is a key partner. It is a member of the Quad.

It is the only member of the Quad that maintains such a close and ongoing relationship with Russia, including continuing to acquire additional weapons from Russia.

Are there more steps we should be taking to discourage India from maintaining that relationship with Russia and encourage them to adopt more of the positions of other members of the Quad, Australia, Japan, with us?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So India has been a tremendous partner. The partnership is only growing. It is strengthening. We have similar security concerns. We have people-to-people ties. We have certainly deep relationships with the Indians. They buy our equipment. We are interoperable in the military-to-military space. Their Chief of Defence, General Chauhan, and I have a terrific relationship.

So I think what we need to do is keep fostering this.

The world's largest democracy with similar security concerns, we have to continue to work together in order to ensure that the United States and India's relationship grows. We certainly support the increased multilateral aspect of it. So the Quad is not a military agreement. It is an economic and diplomatic relationship. But the Quad nations come together often to practice and

rehearse, and will continue to do that.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Well thank you. I agree. I think it is very important. And as we look at the growing relationship between **China** and Russia, it has an ever-increasing role to play. So thank you.

Can you speak to how the expanded security agreement between the U.S. and the Philippines enhances our posture and how it can serve as a model for other nations?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. It is critically important. So one of five mutual defense treaty allies in the region, the Philippines, our history goes back a very long way, as everyone knows. The increased EDCA, that have been concurred to – and I thank the Secretary for his work there as we have proposed those sites, that expands the areas that we can rehearse and exercise with the Philippines. But the critical nature of the Philippines, its strategic location, and the partnership that we have, those sites are critical. More than likely in next year's budget you will see and ask to do planning and design work in those sites. They have just been announced. So there is no money in the 2024 budget to start work in those additional four sites, but you do see other requests to build up the current sites in the Philippines. And our operations there, our partnership with the Philippines is critical.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: And is that helpful as we are looking at other partner nations in the region, to be able to show what is happening in the Philippines? Are they looking at that as something that they are willing to consider because they see that agreement?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. I think all the nations in the region are looking at the threat and realizing they need to take additional actions, the Philippines, as a model for how we operate together, but it is certainly not alone. We are doing the same thing with the Japanese. General LaCamera is working with the South Koreans. We are working with our Australian counterparts.

We are doing the same with our Thailand alliance.

So it is a model, and it is expanding, and we are looking at all nations to deliver those same capabilities, together with the United States.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you. I really appreciate the leadership that

INDOPACOM has taken on the Women, Peace, and Security Act, and I think it serves us well all around the world. But can you speak to the advantage that that gives us over **China**, when we are looking at how we can engage women more fully and the contrast that presents to what **China** is doing?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Certainly, Senator. So the contrast is clear when you think about Xinjiang and the treatment of the Uyghurs, and understand that that goes on, you know, that is a problem set that **China** has to face, and one of our asymmetric advantages. So our ability to care for all people, no matter what, and the Women, Peace, and Security Initiative that was begun in **INDOPACOM** before me and that we continue has been helpful.

As a matter of fact, I was just in Papua, New Guinea, a couple of months ago with my counterpart, General Goina, and that is where our next seminar is coming up, followed by one in Japan.

So it is about people, it is about respect, it is about treating people fairly. It is what we stand for in the United States and we will continue to do those things.

SENATOR SHAHEEN: Thank you very much. Thank you both.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Fischer, please.

SENATOR FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here today and thank you for your service to this country.

Admiral, on your unfunded requirements list you included a requirement for funding to accelerate the development of several munitions, including the FM-6, the Army's PrSM weapon system, and the Maritime Strike Tomahawks. What would those capabilities provide and why do you assess that it is necessary to make those investments in 2024?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thank you, Senator. So as we always look at lessons learned, certainly one that came out of the Ukraine conflict was the ability to ensure that our stockpiles were correct, with the right number and the right types of weapons and capabilities. So in the **Indo-Pacific** Command, we have those requirements identified. We can talk specific classified if we need to, but bottom line is the entire Joint Force is required to help deliver effects to both

deter and fight and win.

So from the land component, Maritime Strike Tomahawk, PrSM Increment 2, those capabilities, to enable the MDTF from the Army, their new formation, the Multi-Domain Task Force, and from the Marine Corps and the Littoral Marine Regiment, those are the capabilities that those forces need to bring with them in the region to do the missions assigned. So that is why I have advocated for those, right types and right numbers.

SENATOR FISCHER: Right. Thank you, because it was a lesson learned from Ukraine. The much, much faster rate than planned for, especially in expending all those munitions there. So thank you for including those on the requirement list.

You also have on the unfunded priority list a requirement for an additional \$511 million for **INDOPACOM** campaigning. Why is campaigning in the **Indo-Pacific** particularly valuable, and what types of exercises or activities would this additional funding be used for if Congress would authorize it?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So the delivery of deterrence through the lens of **INDOPACOM** "Seize the Initiative" approach, campaigning is one aspect of it, and that means persistent forward forces operating with our allies and partners in the region forward every day.

So when we talk about our operations and exercises, we do 120 exercises a year with our allies and partners, but that is not 365 days. So for the days we are not exercising I am also looking to ensure that our forces are forward, prepared, and operating with our allies and partners every day. That is what those campaigning dollars are requested for. That is to pick up the force and move it forward into the theater, in places where they can operate with our allies and partners. And that money is not to do maintenance. It is not to do depot-level sustainment. It is for transportation costs to be able to move the force and sustain the force forward.

SENATOR FISCHER: Which is extremely important not just for the exercises but also for future planning. Correct?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR FISCHER: Thank you. With AUKUS, the security partnership that

allows us to share significant capabilities with our closest allies. We hear a great deal about Pillar 1 and the sharing of nuclear propulsion technology with Australia, and that is an important part of the agreement.

However, through Pillar 2, the AUKUS partnership allows for greater cooperation across multiple lines of effort.

What do you assess to be the prime areas of opportunity to increase that coordination and extend partner capabilities and capacities?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, first, our partnership with the Australians is so critically important, again, a mutual defense treaty ally. The Australians have shared blood and treasure with us in every fight we have been in for over 100 years. So I commend my partner, Angus Campbell, and all of the Australian leadership.

They also are concerned about the security environment, which is why AUKUS is so critical for both peace and prosperity, as we share submarine technology and deliver U.S. Virginia-class submarines, and follow-on types of submarines.

But in Pillar 2 there is also a ton of capabilities that you highlighted. The most critical, and I think we can get at fast, there are some cyber capabilities, there are space-based capabilities, there are some undersea capabilities, and then there is some work in the form of artificial intelligence and machine learning. There are others. Those, I think, have the most promise for near-term delivery of capability.

SENATOR FISCHER: And the United States is stronger when our allies are strong as well. Correct?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Always.

SENATOR FISCHER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Fischer.

Senator Gillibrand, please.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Thank you. Admiral Aquilino, **INDOPACOM** is the first combat command to have a Space Force Regional Command Center. How is U.S. Space Force's Indo-Pacific integrating into **INDOPACOM**, and can you

discuss how you build the Guardian skill set into your regional exercises like Cobra Gold and Balikatan?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, Senator. Thank you. I really appreciate General Saltzman's team, along with General Dickinson to set up the first component at **INDOPACOM**. So General Mastalir is my component commander, and the criticality of his efforts to synchronize our effects, undersea, on the sea, above the sea, in space and cyberspace, is something that the U.S. can do better than anybody on Earth. The space component is critical. Their enabling capabilities are extremely valuable. And working with our allies and partners in this domain is also important.

In Cobra Gold, which is our most recent exercise, in Thailand, we actually put in place a space component as a part of that exercise. We are doing it in Balikatan. It will be included in all of our upcoming exercises, wherever and whenever we can. Talisman Sabre, as well, with the Australians. Northern Edge as a part of our event. So it is now just normal ops.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Great. The House Armed Services Committee earlier this week, you noted that the strategy and approach with regards to the **PRC** is competition and not containment. Can you expand upon why that difference is important?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I think for me, Senator, the ability to compete is really a non-adversarial type of relationship, which is, I think, what the United States seeks. The **PRC** believes we are trying to contain them. There is no doubt, despite the President's comments, the Secretary of Defense's comments, General Milley's comments, and my comments. We seek peace, not to provoke conflict.

So competition is important. There are things we are going to agree on. There are things we are not going to agree on. That is what competition looks like.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Well, relatedly, last month Secretary Austin testified before this Committee that he thought it was important that great powers have the ability to talk to each other and manage crisis. But reports indicate that his outreach was not answered by the **PRC** during the tensions in February over the high-altitude balloon.

Are you engaged with your counterparts in **China**'s eastern and southern

military districts, and from your perspective, why would such engagement be important?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, I certainly think it is valuable to have relationships and be able to have conversations, whether it is for positive reasons or in times of concern. So it has been important for me. I have not had contact with my counterparts, either in the Eastern Theater Command or the Southern Theater Command, although I have had a standing request to have a conversation now since I have been in this position.

We have invited our counterparts to the Chiefs of Defense Conferences that we do two to three times a year virtually, and once a year in person, and we will continue to seek their attendance to those important events where we can come together with all of the regional military leaders to have conversations.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: I would be grateful if you do establish that contact that you update the Committee, because this is a priority that we can deconflict.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Similarly, the Department has focused on One Health surveillance, meaning an integrated public health approach considering human and veterinary diseases, food, and environmental monitoring, for years, since well before the pandemic. COVID-19 focused us all on the intersection well-framed in the One Health concept.

Can you address any programs or initiatives within **INDOPACOM** based on the One Health concept and how those are serving to protect the health and security of the American people?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. We certainly support CDC in this important initiative. We do not have any programs, but what we do have is exercises. So in 2021, we did an exercise directly focused on this issue. We will do it again in 2023, and we will remain linked with the interagency. Especially in the wake of COVID, the importance, I think, came to light.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Right, and the fact that we do not have any working relationship with **China** made the work with regard to COVID's beginnings, middles, and end really difficult. So that is why your role is so important in these long-term national security goals.

General LaCamera, Kim Jong Un has launched 12 rounds of missile tests since January. Some of these tests happened close in time to our Freedom Shield exercise with South Korea, but several of the tests predated that exercise. Can you fill us in on what your assessment is driving the recent surge in dangerous activity?

GENERAL LACAMERA: His Eighth Party Congress in 2021, Senator, he laid out a trajectory. He is doing that. Right now I think he is reacting to our training. Since President Un has come in we have increased our ability to not just do command post exercises but field training exercises.

The challenge is when we telegraph the timing of it, it gives him an opportunity to plan to use that as a reaction to us. But he is on a course that he set in 2021, and he is moving out on it.

SENATOR GILLIBRAND: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.

Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Cotton, please.

SENATOR COTTON: Admiral, I want to continue along the line of questioning about Taiwan's capabilities. I know that there is a backlog of weapons transfers to Taiwan that has to be addressed. But not every kind of weapon in the world is backlogged. So while we work on that backlog I want your professional assessment of whether an appropriation of FMF funds to provide Taiwan with weapons that are not backlogged, weapons such as mines, might be helpful for them and also helpful to increase deterrence in the Western Pacific.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, Senator. So the delivery capability to enable our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act is important, and to get it to the people on Taiwan is critical. And the capabilities we have laid out, that we have coordinated and identified inside the Department, there are many that could be done very quickly.

SENATOR COTTON: Could you just give us kind of a handful of the top priorities of what additional FMF funds could get to Taiwan of weapons that are not backlogged?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I think what I would give you is the capability set. I cannot tell you which specific ones are backlogged.

SENATOR COTTON: That is fine.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: But if you think about anti-aircraft capability, if you think about anti-ship capability in a variety of forms, whether they be missiles, mines, but those capabilities would be critical.

SENATOR COTTON: There is also the possibility of a Taiwan-focused presidential drawdown. Would your answer be the same for that, that that also could help surge some of the capabilities to Taiwan that they need to improve deterrence in the Western Pacific, just like FMF funds would?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, sir, absolutely, and I thank Congress for taking a look at that, and ultimately for the presidential drawdown authority, not only for the authority to do it but ultimately to backfill it, if possible, is critical.

SENATOR COTTON: Okay. You have also expressed concern about the loss of any combat power in the theater. As the Ranking Member on the Air, Land, Power Subcommittee I have been particularly concerned about the fact that our Air Force is characterized by shrinking inventories and an aging fleet, going back 30 years now.

I want to be clear I am not talking about changing our global force posture. I know there has been a lot of angst, if you will, about moving aircraft around from the Western Pacific and from Germany and Alaska. So I am not talking about that. I am talking about adding more capability to the Air Force as a whole.

Given the importance of air power in any kind of conflict scenario in the Western Pacific, would additional F-15EXs and F-35s in the Air Force inventory enhance your efforts to deter conflict?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: It certainly would, Senator, especially when you talk about the increased capability and capacity that might come with that. Fifth-generation advanced and the fourth-generation capability that exists in the EX, those capabilities would absolutely help deliver deterrent effects.

SENATOR COTTON: Thank you.

General, North Korea continues to develop new capabilities and make new threats to the Republic of Korea and to the United States and other friends. They recently tested a solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile.

How does that change your assessment of their capability, and why would that be an important advance for North Korea over their traditional liquid-fueled missiles?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Thanks, Senator. It poses some challenges on the indications and warnings. Again, he laid out his plan. He is moving towards it. It is continuing to demonstrate a couple of things. One, he meant what he said, and two, he is continuing to be able to develop this capability. Even with sanctions and even with COVID and lockdowns and things like that, he has been able to continue this development.

SENATOR COTTON: And why, exactly, does the introduction of a solid-fueled missile reduce your indications and warnings?

GENERAL LACAMERA: I would rather move that to a classified setting, Senator.

SENATOR COTTON: Okay. I think sometimes we get kind of accustomed to these provocations from North Korea and we overlook the fact that they are, in fact, improving their nuclear forces capability, and it is not just the same-old, same-old.

GENERAL LACAMERA: I can assure you I am not distracted.

SENATOR COTTON: No, I know you are not, but I think some people here, and when they see the news in the United States are, and I think it is important that we be mindful that they are making technological progress that is alarming in both the nature of their nuclear forces and also the ranges of their missiles.

Thank you both, gentlemen.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Kelly, please.

SENATOR KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Aquilino, as we spoke about this morning, I just want to get a little bit

more detail on the Compass Call electronic warfare mission. You know, there is no doubt that the next conflict that we are involved in will be heavily fought, and potentially won in the electromagnetic spectrum. And as our adversaries evolve in their EW capabilities it is critical that we maintain our competitive edge here by being ready to protect our own assets and also attack our adversaries' capabilities in the electronic warfare spectrum.

So the EC-37B, the new Compass Call capability that I worked on on this Committee to increase the procurement will enhance blue force lethality and survivability. And I am really proud that this capability is going to be hosted in Arizona, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

So Admiral, what impact would the Compass Call have in **INDOPACOM** if a crisis or conflict emerged?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. It is absolutely a part of our set of capabilities that we believe we would need to employ. The new capability out of Compass Call is critical, along with all of the other electromagnetic support capabilities that come from all the services.

Again, this is going to be a joint service fight. The Compass Call supports not only the Air Force but the rest of the Joint Force, so it is critical.

SENATOR KELLY: And I know you are not an EW guy, you know, being a former F-14 pilot, who served, by the way, with my brother, I think aboard the Ike. But can you speak specifically about the EC-37B and what critical capabilities that it can deliver that might not be available on any other platform?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So to keep it in the unclassified space, the ability for our force to operate in contested space is important. Our ability to have persistent battle space awareness is important. And then any capabilities to do any disruption actions that we would like to take are important.

SENATOR KELLY: And has it recently been used in any exercises?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I will have to get back to you on that, sir.

SENATOR KELLY: Okay. And then, finally, in your professional military opinion how many Compass Calls do you think that your theater, **INDOPACOM**, needs to ensure blue force survivability if we were to be in a conflict, specifically with

China?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Sir, if it is okay I would get back to you in a classified setting on that.

SENATOR KELLY: And then, General, can you also comment on the necessity for a strong electronic warfare attack capability on the Korean Peninsula?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes, Senator. Thank you. I need that but I also need the ability to train at that level on the Korean Peninsula, which we currently do not have, either on the ROK Air Force or U.S. Air Force side. So we have got to go off-peninsula to get some of that training for our pilots to be able to operate in the EW threat area.

SENATOR KELLY: And then, Admiral, back to you. On the Navy's EW capability, how do you currently assess where the United States Navy is specifically with aircraft carrier battle groups?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, as we talked about there is a critical importance for that electronic attack and electronic support capability. It is inherent and interwoven into the carrier strike group formation. It is also used to support the rest of the Joint Force, so those F-18G Growlers are critically important.

SENATOR KELLY: It is one area where Ukraine is currently struggling when the Russian electronic warfare capability is outmatching them at this point. And I think it is indicative of how important electronic warfare is in any modern combat. So thank you, Admiral, and thank you, General.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Senator Rounds, please.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, first of all let me begin by thanking both of you for your service to our country, and your families' as well. It is appreciated and sometimes we do not say it enough.

Gentlemen, to both of you, I would like to begin along the same lines with regard to spectrum issues. There has been a discussion about the separation or the sharing of certain parts of the electromagnetic spectrum, in order for our country to continue moving forward in 5G development.

But the area in particular that I want to focus on is the area which is the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band. It is especially sensitive because we have already had testimony by naval officials, including Secretary Del Toro, specifically regarding the use of that part of the electromagnetic spectrum with regard to radar.

I would like to continue that line of questioning and provide each of you an opportunity to discuss the importance of the 3.1 to 3.45 portion of the spectrum with regard to protecting our forces, and perhaps a little bit of additional color with regard to how critical that part is with regard to the physics of that area of the spectrum.

Admiral Aquilino?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, we certainly operate in that spectrum, so as we look at the potential sharing and how we are going to do that, we certainly do not want to have any place where either our capabilities are impacted by other use, and as always, as good stewards, we do not want to be impactful to any other use. So I think we would have to look at it very closely and figure out how we could make it work.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Fair to say that the current radar systems that our most advanced destroyers use is using radar systems that operate in that area. Correct?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, Senator. There are a variety of Joint Force capabilities that operate in that spectrum, to include missile defense, firm at sea, so there are certainly some critical capabilities there.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Does that include the island of Hawaii?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So the Aegis system on Kauai, in Kauai, certainly operates in that spectrum, along with other missile defense capabilities.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you. General?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Senator, I am going to have to take that for the record. That is above my expertise.

SENATOR ROUNDS: That is fine. Thank you, gentlemen.

I simply think that it is very important that we understand – we have an

committee which is working right now on sharing that information. There are some people that would like to move forward with including a sale of that part of the spectrum, and I think it is just simply not responsible for us to allow that to happen until after the complete report is completed in September. That is the reason for asking the question.

Admiral Aquilino, cyber and space remain critically important domains to U.S. national security. Could you briefly explain how you integrate your operations with CYBERCOM and SPACECOM? And do you believe the fiscal year 2024 budget adequately supports our ability to effectively address the growing cyber and space threats in the Indo- Pacific?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So I have a space component, as we just talked about, and I also have a cyber component. As a part of our operations development and planning and campaigning those teams are plugged directly into the physical domains, the ships, the submarines, the airplanes, the ground forces, and we synchronize all those operations.

General Nakasone, General Dickinson, and General Saltzman are great partners. They understand the missions that I have asked, they understand my priorities, and they are taking all actions to support our efforts.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you. We have talked some about the use of land mines and other capabilities in which to shape a battlefield. General LaCamera, can you talk a little bit about the need to be able to appropriately shape a battle positioning on land in the Korean Peninsula and the need to have those battle-shaping capabilities.

GENERAL LACAMERA: Thanks, Senator. I mean, the Demilitarized Zone is probably one of the most heavily mined areas in the world, and to be able to integrate, to prevent, shape, move, disrupt the enemy's ability to move over land is extremely important to the ground force commander.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Do you continue to have discussions about the deployment or the ability to deploy appropriate, treaty-appropriate capabilities? And we are talking about land mines, basically, but those of a modern era that we can control in terms of when they are available and when they are neutralized?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes. As we go through on our exercises, mine clearing

and mobility exercises is all part of the field training exercises that we do, not just in the digital world but on the ground.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Can you do your mission appropriately without access to those types of tools?

GENERAL LACAMERA: I do not believe so.

SENATOR ROUNDS: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr.

Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Ernst, please.

SENATOR ERNST: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, thank you very much.

Admiral Aquilino, let's talk a little bit about the **Indo-Pacific**. It absolutely is the priority theater and site of our pacing threat. Thank you for your defense. If, God forbid, the United States would ever cross swords with **China**, the defense of our nation really does depend on you, so thank you.

I want to talk specifically, Admiral, about the land-based systems. DOD reports that **China** fields more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles and ground-launched cruise missiles, with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. How many ground-launched missiles of that range does the United States field?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: None that I am aware of at this time.

SENATOR ERNST: You are right. Zero. And of the programs under development, how many exceed 3,000 kilometers, which would be the outer ranges of your area of responsibility?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Same.

SENATOR ERNST: Zero. You are right, Admiral. Thank you. And Admiral, what military advantages would this gap provide **China** with in any future conflict?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Well, Senator, it certainly is in their strategy and their design is to keep us out of the theater. So our ability to operate in that space is

critical, as I discussed.

SENATOR ERNST: And Admiral, would you agree that ground-launched theater-range strike systems could buy down some of that risk in your AOR?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, as we said, the entire Joint Force would be required both to deter and to fight and win if need be. The ability for the land component to deliver those weapons – and again, those are articulated in my 1254 Report, as requirements that I have identified that we need – it certainly expands our ability to provide multiple dilemmas, and they are directly involved in our approach.

SENATOR ERNST: Multiple dilemmas is a good thing. And Admiral, would you further agree that DoD should study options for deploying those ground-launched, theater-range strike missiles in your AOR?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So I do not know about the study. I can tell you we are doing it right now, Senator. So our exercises, our operations as a part of the Multi-Domain Task Force and the Marine Littoral Regiment, the forces are preparing when that capability is delivered.

SENATOR ERNST: Very good. Thanks. And I am glad to be leading an effort to build the Rings of Fire in **INDOPACOM** along with Senator Manchin and Congressman Gallagher in the House. We feel that that is important for your capabilities.

Admiral, you spoke a little bit with Senator Wicker about some of the Ukraine tradeoffs, and I want to drill down a little bit on that and be a little more specific. So let's talk about Ukraine as it applies to Taiwan. Has our support to Ukraine depleted any munitions that are needed for Taiwan?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Not at this time, Senator.

SENATOR ERNST: So a little different fight, a little different capabilities that are needed. So just to be very, very clear, the fight that is ongoing between the Ukrainians and the Russians, the munitions that we are providing to Ukraine at this time are not degrading capabilities that are necessary for the fight that might occur in Taiwan.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: That is correct, Senator.

SENATOR ERNST: Okay. Thank you. So we do have a lot of discussion about this, ongoing, in the Senate and in the House. There are those that say we cannot complete both missions, we should not be helping in Ukraine. I agree with you, Admiral Aquilino, I agree with you, General LaCamera, that we must maintain our assistance to Ukraine. It will not, at this point, degrade what we are doing as we look towards the East.

So I want to thank you both for making that very clear today, and I do hope that other Members of Congress understand this need, and plainly put, it is for the defense of our nation and our global standing that we ensure success with the Ukrainians, but we also cannot take our eye off the ball when it comes to any fight that might occur, whether it is North Korea or whether it is **China**.

So thank you, gentlemen, very much for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Rosen, please.

SENATOR ROSEN: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed. I really appreciate you holding this hearing. Thank you both for your service to our nation, for being here today, and I want to associate myself with my colleague, Senator Ernst, on how we have to do all of it. All of our standing, our safety around the world matters, and I appreciate your service there.

And so we are going to go right into it, Admiral Aquilino, and talk about maintaining our technological edge, because we are all talking about **China**. They are leveraging state funding to accelerate their own military modernization efforts across key domains. They are rapidly advancing in areas like AI, robotics, cyber, and, of course, hypersonics.

Domestically, global competition for a skilled workforce, declining investment in R&D, DOD's contracting challenges, and the STEM workforce gap, they are unfortunately all eroding and they are hurting our technological edge over **China**.

And so it is why I am working to establish a public- private partnership program to accelerate the scaling, production, and acquisition of innovative defense

technologies by creating incentives for investment right here in American small businesses working in this space. We have to be nimble.

So, Admiral Aquilino, how might a public-private partnership that spurs private sector investment and advanced defense capabilities, how do you think that could help us maintain our technological edge with **China**?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So as I articulated in my testimony, the ability for the United States to go faster to deliver deterrent effects is critical. The innovation that exists in the United States is second to none anywhere on the globe, so any actions that would deliver outcomes in support of our deterrence effect would always be welcome.

SENATOR ROSEN: Thank you. I think using the imagination and innovation partner is always a good thing.

And another place that we really have to do that is our cybersecurity, and our cybersecurity cooperation, in particular, with Taiwan, because we are acutely aware of the threat that **China** poses in the cyber domain. China has used Taiwan as a testing ground for its cyber capabilities, and its recent cyberattacks have forced Taiwan to harden their defenses.

So it is why today I am introducing, with Senator Rounds – he is not here right now – Senator Rounds and Congressman Gallagher, bipartisan legislation to expand military cybersecurity cooperation with Taiwan. So again, Admiral Aquilino, how do you assess **Chinese** cyber threats to Taiwan and how is **INDOPACOM** working to expand military-to- military cybersecurity cooperation with Taiwan to strengthen the deterrence and raise the cost of escalation for **Beijing**?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thank, Senator. Again, in combination with my partner, General Nakasone from CYBERCOM, we always look to strengthen allies', partners', and friends' networks so that they are secure and that they can have a confidence that the things that they are putting out in their own networks are not being read or impacted by other nations, and we do that across the theater. So we certainly have actions undergoing to ensure that.

As a part of our approach in **INDOPACOM**, and it is a part of my unfunded list, is something called the Mission Partner Environment. So to talk to those allies

and partners right now, I have 13 separate networks. That is costly. They are at risk. And what we are attempting to deliver is a single pane of glass that allows us to communicate securely, in a cyber safe way, with all of our partners across the region, no matter who, at the level at which we can share.

So we have demonstrated already with one of our partners, and we will expand that our ability to scope and scale it. But it is the only way we will be able to operate with those allies and partners in a way that gives us confidence.

SENATOR ROSEN: I agree with you on the single point of entry because 13 separate networks leaves a lot of points of vulnerability, too much to manage.

In the few seconds I have left, I want to talk about your state partnership program. In Nevada, we have the Nevada National Guard, we have our partnerships with Fiji, Tonga, and most recently Samoa, to support **INDOPACOM**'s mission. I am going to go pretty fast here. In the South Pacific we help you with maritime security and humanitarian assistance goals.

And so given their strategic locations, the small island nations, particular again vulnerable to threats from **China**. So how can our state partnership program, how can it be leveraged to bolster the cybersecurity programs in the **Indo-Pacific**, and the National Guard is?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So we view those relationships through the National Guard, and General Hokanson is also a great partner in support of that. As a matter of fact, we just signed a recent one – I was at the signing – in one of the Pacific islands not long ago.

So expanding that, building those relationships help build trust, and all of that leads towards increased interoperability and capability, in cyber and all the other domains.

SENATOR ROSEN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator Budd, please.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you, Chairman, and General, Admiral, thank you both for being here.

Admiral, in very real terms what is the strategic significance of the Taiwan Strait? And more broadly, why is maintaining a free and open **Indo-Pacific** matter to Americans?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So certainly Taiwan itself is in a strategic location as it applies to the transfer of two-thirds of the global commerce around the world. It matters as it applies to the international rules-based order. In other words, if a single nation is allowed to describe what will be allowed to sail, fly anywhere that they choose, that is not what the like-minded nations of the world have signed onto. There is a coercive potential.

There is increased cost potential. There is insurance hike potential. I mean, the second-, third-, and fourth-order effects are enormous. So all of those things are what matter to the global nations.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you for that. You know, when I think about this, I think about how important it is to work with and empower our allies and our partners to ensure that no one nation can dominate such an important region, militarily.

And sticking with you, Admiral, I have got a few questions I would like to ask about our foreign military sales process. And I have asked questions of other geographic combatant commanders as well. So I would appreciate, on the first part, just a simple yes or no, and then at the end I will give you a chance to expand, if you will.

Is the current FMS process, is it fast and flexible enough to meet our foreign partner security needs, in your AOR? And that is a yes or no. Is it fast and flexible enough to meet –

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I would like it to go faster.

SENATOR BUDD: So that is a no, I take it?

Does the transfer of U.S. defense articles build our partners' capacity to provide for their own defense?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: It does.

SENATOR BUDD: And is the United States still the security partner of choice in

your AOR?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: For almost all of the nations, yes, sir.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you. Is the United States at risk of losing that security partner of choice status to **China**?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I think it is an area of competition that we have to ensure that we execute our roles and make sure that we, in alignment with all those like-minded nations, are moving towards a region that supports the benefit of all those nations.

SENATOR BUDD: Is **China** increasing arms exports to any countries in your area of responsibility?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: They are.

SENATOR BUDD: So could you explain how foreign military sales challenges are impacting strategic competition with **China** in the Pacific?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So the FMS program for the United States, Senator, helps us ensure that we are interoperable with like-minded nations. We are certainly not going to plug in any of the **PRC** capabilities into our systems. It builds confidence. We have the best capabilities on the globe, also a lesson learned from Ukraine. So continuing to share, operate, coordinate, and exercise with those partners increases their ability to defend themselves and it increases our partnerships.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you. Admiral, how comfortable are you with the defense industrial base ability to produce the munitions necessary to meet your requirements?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So I am extremely impressed with all the defense industrial base. I would like them to go faster.

SENATOR BUDD: Thank you very much. Chairman, I yield back.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Budd.

Senator Hirono, please.

SENATOR HIRONO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, thank you very much for your service and for being here. And Admiral, always good to see you.

So when we met recently, Admiral Aquilino, you made it very clear that you are the responsible person for missile defense of Hawaii. In this year's budget request there is money for a dual-use radar, and this is a good step forward, but certainly will not be the last.

As the supported commander for the mission, do you believe the services and your fellow combatant commanders are providing you the capabilities you need for the defense of Hawaii now and into the future?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Aloha, Senator. Thank you. I am absolutely responsible for the defense of Hawaii. I am supported by a variety of great partners. They understand their roles. They understand the stakes. I certainly have an added concern since I live there. But bottom line is Hawaii is defended, and we will continue to defend it. The additional capabilities we have asked for will enhance that defense.

SENATOR HIRONO: Thank you. The Compacts of Free Association between the U.S. and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau are currently up for renewal. You and I discussed the importance of the Compacts when we met, and they are vital to our ability to maintain a free and open **Indo-Pacific**.

The COFA agreements include support for COFA citizens who can come to our country without visas, a very special category of lawfully present people in our country. So until the policy changes in the late 1990s, these COFA citizens had access to Federal benefits. While the access to COFA benefits is not directly within your jurisdiction, effective Compacts are critical to our ability to operate in your AOR.

Admiral, do you agree that strong Compact agreements, including honoring our commitments to the people of the Compact states and nations, and particularly those who choose to live in the U.S., is critical to our ongoing operations in the **Indo-Pacific**?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So the Compact Agreements are

absolutely critical to the defense of the United States. Those are partner nations that we have deep history ties with. As a matter of fact, the Compact states, per capita, send more servicemembers to the United States military than anywhere else. So they have proven to be patriots, and they are tremendous friends. So we defend them like they are our hometown, and we will continue to do that. So that is critically important.

Now, as you articulated, not in my lane, but the United States takes care of people. Our ability to ensure the broad spectrum of human rights and taking care of people is a part of our DNA, so I certainly support that.

SENATOR HIRONO: Thank you very much, because as a totality of the commitments that we have to our Compact nations, the DOD, which very much, of course, in our country, very much benefits from these Compacts, that again, while it may not be in your lane as to their ability to access Federal benefits, that is a very important component of our partnership and our close relations with our Compact nations.

Admiral Aquilino, across your theater facilities in Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and Korea are in a state of disrepair, impacting our readiness and ability to mobilize forces quickly. Failing pipes, moldy barracks, intermittent blackouts, and frankly, lackluster repair facilities run counter to our military and community needs.

How does the deferred maintenance of our infrastructure, really resulting in massive facility failures such as at Red Hill, how does that impact your ability to conduct deterrence in your AOR?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So I as you know, the infrastructure and support and funding for the service infrastructure comes through service budgets, but when we took a look at the most recent, specifically the water main break on Hawaii, I took a look through the lens of readiness, on we ought to be able to identify where we are concerned, and not just in Hawaii. We did in Korea. We did it in Japan and the other places throughout the theater, for me to be able to understand our readiness.

So we undertook a study. My team is reviewing what that looks like, and Senator, when we complete that study I would be glad to come back and brief you. I have advocated for those investments into the infrastructure to deliver the

readiness we need for the force. But again, I owe you an answer on that.

SENATOR HIRONO: I think it is really important because as we establish priorities for the DoD and for all of the services that the deferred maintenance is becoming ever, ever larger, and it results in the kind of catastrophes that cost billions of dollars. So I appreciate your leadership on this, and as far as I am concerned we need to have a much better plan on how we are going to keep up with maintenance of all of our facilities across our country, as well as, indeed, the world.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Scott, please.

SENATOR SCOTT: Thanks, Chairman.

General LaCamera, thanks for hosting me last Independence Day. I got to meet a lot of your troops, and a lot of them were from Florida, so thanks for doing that.

If North Korea invades and was able to take over South Korea, would it have any impact on the American family?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes, I believe it would.

SENATOR SCOTT: So if you were going to say, hey, this is why we should have troops in South Korea, why we should make sure that South Korea remains as an independent country, what would you tell the American public?

GENERAL LACAMERA: I would tell it is an important piece of ground. It puts us on the Asian continent. It is a demonstration of our iron-clad commitment to the region and peace and stability in the region. I think South Korea's economy is important to our economy, and that regional stability. And I believe that a challenge to that would have impacts on the United States.

SENATOR SCOTT: Are there any products or services that would be important that the American citizen would be without? Would it matter to the average person that wants to go buy something?

GENERAL LACAMERA: No. I believe in capitalism and competition, and I am

sure they can find another product elsewhere. I think it is more of an intangible than it is a tangible.

SENATOR SCOTT: Admiral, what would you say about –

would you say the same thing about Taiwan? You know, if **China** invaded and they were able to win and took over Taiwan, would it have any impact on American families?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, first of all, the integration of the global economic network is critical, and there would be multiple touches on the Taiwan piece, specifically the high-end semiconductors is critical to many things we use. So there would be a drastic impact if we were not able to replace it in some other way. There is no doubt about that.

SENATOR SCOTT: And do you have any idea of what percentage of high-end chip are made in Taiwan and how much of an impact that would have on cars, any electronics we do?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Almost all of them, and I do not know what that percentage of impact would be, but it would be broad.

SENATOR SCOTT: For both of you, for Korea and for Taiwan, are the governments of South Korea and Taiwan, are they doing everything they can to defend themselves?

Because it is not the easiest thing in the world to, one, get to Taiwan, or two, to have the resources to be able to defend South Korea. So for each of you, could you just tell me how important it is, and do we have the right resources, are they doing the right things? I mean, as far as I can tell, Taiwan – I mean, what, do they have 8-month conscription? I mean, they have not armed their citizens.

I mean, it seems to me that would be some of the simplest things to do, have a stronger military, arm their citizens.

The same with South Korea.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yeah, Senator. So in the wake of the Ukraine invasion by Russia I think if you look at that and if you look at a variety of other actions that have gone on in the region, there is a real concern, to include on the island

of Taiwan. If you look at Hong Kong, all right, who is next? And if you look at Ukraine and the linkage between Russia and **China**, there is a real concern.

So I have certainly been encouraged by recent actions for conscription and other things that have been taken. I think there is a real seriousness now.

SENATOR SCOTT: Is that true for South Korea?

GENERAL LACAMERA: I mean, it is a little bit complicated because right now we have a bilaterally agreed upon OPCON transition program to get them to where they would take over one of my commands, Combined Forces Command.

They are on the right trajectory to do that. The agreement is that it will be standards based and not time based, so we are moving in that direction, to make sure that happens.

SENATOR SCOTT: So Senator Budd brought up, and I think some others have brought up our military industrial complex ability to provide weapons. We are way behind, we know, in Taiwan. What do you think the Federal Government ought to be doing to make sure that our defense contractors move faster? Because it will make your lives easier, especially in Taiwan, if they had, what is it, \$19 billion worth of arms that they have ordered that we have not provided to them.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yeah, Senator. Certainly the President's budget, as it was submitted, has got a component of a multi-year on the munitions piece, would be very helpful. I think sending that consistent demand signal is what industry needs. That said, as the most innovative nation in the world, I would hope that the industrial base could take that, combined with other actions, and move faster.

SENATOR SCOTT: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Duckworth, please.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, gentlemen.

I have been emphasizing the importance of our partners in Southeast Asia, in

particular, with every chief and combatant commander that has come before this Committee today. I think we can do much more to bolster these key relationships to support the entire **Indo-Pacific** region, and there are some nations that we have not managed those relationships in the last few decades in a way that we have in the past.

In August, I plan on taking several of my colleagues to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, in particular, where we will focus especially on this issue, the many important opportunities that our nations have to partner together.

Admiral Aquilino, in your testimony you highlighted **INDOPACOM's** enhanced exercises with 14 partner nations like Indonesia's Super Garuda Shield. But beyond these, you know, Coral Gold, Garuda Shield, once-a-year, once-every-other-year exercises, in what other ways does your command plan to deepen cooperation with our allies and partners, in Southeast Asia in particular, including those nations that maybe we have not dealt with on a regular basis, like Vietnam or Cambodia, and some of the other nations?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, thanks, Senator. So the exercises certainly are a critical component, as you know.

My partner, General Centino, in the Philippines – as a matter of fact, I am flying to the Philippines on Wednesday to go to an event with him and our Japanese counterpart. We have agreed to, across the region, the Chiefs of Defense and myself, to work towards more mini- and multi-lateral sets of engagements, whether they be meetings, tabletop exercise, or operations, for more consistent and more direct ability to operate the interoperable and to execute our mission sets, all for the defense of the region and to keep it safe.

So we are doing a ton. There are almost no events we do unilateral anymore. Everything is done with allies and partners.

In Thailand, General Chalermphol is also a good friend and partner. I went to Cobra Gold kickoff, we spent some time together, we laid out what else we could do, and again, we continue to look for those opportunities.

We are always prepared and planning for any HADR support that might be needed. That is us taking care of humanity should it happen to any of those

partners.

So we are plugged in across the board, and I only see it getting more robust and more effective.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Yeah, I think also there is intelligence sharing that is important. I know that Singaporeans kind of had a cell there that that helps with, limited intelligence sharing. There are so much that you can do.

My colleague, Senator Rosen, talked a little bit about cyber. I informed her that in 2021, we actually passed legislation that authorized a pilot program that enhances cybersecurity partnership with our forces, with those of Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. I am now planning on introducing legislation to expand this important program to include Malaysia and the Philippines in this year's NDAA.

Admiral Aquilino, can you comment on the value of direct engagement with our overseas partners to help build their cyber skills? You sort of touched on this a little bit, but I think it is really critically important, beyond just speaking directly with us, but also sharing with each other within the region.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yeah, thanks, Senator. Certainly our ability to share information and coordinate and cooperate is absolutely dependent on the cybersecurity of those systems. Otherwise, it is just getting to places where it should not go.

You mentioned the CTIF or the Counterterrorism Information Force in Singapore. It is also critical that that sharing gets directly into those facilities to prevent any violent extremism, multilateral, multi-nations, to deliver those effects.

So like I said, General Nakasone has taken great strengths to ensure those neighborhoods have the cybersecurity they need. Our investment in the mission partner environment contributes directly through this zero-trust mindset to ensure we can do it.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you. General LaCamera, I am really interested also in U.S.-Korea cybersecurity partnerships, and you mentioned this in your testimony. Can you expand on that a little bit here?

GENERAL LACAMERA: We are also working with General Nakasone and his folks, and we are also working with the South Koreans. We have our own mission partner environment networks for us to be able to communicate. It is not only important when dealing with the South Korean military but also in the United Nations Command and the Sending States, and making sure that we can coordinate with those countries.

SENATOR DUCKWORTH: Thank you. I yield back, Mr.

Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth.

Senator Sullivan, please.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you. I think the country needs to know what an excellent job both of you two are doing in your respective theaters, so I want you to hear that from this Committee. I both of you are doing exceptional work for our country.

Last year, in the NDAA, this Committee, by the way, unanimously, put in a provision for a floor of 31 amphib ships, 10 big-deck amphibs. The Commandant, a few days ago, testified just how important that was for force projection, crisis response, all over the world, for the Marine Corps and the Navy. How important is a robust complement of amphibs for your theater, both of you?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So Senator, thanks. The amphibious ready group as it applies with 3-ship ARGs is certainly important to our ability to deter as well as our ability to fight and win. And I have articulated the requirements as it exists from **INDOPACOM** in to the CNO as part of his development approach. Now he owns the whole globe. So right now our requirements are met, and we have advocated to ensure that those requirements are not divested or they are somehow reduced.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: General? Amphibs, force projection, crisis response, MEU-ARGs?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes. Thanks, Senator. We live on a peninsula. Having that capability available allows me to give multiple options or multiple dilemmas

to any adversary who would try and disrupt peace and stability in the region.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Admiral, we have talked about different kind of deterrence factors with regard to the CCP's decision whether or not to invade Taiwan. Of course, there is the ability, which has already been talked about here, for Taiwan to defend itself, which is in the Taiwan Relations Act, the ability for us, if need be, called upon by the President to help in that regard with our allies.

But there is also this, what I call a third level of deterrence, which is economic, financial, energy, to put forward a very comprehensive suite of sanctions with us and our allies to say to Xi Jinping and others, hey, if you actually undertake a violent military invasion of Taiwan, here are the massive sanctions that are going to crush your economy.

When you think about all instruments of American power, the way the **Chinese** do, how important do you think that third level of deterrence could be? Because we all want deterrence. No one wants a war in the Taiwan Strait. But we also know if it is going to be started, it will be started by the **Chinese**. How important is that to look at from the level of deterrence as well, on military factors?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yeah, Senator. Again, so the military lens is certainly my lane as it applies to this, but as I look at the **Chinese** approach for an all forms of national power assault on the international rules-based order, I think it is critical that the United States, and it is also a part of this integrated deterrence strategy the Secretary has tasked us. So that all forms of national power have to come together, and the economic lever is a pretty big one. So I concur.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Admiral, you and I went to Northern Edge 2 years ago. Impressive. There was a carrier strike group there, a couple hundred aircraft doing night fighting in JPARC, really great training for the whole Joint Force.

Can you talk a little bit about how important you think Northern Edge is in Alaska for an exercise that brings together all of our services but also our allies, and what we can demonstrate up there in the great state of Alaska?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Yes, Senator. So Northern Edge, as a matter of fact it is going to happen here again this year, in the not-too-distant future. It is

certainly important for us to be able to operate in places that we are comfortable operating. We can train to high-end tactics and capabilities. That said, all of our exercises are important across the globe. Northern Edge is usually one of our largest.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: General, I was actually out, left the hearing here for a few hours. I greeted an honor flight from Alaska. They just arrived – World War II vet, Korean War vet, Vietnam vets. I love doing this. I never miss when the honor flights come in. We were at the Korean War Memorial. I want to publicly, and I have done it a few times, you and I have talked about, do a shout-out to the Korean government and the Korean people who just spent over \$20 million adding a very important element to the Korean War Memorial, which is the wall of honor, all the U.S. and Korean killed in action. I encourage all Americans to go look at that. I want to thank again the Korean government, Korean people, because they paid for that. They paid for that. Pretty special.

How is it going with the new government – I had the opportunity to meet with the new president recently – in terms of their commitment to not only defense, but one thing that I have seen that looks very promising is a new focus on U.S.-Korea-Japan relations, training. The trilateral aspect of our defense in Northeast Asia is really important. How do you see that going? And I want to compliment the new government. They seem to be really putting their shoulder into that, and I think it helps for our deterrence and defense in the region. What is your view on that?

GENERAL LACAMERA: Thanks, Senator. In the last year we have been able to increase our combat readiness and focus, not just in command post exercises but at the addition of field training exercise. And we have been able to bring in two carrier strike groups. We have been able to do multiple ballistic missile defense exercises. We talked about the other exercises that the admiral does inside of the theater that we have been able to participate in.

So President Yoon has really been focusing on combat readiness, and as you discussed with the trilateral piece, the threat is real to the region. KJU, when he fires his missiles, you know, he sends messages to not only South Korea but to Japan and the United States on the capabilities. And I think the President is showing tremendous leadership in the region to move forward to secure not just the Korean people but the American people.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: So the trilateral relationship is deepening and getting better, from your perspective?

GENERAL LACAMERA: It is. Yes, sir.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Senator Schmitt.

SENATOR SCHMITT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your service.

Admiral, I wanted to ask, I know there has been some discussion, there is \$19 billion worth of weapons systems that the Taiwanese have ordered that they have not gotten.

I think you and I share the same belief that we need to have a greater sense of urgency with this, as they face a potential invasion from Communist **China**. What other weapons capabilities do you think, that are not going to take that long, are really important for the Taiwanese to have to defend themselves, that could get there in shorter order?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Thanks, Senator. So again, without going into some specific systems, but again, anti-air capability, anti-ship capability, delivered in a variety of means, whether it is missiles, mines, or other things. I think there are some of those that, with some innovative work, could be delivered faster.

SENATOR SCHMITT: Okay. Admiral, a few days ago the **Chinese** Ambassador to the Philippines made some significant threats against Taiwan and the safety of 150,000 Filipinos living in Taiwan. This kind of egregious comment is exactly why many countries in the **Indo-Pacific** are deepening defense cooperation with the United States, as you are aware.

In addition, **China** continues to conduct provocative operations in the South **China** Sea, harassing Filipino vessels with lasers and sailing **Chinese** warships near Filipino holdings in the South **China** Sea. There has been a commitment, my understand, to accelerating capability development of the Filipino armed forces during the recent 2+2 meeting to include helping Manila acquire priority defense systems and platforms.

Admiral, in your view what are the next steps we should take with the Philippines?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: So in support of our mutual defense treaty we are providing a variety of capabilities and training and actions with the Philippines. I think the posture initiatives are critical. So for the United States to be successful in executing our responsibilities for the defense of the Philippines, those posture initiatives, the new EDCA sites, and delivering that capability and infrastructure is critical. And then we can always continue our operation together.

Exercise Balikatan is going on. It is the largest event in the region for the land component. We have also synchronized at sea. And this particular exercise, it is led by the Marine Corps, but it is integral with the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force as a part of Balikatan.

So those continued demonstrations and interoperability is the next piece we can do.

SENATOR SCHMITT: And I think it is just such a key and strategic alliance for us, the Philippines. Would you support – you mentioned infrastructure – would you support a permanent base on the Philippines?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: I think that decision, Senator, would be certainly critical for the Philippines. I do not think the Philippines are looking for permanent U.S. bases.

That is their sovereign territory. I think what we would like to be able to do is operate with them in places that they would allow us to go at this point in time.

SENATOR SCHMITT: Okay. Admiral and General, Missouri, as you both know probably, hosts the entire operational fleet of the B-2 Spirit bombers. Could you both discuss, in general terms, the significance of the air leg of the nuclear triad to your deterrence missions?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Yes, sir. Certainly the foundational aspect of our strategic nuclear deterrence lies in the triad. So the B-2s, the SSBNs and the ICBM-4s. That modernized force is critical to ensure that our conventional deterrent is foundationally based. So for the **China** portion and the rest of the **Indo-Pacific** region, it is absolutely critical, and we demonstrate it, aligned

with our STRATCOM partner, fairly frequently, and General LaCamera can talk to that.

GENERAL LACAMERA: Thanks, Senator. It poses multiple dilemmas. We get questioned about our ability on extended deterrence, and I think it is just another demonstration of the tremendous capability that we bring to any fight worldwide.

SENATOR SCHMITT: And what has been the reaction from our friends and adversaries? What have you witnessed is their reaction to that capability?

GENERAL LACAMERA: For us, on the allies side, again, we are looking at this fight from a joint, combined interagency, multidomain, and this is just another arrow in our quiver that we continue to demonstrate. With the testing that KJU has been doing and the support that I get from Admiral Aquilino, and pushing assets, again, it is just allowing us to build combat readiness, which we have not been able to do.

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: And I think for the rest of the region, Senator, it is also important for them. The Australians have allowed us to do two B-2 bomber detachments out of Amberley. So that shows, to me, that the capability is important for them, as well as the rest of the region.

And we operate, whenever possible, to demonstrating that bomber capability in the theater.

SENATOR SCHMITT: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN REED: Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt, and gentlemen, thank you. I have one additional question.

We are currently at impasse in confirming general officers, including, I believe, the 7th Fleet Commander.

Admiral Aquilino, what impact does this have on your readiness and the impact also on the offices involved in terms of their whole family situation and also their opportunities outside the service?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: Senator, thanks for that.

Operationally, I am going to have no impact because the 7th Fleet Commander

is not going anywhere until a proper replacement is in place. So I think the real impact you articulated, right, it is the personal advancement, it is the personal development, it is the family understanding and predictability. Those are the places. So will it hinder our ability to continue to maintain the right people in the right jobs to be able to then potentially advance and take the next right job? Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN REED: Again, it seems a situation where, for the next several months, you could get by. But at that point people who are next in line to step up will consider other options outside the service. And, in fact, we have seen this situation in the Navy because of other situations.

Tailhook froze an entire cohort of officers, other incidents in the Navy, and as a result, valuable individuals just could not be promoted and had to retire. And if this persists, this will have a serious detriment on readiness eventually. Is that correct?

ADMIRAL AQUILINO: That is absolutely right, Senator, or Chairman, and Glenn Defense Marine is the other example I would think you are inferring to. We did have impact to really quality people in a lot of cases.

CHAIRMAN REED: General LaCamera, any other comments in this regard?

GENERAL LACAMERA: No. I agree with Admiral Aquilino.

I mean, the general officers that I have, I am not giving them up. But again, it does stagnate the next set of general officers or flag officers that are on current promotions lists that are not confirmed. So the second and third or long-term effects, there will be impacts, and then when do people decide to leave and you might lose quality.

So I think there is a potential long term.

CHAIRMAN REED: I do too, and I hope that we can move quickly and return to regular order and the custom, which is that individuals who served the nation for 30 years or more have been selected based on their merit as military officers, not any other reason, by panels of other military officers can be confirmed routinely by the Senate, unless there is some particular, specific issue with an individual candidate. And that is my hope.

So thank you all, gentlemen, for your testimony today.

[Whereupon, at 11:17 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]