

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED  
STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES  
FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE  
AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 AND THE  
FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES INDO-  
2 PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF  
3 THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 AND  
4 THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5  
6 Thursday, April 10, 2025

7  
8 U.S. Senate

9 Committee on Armed Services

10 Washington, D.C.

11  
12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m.,  
13 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger  
14 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer,  
16 Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Budd,  
17 Schmitt, Banks, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal,  
18 Hirono, Kaine, King, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and  
19 Slotkin.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3           Chairman Wicker: The hour of 9:30 has arrived and  
4 this hearing will come back to order. We have already had  
5 a classified part of the hearing, beginning at 8 a.m.

6           But at this point, we hold a hearing on U.S. Indo-  
7 Pacific Command and U.S. Force Korea. At the outset, I  
8 would like to thank Admiral Paparo and General Brunson for  
9 their distinguished service to our country.

10          Last year at this hearing, I stated that the balance  
11 of power in the Indo-Pacific was shifting in China's favor.  
12 Since then, the Chinese Communist Party has significantly  
13 increased its coercive activity toward Taiwan and the  
14 Philippines. Last week, the Chinese conducted an exercise  
15 called Strait Thunder 2025A. This exercise demonstrated  
16 the extent to which the People's Liberation Army could  
17 execute a maritime blockade of Taiwan and pummel it with  
18 missile strikes. As China conducts more exercises with  
19 Taiwan in mind, it also escalates the rhetoric against the  
20 island. Last week, a Chinese military officials called  
21 Taiwan's democratically elected president a "parasite."

22          The Chinese have also substantially increased their  
23 harassment of our Filipino allies. China's vast Maritime  
24 Militia, backed by the PLA Navy and Chinese Coast Guard, is  
25 using increasingly aggressive tactics to advance its

1 expansive claims in the South China Sea. The Second Thomas  
2 Shoal remains a major flashpoint. Chinese maritime  
3 militias have tried to keep the grounded Filipino Navy  
4 ship, the Sierra Madre, from being resupplied. Secretary  
5 Hegseth recently visited the region. I was pleased to see  
6 that he reaffirmed our Mutual Defense Treaty with the  
7 Philippines, reminding the world that the treaty applies to  
8 attacks on the Filipino armed forces anywhere in the South  
9 China Sea. Even so, it is clear that the Chinese have been  
10 emboldened by 4 years of weakness during the past  
11 administration.

12       There is another reason China has become so confident  
13 in its malign schemes. Xi Jinping has steadily modernized  
14 his military, and that hardware has made him more brazen.  
15 China boasts the world's largest navy. It also has an air  
16 force that is capable of denying the U.S. air superiority  
17 in the First Island Chain. We will certainly want to ask  
18 about that, gentlemen. Its missile force can saturate our  
19 theater defenses. China has been expanding its nuclear  
20 arsenal at a pace that far outstrips our own. Multiple  
21 STRATCOM commanders have called China's growth  
22 "breathtaking." In just a few short years, Beijing has  
23 built more intercontinental ballistic missile launchers  
24 than the United States. Meanwhile, our own modernization  
25 programs languish from past neglect.

1 But China is not the only urgent threat in the Indo-  
2 Pacific. The Biden administration chose to ignore North  
3 Korea. It allowed Kim Jong Un to increase his nuclear  
4 arsenal and project his military into the European theater  
5 to aid Vladimir Putin in Russia's war against Ukraine. Kim  
6 Jong Un has abandoned the goal of unification of the Korean  
7 Peninsula -- and again, we will want to talk about that --  
8 and has declared South Korea to be the principal enemy.  
9 The North Korean nuclear and missile arsenal continues to  
10 grow and diversify, with the rogue nation adopting a  
11 strategic doctrine that embraces nuclear first use.

12 Kim will surely seek remuneration for his support to  
13 Moscow. The Russian technology transfers and military  
14 assistance Kim receives will help him to further strengthen  
15 his strategic missile forces. The continued demonstrations  
16 of Russia, China, and North Korea aligning and cooperating  
17 should be of great concern to all in the West. This  
18 concern should then lead to action. If we are to maintain  
19 global peace and stability, we must continue taking steps  
20 now to rebuild our military and reestablish deterrence.

21 As I noted in my Peace Through Strength report last  
22 May, it is time to make a generational investment in our  
23 national security -- and I do believe that view is  
24 bipartisan. We must be able not only to deter and defeat  
25 the People's Liberation Army, but also to maintain

1 deterrence in other theaters. Our adversaries, led by  
2 Beijing, are playing a global game. We must be smarter and  
3 more agile than they are across the board.

4 Last year, INDOPACOM's unfunded requirements list  
5 totaled \$3.5 billion. This year's unfunded requirement  
6 list was \$11 billion, and virtually none of that was funded  
7 under the full-year CR. This is unacceptable, and also, I  
8 hope we are going to get from everyone an accurate and full  
9 assessment of the various unfunded requirements. We need  
10 real growth in the fiscal year 2026 budget request, in  
11 addition to a historic defense reconciliation package.

12 We need more survivable long-range munitions, more  
13 assured U.S. command and control systems, and an improved  
14 ability to counter China's increasingly capable cyber and  
15 space systems. We need a wholesale overhaul of our  
16 logistics infrastructure and a rapid deployment of unmanned  
17 systems. We need a renaissance in our camouflage and  
18 deception programs, and we need a drastic improvement in  
19 our shipbuilding. The risk is simply too high for us to  
20 avoid making these changes.

21 So I look forward to hearing our distinguished and  
22 well-informed witnesses and having a candid conversation  
23 about what this committee and this Senate and this Congress  
24 can do this year to address these challenges.

25 Senator Reed.

1           STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE  
2 ISLAND

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
4 Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, welcome. Thank you for  
5 appearing today, and please convey our thanks to the men  
6 and women serving under your commands and defending us.

7           This is a challenging time for our forces in the Indo-  
8 Pacific. China is deploying a wide range of military,  
9 economic, and political pressures against its neighbors  
10 while aggressively challenging America's leadership in the  
11 region. The United States does not seek conflict with  
12 China, but we have deep economic and security interests in  
13 the Indo-Pacific that must continue to be protected through  
14 strong deterrence and smart competition.

15           Several months ago, I traveled to Guam, South Korea,  
16 and the Philippines to assess our posture in the region. I  
17 observed a number of joint military exercises, met with  
18 allied leaders, spoke with foreign business leaders, and  
19 inspected our military infrastructure. Overall, I was  
20 impressed with our progress, particularly the development  
21 of our partnership with the Philippines and the remarkable  
22 emerging partnership between Korea and Japan. These  
23 relationships should inspire us to redouble the development  
24 of networks like the Quad, AUKUS, and ASEAN as we bring  
25 other nations into our security cooperation efforts.

1 Indeed, as countless U.S. military leaders and diplomats  
2 have told me, the key "asymmetric advantage" our nation has  
3 over China is our network of allies and partners.

4 With that in mind, I am concerned that the Trump  
5 administration is quickly unraveling much of the progress  
6 we have made. Many observers fear that President Trump may  
7 shrink the U.S. troop presence in Korea and Japan, reduce  
8 our military exercises with both nations, and scale back  
9 plans for our Joint Force Headquarters in Japan, despite  
10 the fact that Korea and Japan contribute significantly to  
11 burden sharing and hosting our forces. Although the  
12 President has temporarily suspended tariffs against our  
13 closest allies and partners, the last few days have  
14 undoubtedly sown seeds of doubt about America's stability  
15 and trustworthiness, feelings that would be amplified if  
16 the President decides to reinstate the sanctions after 90  
17 days. In addition to dismantling America's soft power  
18 tools like the U.S. Agency for International Development,  
19 President Trump's actions serve only to push our friends  
20 away from us, and that is not appropriate.

21 Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, you engage with our  
22 foreign partners every day, both as a matter of diplomatic  
23 leadership and military necessity. I am interested in your  
24 views on how tensions with our allies would disadvantage  
25 your forces and American interests in the region.



1           Admiral Paparo, Taiwan remains the most dangerous  
2 flashpoint in our competition with China. We have seen a  
3 recent surge of aggressive Chinese military exercises  
4 around Taiwan's airspace and territorial waters, and the  
5 world has a right to be concerned. In several consecutive  
6 National Defense Authorization Acts, this Committee has  
7 provided new security assistance tools to help develop  
8 Taiwan's capabilities and strengthen our own posture. In  
9 particular, the Taiwan Security Cooperation Initiative and  
10 the Indo-Pacific Campaigning Initiative should enable  
11 greater support and training for Taiwan, and facilitate  
12 INDOPACOM's increased exercises and freedom of navigation  
13 operations, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act.  
14 However, your command has once again had to divert ships  
15 and aircraft for prolonged and intensive operations in the  
16 Middle East. Admiral Paparo, I would like to know your  
17 assessment of INDOPACOM's readiness to carry out your  
18 missions, as well as United States' broader strategy in the  
19 region.

20           Key to America's success in the Indo-Pacific is the  
21 posture of our forces in South Korea. As I mentioned, I am  
22 encouraged by the recent progress we have seen in the  
23 trilateral relationship among South Korea, Japan, and the  
24 United States, and I hope that developments like these will  
25 provide more opportunities to engage other regional

1 partners.

2           As we do so, we must continue to manage the threat  
3 posed by North Korea. We know that Kim Jong Un continues  
4 to view nuclear weapons as "the ultimate deterrent against  
5 foreign intervention," and he intends to gain international  
6 acceptance as a nuclear-armed state. North Korea's  
7 relationship with Russia also continues to grow, especially  
8 in light of North Korea sending troops and weapons to  
9 support Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and Kim Jong Un is  
10 likely receiving technical assistance from Russia for  
11 missile and nuclear capabilities. General, I would  
12 appreciate your view on the current threat from North  
13 Korea, and how your forces are maintaining readiness  
14 through training and exercises with their South Korean  
15 counterparts.

16           Thank you, again, to our witnesses. I look forward to  
17 your testimonies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18           Chairman Wicker: Thank you. We will now recognize  
19 each of our panelists for opening statements. And General  
20 Brunson, you went first in the closed session. Would you  
21 like to do that again?

22           General Brunson: My boss says yes, so I do. Thank  
23 you for giving me at least the illusion of choice.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL XAVIER T. BRUNSON, USA,  
2           COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/ COMBINED FORCES COMMAND/  
3           UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

4           General Brunson: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member  
5           Reed, and distinguished members of this Committee, thank  
6           you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am  
7           honored to appear before you for my first posture hearing  
8           in front of this Committee as the Commander of United  
9           States Forces Korea, Combined Forces Command, and United  
10          Nations Command.

11          I would like to take a moment just to simply thank you  
12          all for your steadfast leadership, your friendship, and  
13          your critical support to our servicemembers, their  
14          families, our civilians, and the contractors who support us  
15          around the globe. But I especially want to thank you for  
16          your continued time and attention to the people of the  
17          Republic of Korea and the soldiers, sailors, airmen,  
18          Guardians, and Marines who serve there on the peninsula.

19          I would also like to thank the Korean people right now  
20          for their continued resilience through challenges and hard  
21          times. I would like to thank them for their dedication to  
22          our alliance, and I would also like to thank them for their  
23          continued provision of an environment that allows us to  
24          build, sustain, and retain the readiness that we develop on  
25          the peninsula.

1           In my career, every opportunity that I have had to  
2           lead our nation's men and women has been an honor. It is a  
3           privilege to serve alongside Admiral Paparo, our friends,  
4           our partners and allies in the region, working to  
5           strengthen our ties to further security, freedom, and  
6           prosperity amongst the nations. For over 75 years, we have  
7           invested our national treasure in the Republic of Korea,  
8           and remain the last U.S. fighting force on the continent of  
9           Asia.

10           The return on investment of U.S. forces being  
11           stationed in Korea is not measured only in dollars but in  
12           terms of access, forward-basing, and during partnerships  
13           and deterrence. In 2024, the DPRK focused on advancing  
14           their cruise missile and Hypersonic Glide Vehicle research  
15           and development programs, launching 47 ballistic missiles  
16           with 1 failed satellite launch attempt. Kim Jong Un also  
17           has two highly publicized visits to nuclear sites, and over  
18           the past year and a half, DPRK has exported munitions and  
19           troops to support Russia, demonstrating the ability to  
20           provide external support while simultaneously advancing  
21           domestic capabilities.

22           In the coming year we expect the DPRK to further  
23           develop hypersonic and Multiple Independently Targetable  
24           Reentry Vehicle, MIRV, capabilities to complete his 8th  
25           Party Congress goals. Kim Jong Un's leadership has shifted

1 focus from reunification to declaring sovereignty. This  
2 change is evidenced by the hardening of DPRK's southern  
3 border, the rejection of reunification discussions, and the  
4 destruction of unification monuments and buildings.

5 The DPRK continues to build its nuclear weapons  
6 programs, and boasts a Russian-equipped, augmented,  
7 modernized military force of over 1.3 million personnel.

8 Lastly, DPRK's cyber threat is increasingly  
9 sophisticated, as demonstrated by the recent theft of  
10 approximately \$1.5 billion in cryptocurrency.

11 In contrast to that, I would speak to the ROK-U.S.-  
12 Japan trilateral efforts, which are bearing much fruit, not  
13 only in ballistic missile defense but in training and  
14 readiness developed on the peninsula.

15 I thank you all for allowing me again to appear before  
16 you. I look forward to your questions, and thank you.

17 [The prepared statement of General Brunson follows:]

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Chairman Wicker: Thank you, General. Admiral Paparo.

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1           STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. PAPARO JR., USN,  
2           COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

3           Admiral Paparo: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed,  
4           and distinguished members of the Committee, thanks very  
5           much for the opportunity to appear.

6           With me, over my right shoulder, is United States  
7           INDOPACOM Senior Enlisted Leader, Fleet Master Chief  
8           Special Operations Dave Isom. This is his last hearing.  
9           He is retiring after 38 years of selfless service as a SEAL  
10          and Special Operator.

11          Speaking of asymmetric advantages, the NCO Corps of  
12          the United States of America is one of the Joint Force's  
13          absolute asymmetric advantages. Fleet Isom's leadership in  
14          this critical duty has been exemplary. It has been  
15          indispensable to my own transition as the Commander of  
16          USINDOPACOM. He has been indispensable to me personally.  
17          I honor his service.

18          In a region that is home to over half the Earth's  
19          surface and half the operational joint force, INDOPACOM  
20          faces a confluence of challenges. China's unprecedented  
21          aggression and military modernization poses a series threat  
22          to the homeland, our allies, and our partners. In 2024,  
23          the People's Liberation Army demonstrated growing  
24          capabilities through persistent pressure operations, with  
25          military pressure against Taiwan increasing by 300 percent.

1 China's increasingly aggressive actions near Taiwan are not  
2 just exercise. They are rehearsals. And while the PLA  
3 attempts to intimidate the people of Taiwan and demonstrate  
4 coercive capabilities, these actions are backfiring,  
5 drawing increased global attention and accelerating  
6 Taiwan's own defense preparations.

7 As General Brunson said, North Korea's development of  
8 advanced nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles pose a  
9 direct threat to our homeland and our allies, and are  
10 executing a deepening cooperation with Russia.

11 Russia's growing military cooperation with China adds  
12 another layer of complexity, creating a compounded  
13 challenge with a deepening cooperation among China, Russia,  
14 and North Korea, and China's and Russia's Pacific fleet is  
15 a growth enterprise.

16 USINDOPACOM deters these challenges to regional  
17 stability in competition and crisis while maintaining the  
18 availability to prevail, but that margin is eroding, as the  
19 Chairman and Ranking Member have discussed.

20 In 2024, we conducted 120 joint exercises, among them  
21 20 major joint exercises, including not just the U.S. Joint  
22 Force but allies and partners. We continue to strengthen  
23 the relationship with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the  
24 Philippines, India, Taiwan. The ASEAN nations, Pacific  
25 Island countries, and, in fact, European partners are



1 active in the theater.

2 As the first priorities, we must be dominant in space  
3 an across the information environment, leveraging  
4 capabilities to counter the PRC's command, control,  
5 intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting  
6 complex. This will enable us to gain a non-linear  
7 advantage over potential adversaries, in fact, to maintain  
8 and increase the non-linear advantage.

9 To maintain credible deterrence, INDOPACOM require  
10 additional sustained investment in long-range survivable  
11 fires, in integrated air and missile defense, in force  
12 sustainment, with an emphasis on autonomy and AI-driven  
13 systems.

14 China is outproducing the United States in air,  
15 missile, maritime, and space capability and accelerating  
16 these. I remain confident in our deterrence posture, but  
17 the trajectory must change. The Pacific Deterrent  
18 Initiative should counter the China threat by investing in  
19 key readiness and capability which would, in fact, if  
20 funded, advance the intent of this initiative and deliver  
21 major posture improvement. Deterrence remains our highest  
22 duty. However, that must be backed up by the real  
23 capability to prevail in combat.

24 The Joint Force remains confident, resolute, and  
25 determined to prevail.

1 Thank you for your attention. Thank you. I look  
2 forward to the questions.

3 [The prepared statement of Admiral Paparo follows:]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you both for your testimony  
2 and for your service. Let's start with General Brunson.  
3 Just quickly yes or no. North Korea continues to expand  
4 its nuclear weapons arsenal. Correct?

5 General Brunson: Yes, sir.

6 Chairman Wicker: And they continue to expand their  
7 delivery systems of nuclear weapons. Is that correct?

8 General Brunson: Yes, sir.

9 Chairman Wicker: Okay. You know, you never know  
10 whether to believe what you read in the newspapers and see  
11 on the media, but there are reports that some midlevel  
12 officials in the Pentagon are considering reducing our  
13 military presence on the Korean Peninsula to focus instead  
14 on the China threat in defense of the U.S. homeland. If  
15 our strategy in Korea is to deter war and win it if we have  
16 to, would that be a good or bad idea?

17 General Brunson: Senator, Chairman, to reduce the  
18 force becomes problematic, and I will not speak to policy.  
19 But what we do provide there, sir, is the potential to  
20 impose costs in the East Sea to Russia, the potential to  
21 impose costs in the West Sea to China, and to continue to  
22 deter against North Korea as it currently stands. I am  
23 trying to focus right now on the capabilities necessary to  
24 do all those things, that we might participate routinely in  
25 the campaign that my boss is fighting, which is to prepare,

1 deter, and then prevail in conflict, should it come. But  
2 the forces in Korea play an important role. In over 75  
3 years they have done the same.

4 Chairman Wicker: Admiral, a significant reduction of  
5 our military presence on the Korean Peninsula, good or bad?

6 Admiral Paparo: Inherently it would reduce our  
7 ability to prevail in conflict.

8 Chairman Wicker: And for both of you, would a  
9 conflict on the Korean Peninsula likely involve China?

10 Admiral Paparo: My belief is that there would be a  
11 risk that it would involve China and would have to be  
12 conducted carefully if it were so. And so that risk has  
13 got to drive our calculus.

14 Chairman Wicker: And General Brunson?

15 General Brunson: Sir, our preparedness would prevent  
16 them from entering in any conflict, because of the  
17 potential to take them off their own party goals.

18 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Who wants to take the  
19 question about the air superiority of the PRC over ours in  
20 that theater?

21 Admiral Paparo: Chairman, the People's Republic of  
22 China have an order of battle of 2,100 fighters, an order  
23 of battle of over 200 H-6 bombers, and they are producing  
24 fighters at a rate of 1.2 to 1 over the United States.  
25 Furthermore, their advanced long-range air-to-air missiles

1 also present a tremendous threat. If you do not hold the  
2 high ground along the first island chain you are vastly  
3 limited in your ability to operate. I think everybody  
4 knows the importance of the high ground. So ceding air  
5 superiority is not an option if we intend to maintain  
6 capability against our adversaries and the ability to  
7 support our allies.

8 Chairman Wicker: Admiral, is it a fact that China is  
9 now capable of denying U.S. air superiority in the first  
10 island chain?

11 Admiral Paparo: Yeah, I give them high marks in their  
12 ability to do that. I have some game, too. And air  
13 supremacy is the complete mastery of the air. Neither side  
14 will enjoy that. But it will be my job to contest air  
15 superiority, to protect those forces that are on the first  
16 island chain, such as 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, and  
17 also to provide windows of air superiority in order to  
18 achieve our effects.

19 Chairman Wicker: Admiral, Kim Jong Un is not  
20 motivated by charity in helping Russia in Ukraine. What  
21 does he expect back? What is he likely to get back?

22 Admiral Paparo: Chairman, he expects concessions. He  
23 is doing it order to gain concessions, and those  
24 concessions would be modernization of their air defenses,  
25 specifically the MiG-29, the SU-27, advanced health of

1 their surface-to-air missiles, quieting technology for  
2 their submarines, additional help in order to instantiate a  
3 ballistic missile submarine, as well, and then likely  
4 propulsion help and potentially even help with the reentry  
5 vehicles for their burgeoning nuclear program.

6 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you. We will take  
7 another round. Let me just make sure that people  
8 understand General Brunson. You are USA Commander, United  
9 Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States  
10 Forces Korea. You do not answer at all to the United  
11 Nations headquartered in New York City, do you?

12 General Brunson: No, sir. Those authorities go  
13 through the Chairman to the Secretary of Defense and then  
14 on to the President.

15 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Totally different  
16 organization. Thank you very much, and the distinguished  
17 Ranking Member is recognized.

18 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
19 First, let me begin by thanking the Command Master Chief  
20 for his dedicated service to the nation. Thank you, Chief.  
21 And let me associate myself with Admiral Paparo's comment  
22 that our asymmetric advantage, one of the keys is our  
23 noncommissioned officers.

24 General Brunson, you have indicated the importance of  
25 our forces on the Korean Peninsula. Can also elaborate on

1 the support and the magnitude of the burden-sharing that  
2 the South Koreans contribute to us?

3 General Brunson: Yes, Senator Reed. So first I would  
4 like to say that forward presence provides unmatched  
5 access, unmatched deterrence, at minimal cost comparatively  
6 speaking, by other forces that are stationed forward. We  
7 recently received help from the Department of Defense with  
8 our tour normalization, which brings tours in Korea on part  
9 with other OCONUS locations, which changes our exposure to  
10 the region and our understanding of the adversaries  
11 therein.

12 I would also say that 2,100 U.S. companies have ties  
13 to the Republic of Korea. That is 450,000 jobs that are a  
14 part of that. That is a piece that I think is critical to  
15 know and understand.

16 And I would also say that we receive about half a  
17 billion dollars a year in Korean-related construction.  
18 That builds the brand-new school on Pyeongtaek at Camp  
19 Humphreys, that builds additional towers to house our  
20 families in quality housing, that also builds SCIFs for us  
21 right now in the Republic of Korea that we might be able to  
22 do the important work to stay tied to INDOPACOM.

23 I would also like to say that in kind, the overall  
24 contribution in the past fiscal year was about 1.4 trillion  
25 won, which works out to be close to a billion dollars'

1 worth of support that we receive in kind.

2 I would also mention the continued and growing  
3 maintenance repair and overhaul facilities that exist on  
4 the East Sea and the West Sea, that we have utilized most  
5 recently to bring the Wally Schirra back out of an  
6 overhaul, and looking better than ever. The Cesar Chavez  
7 also visited recently.

8 But there is a lot that we get. Some of it is fiscal  
9 and monetary. Others of it is materiel that is  
10 irreplaceable.

11 Senator Reed: All right, General Brunson, again, in  
12 previous National Defense Authorization Acts we have  
13 established a manpower floor of 28,500 troops as a  
14 demonstration of our unwavering commitment to the U.S.-  
15 Republic of Korea alliance, and also the strategic reasons  
16 you said. Would you suggest we include such language  
17 again?

18 General Brunson: Yes, sir.

19 Senator Reed: Thank you. And Admiral Paparo, can you  
20 give us your perception, as the overall commander, of the  
21 value of the South Korean forces to us and the presence of  
22 our troops on the peninsula, together with the  
23 contributions they are making, the South Koreans.

24 Admiral Paparo: Ranking Member, in addition to the  
25 elements laid out by General Brunson, Korea makes



1 significant contributions outside the Korean Peninsula, and  
2 that is in their participation in multilateral exercises,  
3 including Pacific partnership among many others. And so in  
4 the ability of that force to deter conflict, the ability of  
5 that force to avoid from having two conflicts at once, by  
6 dint of the strength of the capability, and by what they  
7 are doing in the trilateral relationship with Japan, that  
8 growing trilateral relationship with Japan, and on their  
9 path to become a global pivotal state, they are a key  
10 partner in the Western Pacific, with a purview that goes  
11 far beyond just the Korean Peninsula.

12 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, sir. I mentioned  
13 in my opening statement that currently you have forces that  
14 have transferred into CENTCOM, the Carl Vinson carrier  
15 group. Open sources suggest six B-2 bombers, Diego Garcia  
16 with supplementary tankers. What effect do these have on  
17 your capabilities?

18 Admiral Paparo: Presently, for Carl Vinson, we do  
19 have George Washington coming out of Yokosuka very shortly,  
20 and Nimitz is at sea. But we have to maintain a high state  
21 of indications and warning so that we can get those forces  
22 back if there is a crisis with greater exigence than there  
23 is one in the CENTCOM AOR. And I owe the Secretary and the  
24 President constant vigilance on this, and a constant  
25 awareness of that force's ability to FLET, which is a sign

1 to USINDOPACOM, its Carl Vinson strike group, and a Patriot  
2 battalion if need be they return to the INDOPACOM theater  
3 for a higher priority threat.

4 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank  
5 you, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator  
7 Cotton.

8 Senator Cotton: Gentlemen, welcome back. Admiral,  
9 let's take a step back to first principles. We have talked  
10 a lot here about the threat that China poses Taiwan and  
11 what you are doing to try to address that threat. I would  
12 like you to explain why that threat is so severe. Some  
13 people might look at the map and say, well, Taiwan is a  
14 small island, and it is really far from us, and it is  
15 really close to them, and China has marched into Tibet in  
16 the past, and they have marched into Hong Kong in the past,  
17 and that was bad, and they should not have done those  
18 things. But it did not lead to a World War, and it did not  
19 lead to a Great Depression.

20 On the other side you have got one of your ancestors,  
21 so to speak, Douglas MacArthur, who said at the dawn of the  
22 Korean War that "the domination of Taiwan by an unfriendly  
23 power would be a disaster of utmost importance to the  
24 United States." He was speaking then, as we do today, of  
25 Communist China. Ian Easton, a Naval War College professor

1 and one of the military's leading experts on Taiwan, says  
2 that "it's possible that the Chinese invasion of Taiwan  
3 would cause a 21st century version of the Great  
4 Depression." And the famed investor, Ken Griffin, put it  
5 more bluntly: "It's an immediate Great Depression."

6 So why is it that Taiwan is different? Why is Taiwan  
7 such a hot flashpoint? Why could it lead not only to a  
8 catastrophic war but also a global Great Depression? Why  
9 should Americans care about an island on the other side of  
10 the world?

11 Admiral Paparo: Senator Cotton, that last point is  
12 quite salient. Many a research organization postulate that  
13 conflict in the Western Pacific over the Taiwan question  
14 would result in a 25 percent GDP contraction in Asia, and a  
15 knock-on effect of 10 to 12 percent GDP reduction in the  
16 United States of America, with unemployment spiking 7 to 10  
17 points above base, and likely 500,000 excess depths of  
18 despair above base, as well.

19 And this is just the importance of the regional  
20 stability to the world economy and its effect on people's  
21 lives. And this is viewed as a function of freedom of  
22 navigation. It is a function of the world dependency on  
23 semiconductors.

24 In the longer term, for the United States, our  
25 strategic center of gravity is our network of alliances and

1 partners. The sum total of 350 million peoples' talent,  
2 130 million Japanese, 130 million Filipinos, 25 million  
3 Australians, not to mention 500 million in Europe, as well  
4 as partners across the globe.

5 The knock-on effect of the brittleness of that network  
6 of alliances and partnerships means that some of the states  
7 could confer and submit to the PRC's mode of exploitation  
8 enroute to their long-range goal of setting the rules of  
9 the world and reaping the benefits of that.

10 And then finally, some nations in the area of  
11 responsibility will submit, but others it would never  
12 happen, just because of the historic tensions. And in that  
13 case, the proliferation question comes to mind, with  
14 nuclear-armed states that are treaty allies with the United  
15 States, and minimal warning for launch among those nuclear  
16 states. It is a vital interest for the United States.

17 My job is to have a force ready to make those choices.  
18 You know, I don't make the choices on whether or not it is  
19 important or not. I am explicating how it is. And my job  
20 is to present those options to the commander in chief to be  
21 ready to fight and win.

22 Senator Cotton: And to be clear, a lot, of not all of  
23 those consequences, would follow whatever the outcome of a  
24 conflict over Taiwan, whether China succeeds in going for  
25 the jugular or fails, or there is some kind of indecisive

1 outcome. Simply having the conflict over Taiwan, which is  
2 such a center of gravity in the modern economy, could lead  
3 to many of the consequences you just outlined.

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. I cannot quote the source.  
5 I will later. But most of the things I have studied  
6 indicate that American intervention would have that impact.  
7 A successful American intervention would potentially do so.  
8 So still a grave result, but half as grave with savings of  
9 a lot of human misery.

10 Senator Cotton: So the key then is to prevent the war  
11 from happening in the first place. We do not want to be in  
12 a situation where we have to win a war over Taiwan. We  
13 want to stop it from happening, and the way to do that is  
14 through strong military and resolute, confident leadership.

15 What do you need most, that you do not have right now,  
16 to deter that conflict from happening in the first place?

17 Admiral Paparo: Senator, counter-C5ISR capabilities  
18 in cyber, space, counterspace, to ensure that the United  
19 States can see, understand, decide, act, assess, learn  
20 faster than the PRC can, to enhance our ability to blind,  
21 to deceive, and to destroy the adversary's ability to see  
22 and sense. And then, in addition, the requirement to  
23 effect those long-range fires and effects that make the  
24 Joint Force effective in attacking centers of gravity, the  
25 platform that they ride on, the sustainment that sustains

1 them, absolutely key and critical foundation. And then the  
2 critical infrastructure across the theater that enables the  
3 force to reach the principles of expanded maneuver and puts  
4 geography on our side, which it is.

5 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

6 Senator Fischer: [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator  
7 Cotton. Senator Hirono, you are recognized.

8 Senator Hirono: Thank you. Welcome Admiral Paparo.  
9 It is always good to see you. Thank you for your  
10 leadership.

11 While successive administrations have identified China  
12 as the pacing threat and the Indo-Pacific as the priority  
13 theater, you still identified \$11 billion in unfunded  
14 priorities this past year. You talked about just now the  
15 importance of deterrence, because a conflict over Taiwan  
16 would have massive negative effects. Is some of this \$11  
17 billion having to do with the deterrence that you talked  
18 about regarding Taiwan?

19 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator Hirono, thank you.  
20 Absolutely right. Deterrence must be backed up by the real  
21 capability to fight and win. The United States of America  
22 enjoys key advantages in space, counterspace, command and  
23 control between the Kármán line and the surface, and  
24 undersea dominance. But that margin is shrinking, and we  
25 must regain the margin and increase the margin. And that

1 ability to fight and win is what will make sure that our  
2 adversaries do not execute any aggression to do so.

3 Senator Hirono: What would happen if this very large  
4 funding gap is not addressed in this year's NDAA?

5 Admiral Paparo: The trajectory that I am discussing  
6 continues. The Joint Force has an eroded capability to  
7 prevail. It manifests itself in lost people, in lost  
8 capability, in lost money, and in lost time, and it confers  
9 to the confidence of the PRC and inherently erode  
10 deterrence as they see, more and more, they see the  
11 potential of their prevailing in the conflict themselves  
12 and achieving their goals by aggression.

13 Senator Hirono: Admiral Paparo, by the way, thank you  
14 for explaining to this Committee the importance of the  
15 Taiwan situation, because often I get asked, why should our  
16 country care about Taiwan, so thank you for that.

17 Regarding the dismantling of USAID and the impacts on  
18 us, whenever the United States creates a void, such as by  
19 ending foreign aid such as through USAID, it has an impact  
20 on our asymmetric advantage, which also includes our  
21 partners and allies. How does ending foreign assistance  
22 programs and other regional aid efforts impact INDOPACOM's  
23 security cooperation missions and the command's  
24 relationship with partners in the region?

25 Admiral Paparo: Senator, those other instruments of

1 national power are very important and they are critical to  
2 our ability to fight and win. My understanding is that  
3 USAID is under review, and I continue to advocate for it.  
4 The loss of that, the PRC would see the opportunity and  
5 they would seize it, and they frequently do. Wherever they  
6 see a void, they fill it in, in order to confirm more  
7 influence to their own national power.

8 Senator Hirono: So indeed if China is our pacing  
9 threat, we know that every time we create a void in any  
10 part, particularly in the INDOPACOM area, including, by the  
11 way, providing assistance to our compact nation friends,  
12 that China just steps right in and fills that void.

13 General Brunson, you raised an important point in your  
14 opening statement regarding North Korea hackers stealing  
15 \$1.5 billion, and probably more, in cryptocurrency to fund  
16 their military. And at the same time, the Justice  
17 Department has disbanded a team of prosecutors targeting  
18 crypto crimes. Does that concern you?

19 General Brunson: Good morning, Madam Senator. First,  
20 that does not bother me at all. What I am thinking about  
21 is all the instruments of military power that have to be  
22 brought to bear to stop illicit activity. That is only one  
23 of the illegal things they are doing. We have talked a lot  
24 about what is North Korea getting from Russia. One of the  
25 things they are getting is the ability to circumvent



1 sanctions, and that theft is a piece of that. Ma'am, I am  
2 also encouraged by the fact that we can see what is going  
3 on.

4 Senator Hirono: Do you have an awareness of  
5 Department of Justice's team that targeted, basically was  
6 able to prosecute to the tune of billions of dollars crypto  
7 crimes? Are you aware of that team, highly successful  
8 team, that is being disbanded?

9 General Brunson: Yes, ma'am, I am aware of that team.  
10 However, I believe that we have the instruments to continue  
11 to proceed to prosecute these crimes.

12 Senator Hirono: That is somewhat reassuring, but I  
13 think that with all of the crimes that are going on in the  
14 crypto space, I think that we should not be disbanding any  
15 efforts that we have in that space.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator  
18 Ernst, you are recognized.

19 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you  
20 for being here, Admiral Paparo and General Brunson. Chief,  
21 good luck to you in your retirement. Thank you so much for  
22 your service.

23 I will go ahead and start with INDOPACOM. Admiral,  
24 thank you so much. As you have clearly laid out for the  
25 Committee today, the Indo-Pacific is growing very

1 dangerous. It is extremely complex. Our deterrence  
2 depends not just on our warfighting capability but also on  
3 the ability to sustain our operations. I started my career  
4 as an engineer, became a transporter, and ended my career  
5 as a logistician -- not a big, sexy topic here in this  
6 Committee, but it is absolutely necessary that we talk  
7 about it. If we wish to win the fight, we have got to  
8 sustain the fight.

9 So, Admiral, what gaps still exist in our theater  
10 logistics network that put our forward posture at risk?

11 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator. Significant  
12 gaps in sealift. First, the combat logistics force in  
13 total is about 60 percent of the actual requirements. We  
14 account for that by hiring Consol tankers and by  
15 contracting other capabilities. But when the unforgiving  
16 hour comes, the only ships that we will be able to commit  
17 to areas to put into harm's way will be "gray ships," and  
18 as I utter these words, 17 of those combat logistics force  
19 ships are laid up for lack of manpower.

20 In addition, I discussed in the previous committee, we  
21 have to have many millions of pounds of fuel, of jet fuel,  
22 in the air for every capability. So our tanker fleet is  
23 below what we need. We account for that for some contract  
24 air services, as well. But once again, those same factors  
25 obtain, you have to have a "gray tail."

1           And then, finally, just cargo lift and the number of  
2 short tons of C-17 lift. For instance, just having moved a  
3 Patriot battalion into the CENTCOM AOR, it took 73 C-17  
4 loads to move that Patriot battalion.

5           Senator Ernst: Seventy-three.

6           Admiral Paparo: What is that?

7           Senator Ernst: Seventy-three.

8           Admiral Paparo: Seventy-three of one battalion of a  
9 force element. So our lift requirements must be paid  
10 attention to. And I share your passion for sustainment.  
11 That is what won World War II.

12          Senator Ernst: Absolutely. So those logisticians,  
13 the maintenance dudes and dudettes that are out there,  
14 working every day to make sure that our warriors are able  
15 to fight the good fight. So with that, you talked about  
16 contractors, and we use them extensively. But how can  
17 Congress help accelerate the improvements necessary in  
18 INDOPACOM when that hour comes?

19          Admiral Paparo: Well, I think we have got to get at  
20 the problems of why we do not have enough combat logistics  
21 force, and that is shipbuilding, why we do not have enough  
22 labor, and those are looking hard at pay and incentives in  
23 order to recruit and retain those people, rates of  
24 production, and diversifying the tanker fleet is key. And  
25 then continuing on to find alternatives of lift capability

1 that we can order into harm's way. And then over top of  
2 all of this, we are incorporating artificial intelligence  
3 tools with command and control tools so that it is not an  
4 on-demand system, but so that we are executing that  
5 absolutely indispensable joint function as effectively as  
6 we possibly can. You know, we are an AI-enabled  
7 headquarters, and that is important too. But you cannot AI  
8 your way out of a materiel deficiency.

9 Senator Ernst: Right. I agree completely, and we  
10 need to spend more time on this topic. But just very  
11 briefly, General Brunson, I apologize. I have got 30  
12 seconds. We rely heavily on allies, neighbors, friends --  
13 they are force multipliers -- but so do our adversaries.  
14 We have heard that there are North Koreans now that are  
15 fighting the fight over in Ukraine. Can you tell us, what  
16 are the North Koreans learning from this experience, and  
17 what will they take back to your region?

18 General Brunson: Ma'am, I have said several times  
19 now, in several hearings, that we cannot confuse the  
20 tactical lessons that they are learning with strategic  
21 benefit. What we have got to understand is that they have  
22 gone over, they have done some things, there has been  
23 strategic movement, there has been operational maneuver  
24 that they are learning some things. But it is the  
25 technology that is coming back in that is a threat to the

1 Republic of Korea and the world.

2 Senator Ernst: Wonderful. Thank you, gentlemen, very  
3 much.

4 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator  
5 King, you are recognized.

6 Senator King: Thank you, Madam Chair. General  
7 Brunson, without our presence on the Korean Peninsula would  
8 Kim invade the South?

9 General Brunson: Sir, I would tell you that I do not  
10 believe he would. But what I would tell you is he would  
11 take advantage of other weapons and systems that he has,  
12 conventional, to limit the Republic of Korea's great growth  
13 that has taken place over the past 75 years. I think that  
14 if we look at the hardening that has occurred on his border  
15 at the present time, the fences have been raised, mines  
16 have seated in the Demilitarized Zone. I think that what  
17 we see is --

18 Senator King: Why is he doing that? Is there any  
19 threat that the South Koreans are going to invade North  
20 Korea?

21 General Brunson: Sir, I think it is as much about the  
22 things that he has broadcast in open source that he is a  
23 sovereign nation. He is not looking to work at  
24 reunification. He has blown up all the means of industry  
25 in the DMZ.

1           Senator King: I thought you said in your opening  
2 testimony he is not talking about reunification; he is  
3 talking about one whole country. Doesn't that imply an  
4 invasion of the South?

5           General Brunson: No, sir. He considers himself  
6 sovereign north of the MDL, sir, which he claims is his  
7 southern boundary now.

8           Senator King: So he has accepted the boundary, in  
9 which case if you testified he would not invade, then why  
10 are we there?

11          Admiral Paparo: Senator, I do not think it is a  
12 matter of whether he will invade or not. I think that  
13 these intentions to cordon off North Korea could very well  
14 be temporary. So to say will he invade or won't he invade,  
15 you know, we are talking about probabilities. With the  
16 loss of the force on the Korean Peninsula there is a higher  
17 probability that he would invade.

18          Senator King: Well, that was my expectation when I  
19 asked that question. I would assume that if we were not  
20 there it would encourage him to take steps to try to  
21 cripple the South.

22          Admiral Paparo: I think it is essential. We have a  
23 treaty ally. It is the number 10 economy in the world.  
24 Our economies are very much intertwined. KJU's intentions  
25 could shift with the wind, and he has built a military that

1 is designed to impose tremendous costs directly on South  
2 Korea. It is very important we maintain that deterrence  
3 posture.

4 Senator King: I agree, and to the extent that the  
5 South Korean economy is somehow affected or diminished,  
6 that would be against our interest because of the  
7 relationship that we have.

8 General Brunson: Yes, Senator, and I misheard you.  
9 So please forgive me. But as I mentioned previously, 2,100  
10 U.S. companies tied to the Republic of South Korea, 450,000  
11 jobs, as well.

12 Senator King: Thank you. this is sort of an  
13 intelligence question, General Brunson, but I know you have  
14 intelligence. I did not mean that the way it sounded. I  
15 know you have access to intelligence assets. How is that?  
16 Better, yeah.

17 Do the North Koreans know the extent to which they are  
18 being screwed by the regime? We have all seen the famous  
19 picture of no lights in North Korea and South Korea is full  
20 of energy and prosperity. Do the North Koreans have any  
21 inkling of the way that their opportunities in life are  
22 being diminished by this regime?

23 General Brunson: Senator, I would answer that, having  
24 fully listened to the question that I might answer it  
25 correctly this time, I would fully answer that by looking

1 at the forces that they sent to Ukraine, to that fight.  
2 Absolutely died-in-the-wool ideologues who are tied to and  
3 believe in that regime that exists there. I think a great  
4 many of the people are not witting to what is going on  
5 there, but the elites, as long as he maintains control of  
6 the elites.

7 There was a recent article that talked about the  
8 things that he is doing to circumvent sanctions and other  
9 things, to continue to bring luxury goods into his country.

10 Senator King: Those luxury goods do not go to the  
11 people.

12 General Brunson: No, sir. The point I am making is  
13 that as long as he can sort of provide a palliative to the  
14 elite, the other folks will not. There is no way that they  
15 get communications in or out. One of the things that was  
16 coming from the NGOs going to the north was radios, and  
17 those things then begat feces balloons and garbage ballons  
18 back to the South.

19 So I would say that the rank and file, everyday  
20 people, other than those within his Special Operations  
21 Units, are not witting to anything outside of their  
22 country.

23 Senator King: That certainly is my impression.  
24 Admiral, final question. If we pulled back in terms of our  
25 support for Ukraine, would that incentivize Japan, South



1 Korea, to develop their own capacity, including a nuclear  
2 capacity?

3 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I am ignorant of the policy.  
4 I do not know the policy that is going on. It is another  
5 theater. But I will say that Russian failure --

6 Senator King: I am sorry. Did I say Ukraine? I  
7 meant Taiwan.

8 Admiral Paparo: Okay.

9 Senator King: If we withdrew our support from Taiwan,  
10 would that incentivize Japan and South Korea to develop  
11 independent capacity including the possibility of nuclear  
12 weapons?

13 Admiral Paparo: My assessment is yes.

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

15 Chairman Wicker: [Presiding.] Admiral, go ahead and  
16 answer that question with regard to Ukraine.

17 Admiral Paparo: So I am in the Indo-Pacific so I do  
18 not have perfect knowledge of the ongoing.

19 Chairman Wicker: I understand.

20 Admiral Paparo: But my assessment, and it is, to a  
21 very deep extent, backed in the intel record, is that  
22 Russian failure and/or Russian success has the effect of  
23 deterring or emboldening the People's Republic China, and  
24 they have already taken notice of the tremendous costs that  
25 Russia has endured.

1           Senator King: Mr. Chairman, thank you for that,  
2 because that is a question I would have asked if I had had  
3 another 10 seconds. Thank you.

4           Chairman Wicker: And it only took us 59 seconds.  
5 Thank you very much. Senator Scott, you are recognized.

6           Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. I thank both of  
7 you for what you do. Thank you for the men and women you  
8 serve with.

9           So Admiral Paparo, how much of your time do you spend  
10 trying to anticipate or counter actions by Communist China?

11          Admiral Paparo: Senator Scott, that consumes my  
12 duties, which is a constant stare, the constant analysis of  
13 intelligence course, of open-source sources, and then the  
14 physical movement on the ground, to be able to see and  
15 understand, to anticipate, and to be able to pace their  
16 actions that look to coerce Taiwan and to demonstrate the  
17 prospect of settling the matter by force, and number two,  
18 their encroachment on treaty allies in the Philippines as  
19 well as encroachment on partners in the South China Sea,  
20 with their excessive and illogical claims and their nine-  
21 dash line claim.

22          Senator Scott: And their continuing ability to build  
23 ships, airplanes, weapons, all these things, does that  
24 cause you to spend more time and money?

25          Admiral Paparo: Yes. Yes, sir, absolutely. They

1 build combatants at the rate of 6-to-1.8 to the United  
2 States. And I could go through every force element that we  
3 are talking about.

4 Senator Scott: Before they joined the World Trade  
5 Organization and before we allowed them to basically sell  
6 whatever they wanted to this country, did they have a  
7 military that you had to spend a lot of time worrying  
8 about?

9 Admiral Paparo: Just by dint of the weight of the  
10 civilization we worried about it. You know, we have had to  
11 worry about this now since 1949. But it is step-level  
12 change. In the last 20 years they have increased their  
13 military 10- to 15-fold.

14 Senator Scott: So if they did not have the economy  
15 they have, which is completely created by selling goods and  
16 services to the American citizens, they would not have the  
17 resources that you would have to spend your time and money  
18 to try to counteract.

19 Admiral Paparo: The society has grown greatly. That  
20 was a matter of design for the international community.  
21 But unanticipated was the aggression and the buildup that  
22 followed.

23 Senator Scott: So your life would be better if no  
24 American bought any Chinese product or used any service and  
25 no American dollar went to Communist China.

1           Admiral Paparo: I will say that China's inability to  
2 pump resources into its national defense enterprise, which  
3 is bolstered by its trade position, is a direct corollary  
4 to the success of their business model.

5           Senator Scott: So would you recommend American  
6 citizens stop buying Chinese products and stop using  
7 Chinese services?

8           Admiral Paparo: I would recommend that we build  
9 greater resilience and that we beat them on market  
10 principles. And so I do not want to go beyond my remit as  
11 a military officer.

12          Senator Scott: All right. Let's talk about naval  
13 readiness and specifically the C-130s. The Marine Corps  
14 and Air Force are 100 percent recapitalized on the C-130s.  
15 The Navy needs over 30 C-130s, and you have to program for  
16 this critical tactical airlift platform. The Navy now, I  
17 think, only has one under contract. Does that concern you,  
18 and should we be doing something about it?

19          Admiral Paparo: As discussed with Senator Ernst,  
20 sustainment is, in fact, what won the Second World War.  
21 That is what our would-be adversaries believe and have  
22 studied. And everything that confers to our ability to  
23 execute lift, that C-130 is one of a kind. With its short  
24 field operations, with its capacity, it remains absolutely  
25 relevant and indispensable today. And we cannot neglect

1 it. It is a key priority for INDOPACOM.

2 Senator Scott: Do you think there is a role for dual-  
3 use, uncrewed airlift capabilities in a contested logistics  
4 environment?

5 Admiral Paparo: I think, you know, the precept of  
6 unmanned is never send a human being to do something that a  
7 machine can do. And so inherently, we are moving in that  
8 direction, and I would welcome the ability to execute that  
9 lift. And it would also give me the ability to diversify  
10 the places that we do bring smaller payloads into  
11 simultaneously smaller maneuvering units, and would enhance  
12 our ability to sustain by the speed it would confirm.

13 Senator Scott: General Mahoney testified before the  
14 Readiness Subcommittee that only 13 of 32 amphibious ships  
15 are ready. How does the state of the amphibious fleet  
16 impact your ability to do your job?

17 Admiral Paparo: The amphibious fleet is  
18 indispensable. You know, the whole principle of sustaining  
19 and moving a force, ships exist to move people, mass, and  
20 energy from one place to the other place efficiently. And  
21 our amphibious force is under-resourced and not ready  
22 enough.

23 Senator Scott: Thank you.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator  
25 Shaheen.

1           Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
2 you both for your service and for being here today.  
3 Admiral Paparo, I think I understood you to say in your  
4 opening statement that we must be active across the  
5 information environment. So one of the things that has  
6 happened in the last month is that we have stopped -- we  
7 have pulled the plug on Voice of America and Radio Free  
8 Asia. We had a hearing in the Foreign Relations Committee  
9 earlier this year where it was pointed out to us that China  
10 is spending over a billion dollars a year -- billion with a  
11 B -- on information systems and efforts to provide mis- and  
12 disinformation across the region and across the world.

13           So what are we doing to counter that, and how does the  
14 loss of something like Radio Free Asia affect our ability  
15 to counter what the PRC is doing?

16           Admiral Paparo: China and its Political Works  
17 Division and its United Front is incredibly active,  
18 effective, and untruthful in the information space, and the  
19 delivery of truthful information, really bolstered by free  
20 speech, having respect for everybody and everybody's  
21 ability to discern truth from lies, is absolutely vital.

22           We do have an effort that is where Special Operations  
23 Command is nested within this unit, with their  
24 capabilities, to execute information operations, but it is  
25 focused in the military space as it should be, given the

1 fact that we are in the military. But in my opinion, we  
2 must work hard to counter PRC misinformation and  
3 disinformation, and our own principles of free speech  
4 greatly enable us to have faith in people to be able to  
5 suss out truth from lies.

6 Senator Shaheen: And can you talk about why that  
7 matters when we are talking about military conflict?

8 Admiral Paparo: It matters because in order for us to  
9 achieve the effects of expanded maneuver, our network of  
10 alliances and partnerships is the strategic center of  
11 gravity of the United States of America. And so,  
12 inherently, because governments are accountable to the  
13 people they serve, that public opinion will have a great  
14 bearing on whether or not those allies and partners are a  
15 party to enable a coalition, because the bigger the  
16 coalition, the greater legitimacy, the greater capability,  
17 the greater access spacing and overflight.

18 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Clearly we need to do  
19 better.

20 General Brunson, South Korea and Japan recently  
21 renewed negotiations with the PRC toward free trade talks  
22 that have been stalled since 2012. I am concerned that the  
23 tariffs that have been announced and withdrawn, then  
24 announced and withdrawn are pushing our allies toward  
25 closer trade and integration with countries like China, and

1 that poses security risks. So from an integration and  
2 cooperation perspective, do you see any challenges that  
3 would be posed by renewed economic talks between China and  
4 our closest allies in Asia?

5 General Brunson: Ma'am, I will answer by what I am  
6 seeing on the peninsula right now. My concerns would be my  
7 hackles would raise, if you will -- and I will let my boss  
8 answer for the wider region -- if we were not continuing to  
9 move along the pathway for the bilaterally agreed upon  
10 OPCOM transfer. If we were not able to move on that path  
11 by way of economic challenges facing the nation, that would  
12 bother me. If we had impacts that led to lessening human  
13 and procedural interoperability, coupled with technological  
14 interoperability being lost, that would concern me.

15 Senator Shaheen: And I think Admiral Paparo made a  
16 very good case on the economic circumstances earlier, in  
17 response to Senator Cotton's question. But I want to ask a  
18 follow-up on this with respect to the political dynamics in  
19 the Republic of Korea, which you referred to in your  
20 opening testimony. The democratic process is playing out,  
21 but we expect an election. And are there concerns that,  
22 depending on the outcome of that election, that it will  
23 affect our relationship with ROK?

24 General Brunson: Ma'am, the realities of the region,  
25 where Korea sits, the adversaries which they can impose



1 costs upon, is going to keep us in good stead, going  
2 forward.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you both.

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Budd.

5 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. And again, thank  
6 you all both for being here. Good to see you again.

7 So last weekend, a fresh rotation of fighter units  
8 arrived at Kadena Air Base, including the 336th Fighter  
9 Squadron from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Can you  
10 speak to their mission while deployed and how they fit into  
11 the larger strategy, Admiral?

12 Admiral Paparo: Senator Budd, good morning. Kadena  
13 Air Force Base and the wing there is a critical, mobile,  
14 dynamic capability that is just not fixed in Kadena but has  
15 the ability to move throughout the area of responsibility  
16 under the principles of agile combat employment. And so  
17 this is our on-point contact layer, immediate ability to  
18 impose costs, immediate ability to achieve ephemeral air  
19 superiority in the AOR, and it is a foundation on which the  
20 larger forces that would flow in, in the event of a  
21 conflict, rests. And the Fifth Air Force, of course, is  
22 the headquarters in Yokota, with the wing in Misawa and the  
23 wing in Kadena, so it is absolutely crucial.

24 Senator Budd: Thank you for that. And, heaven  
25 forbid, I mean, we hope this never happens, but should

1 deterrence fail in the region does the Strike Eagle have a  
2 role to play that cannot be accomplished by other fighters?

3 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir, it does. And, I mean, with  
4 F-15EX coming on board, and what that portends with its  
5 dominant electronic warfare capability in addition to the  
6 already dominant elements of range, speed, sensors, and  
7 payload of the "Mighty Eagle" -- I am a former Eagle pilot  
8 myself, on exchange -- but without being a homer for it,  
9 indispensable.

10 Senator Budd: Thank for that, and I will switch gear  
11 a little bit. Can you both elaborate on the demand for  
12 Special Operations Forces and how you are currently  
13 resourced to meet those demands? General, we will start  
14 with you in Korea.

15 General Brunson: Sir, Special Operations Command  
16 Korea is augmented within our headquarters by some very  
17 particular intelligence assets, I would call them, that  
18 help us to best see, sense, and understand on the peninsula  
19 itself. SOCKOR is commanded presently by one-star National  
20 Guard officer. A very capable formation in terms of  
21 ensuring that our partners around the region, not just the  
22 Koreans but all forces that come to the peninsula to train,  
23 maintain great awareness of not only the region but the  
24 discreet activities that might occur should they need to  
25 happen. Most recently in the West Sea, we were able to,

1 during Freedom Shield, conduct an air assault, while being  
2 in the daytime. It allowed us to take the Korean forces  
3 and bring them to a higher state of readiness than they had  
4 achieved previously.

5 Senator Budd: Thank you, General. Admiral, you have  
6 talked about previously being underinvested in SOF. Do you  
7 care to expand on that?

8 Admiral Paparo: Senator, currently have a  
9 counterterror operation that is ongoing in the South  
10 Philippine Islands, Operation Pacific Eagle. In addition,  
11 the Special Operations Forces are a critical contributor to  
12 our counter command and control information, surveillance,  
13 reconnaissance, and targeting efforts. In addition,  
14 Special Operations Forces actively augment and are a part  
15 of our intelligence collection, and this is all  
16 notwithstanding the immediate ability to do some of the  
17 more traditional roles as direction action. So I have been  
18 working closely with General Fenton on this to be able to  
19 define to him exactly how much Special Operations Forces  
20 that we have.

21 But I believe that we want -- well, I know I want, and  
22 we need more, and I can gain a lot of early leverage and a  
23 lot of deterrent capability with more SOF.

24 Senator Budd: Thank you, Admiral. General, does the  
25 increased military cooperation between DPRK, Russia, and

1 China concern you as it relates to containing escalation on  
2 the Korean Peninsula? And if so, what does that mean for  
3 the role of SOF in prevention?

4 General Brunson: Well, it does worry me. It worries  
5 me by virtue of the fact of the things that I am seeing  
6 that SOF helps us to see, whether that be with them  
7 operating their own UAS or whether that is them doing  
8 operations in the region. Most recently, during Freedom  
9 Shield, we saw Chinese ships violate and come across the  
10 Northern Limit Line in the West Sea, and in the East Sea we  
11 had violation of the Korean Air Defense Identification Zone  
12 by the Russians. And seeing them work together, along with  
13 the information, what was going on in the information  
14 environment, SOF helps me to counter some of those things.

15 Because what happened was North Korea said, "Hey, they  
16 need to stop these illegal exercises, working together with  
17 the U.S. and the ROK coming together." And then you had  
18 these two other adversaries take actions in the region,  
19 which have to be countered. And I do not mean countered in  
20 a kinetic fashion, but there are non-kinetic things that  
21 that SOF corps allows us to do, that we might counter in  
22 the information space and other domains to continue on with  
23 our mission.

24 Senator Budd: Thank you both.

25 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator

1 Kaine.

2 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to  
3 our witnesses. Admiral Paparo, I would like to direct this  
4 question to you. The discussion has had an awful lot, as  
5 it should, about North Korea, about China. I want to ask  
6 you about the cooperation that we are seeing some of our  
7 adversaries engage in.

8 So in the INDOPACOM, talk about joint activities  
9 between Russia, China, and North Korea and the growing  
10 closeness of the relationship and the threats that pose to  
11 the work that we do with our allies.

12 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator Kaine. It is a  
13 transactional symbiosis where each state fulfills the other  
14 state's weakness to mutual benefit of each state. You  
15 know, a for-instance is that China has provided 70 percent  
16 of the machine tools and 90 percent of the legacy chips  
17 that have enabled Russia to rebuild its war machine. And  
18 then coming back to China is potentially submarine quieting  
19 help as well as other help in some of the areas where  
20 Russia is strong.

21 In addition, you have North Korea that are sending  
22 thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of artillery shells  
23 and thousands of KN-24 short-range missiles to Russia with,  
24 as General Brunson said, the expectations of concessions  
25 coming back in the form of air defense, surface-to-air

1 missile help, quieting, help with their Kilo submarine  
2 fleet, and so forth.

3       And then finally, in the physical space, this last  
4 summer, a saw the longest-range joint patrol of PLA navy  
5 and Russian Pacific fleet formation in the Bering Sea. And  
6 so they are deepening their ability to operate together,  
7 and they are demonstrating that by going further afield and  
8 in bigger formations.

9       Senator Kaine: Quickly, I just would like to ask for  
10 your impression of the importance of AUKUS framework in the  
11 Indo-Pacific.

12       Admiral Paparo: AUKUS is going to confer a  
13 generational advantage on both countries, but I cherish the  
14 advantage it confers on the United States of America. So I  
15 will say, first of all, the ability to operate out of  
16 Stirling, in Submarine Rotational Force West in Stirling,  
17 gives the American submarine force an Indian Ocean port.  
18 It gives us the ability to range the Indian Ocean without  
19 limitation in the Straits of Malacca, the Lombok or the  
20 Sunda Strait. It is a straight shot to the South China  
21 Sea, closer and faster than Hawaii; San Diego; Bangor,  
22 Maine. And then Australia's contribution into the defense  
23 industrial base, a \$3 billion investment in the submarine  
24 defense industrial base.

25       Senator Kaine: Yeah, and imagine Congress having that

1 debate about whether we would invest \$3 billion in the  
2 Australian workforce. It would be a very tough discussion  
3 here.

4 Admiral Paparo: It would be worth it.

5 Senator Kaine: It would be worth it, but the fact  
6 that the Australian Parliament made that investment in the  
7 U.S. workforce demonstrates the degree to which they are  
8 concerned about China.

9 Let me just do one last thing here. I have filed a  
10 resolution, with a number of my colleagues, to turn off the  
11 global tariffs imposed by the President last week, which  
12 are now somewhat on pause. There is still a 10 percent  
13 tariff. I am not going to ask you about the policy.

14 But I just want to point out one of the reasons I  
15 filed the motion. Primarily it is because it is a tax  
16 increase on American consumers. But I do not think we  
17 should treat allies badly. Use Australia as an example.  
18 You talk about how AUKUS is very important. The President  
19 has imposed a tariff on Australia. We have a trade surplus  
20 with Australia, not a deficit. We have a trade surplus  
21 with Australia. So why put a tariff on their products?

22 How about other allies? Japan, 25 percent tariff on  
23 Japan. Why 25 percent? The measure of the tariff was not  
24 Chinese trade barriers. It was the trade deficit that we  
25 have with Japan, measured by deficit in goods. It did not

1 include the full trade picture, goods and services. If you  
2 add in services, all these trade deficits actually get  
3 narrow because the U.S. is such a great exporter of  
4 services.

5 But even if there is a trade deficit in goods with  
6 Japan, of course there is. We buy more of their stuff than  
7 they buy of our stuff. Our population is three times the  
8 size of the Japanese population. So yes, we buy more  
9 Japanese goods, with 340 million people, than 120 million  
10 people buy of American good. So we are going to punish  
11 them for that? It makes no sense.

12 The primary I filed the challenge is because I do not  
13 want to tax American consumers with a big national sales  
14 tax. But the tariff strategy that punishes allies is no  
15 way to be strong in an international world where the U.S.  
16 has built allies over decades, that provide some of our  
17 greatest edge, qualitative edge, against our adversaries.

18 So that is just an editorial comment, but thank you  
19 for your --

20 Chairman Wicker: It surely is. And under the First  
21 Amendment you are entitled to that. But I did not hear a  
22 question so we will move along to Senator Duckworth.

23 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, although  
24 I do endorse my colleague from Virginia's editorial  
25 statement. Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, thank you for



1 being here today and for sharing your assessment of our  
2 posture, capabilities, and readiness in the Indo-Pacific.  
3 one of my major priorities. Everyone knows I am TRANSCOM's  
4 biggest advocates, so I cannot go through a posture hearing  
5 like this without asking questions about the logistical  
6 environment that we will face if our nation's darkest days  
7 come and we must fight a war in the Pacific.

8       Preparing for the difficult realities of large-scale  
9 conflict is not only critical for the "Fight Tonight"  
10 scenario but it is also key to deterrence. We must  
11 demonstrate to our adversaries that we have the capability  
12 to sustain a fight, if necessary, even as they seek to  
13 contest that, to make it clear that such a war would be  
14 costly for all of us. And I applaud both of your efforts  
15 to improve the logistical readiness of the force and with  
16 our allies and partners, but I do think there is more to  
17 do.

18       And I am going to start off with medial readiness. We  
19 must improve our ability to provide lifesaving care to  
20 wounded servicemembers, including to regional hospital  
21 access and effective aeromedical evacuation. We have  
22 partners in the ROK, in Thailand, in the Philippines, that  
23 have medical facilities that meet U.S. hospital  
24 certification standards. Those are opportunities for us to  
25 develop those relationships.

1           The Indo-Pacific's vast distances, logistical  
2 challenges, and maritime environment present a much less  
3 permissive environment for the medical mission than the  
4 global War on Terror did. And as I have said before, long  
5 gone is the golden hour, and we must do comprehensive  
6 planning to ensure that our warfighters have foreign  
7 medical facility access in the Indo-Pacific.

8           This is why I secured a provision in the fiscal year  
9 2025 NDAA to establish an Indo-Pacific Medical Readiness  
10 Program. Admiral Paparo, General Brunson, as you implement  
11 this program, what are the primary barriers that hinder the  
12 necessary medical cooperation, and how can this Committee  
13 help as you begin that effort?

14          Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator Duckworth. I  
15 strongly endorse your viewpoint and I also strongly endorse  
16 what is essentially a concept of operation within what you  
17 are saying, which is put the medical expertise of our  
18 allies and partners to ensure that that can augment what  
19 our own medical providers can execute.

20          So one is MEDEVAC capability in order to get to the  
21 location, the agreements to do so, the ability to practice  
22 and exercise, so it is not the first time that we do it if  
23 the unforgiving hour comes. So I think some of the  
24 barriers are physical, and that is lift, medical lift,  
25 MEDEVAC lift, and then some of the barriers are, I should

1 say, authorities. And we hope for more authorities to be  
2 able to broaden our ability to plan for bringing to bear  
3 the medical capabilities of our allies to care for the  
4 wounded in conflict. So thank you.

5 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. General Brunson?

6 General Brunson: Ma'am, one of the things that you  
7 know, and I know you are full well aware of this, is our  
8 health care comes from the community.

9 Senator Duckworth: You have the only agreement in the  
10 ROK, yep?

11 General Brunson: Yes, ma'am. So we get tremendous  
12 amounts of care there. What we are trying to do at Allgood  
13 Hospital at the present time is have greater access to  
14 PROFIS doctors routinely. I need them to be on the  
15 peninsula in times other than crisis or conflict. In  
16 competition, we want to bring them to the peninsula, so  
17 that they better understand the medical landscape and what  
18 might be required of them.

19 We are also looking to UN Command. There are several  
20 nations that provided hospitals during the Korean conflict.  
21 We want the Italians to come back with their hospitals  
22 again. We want the Dutch to come back with their hospitals  
23 again, as well. And those things, we think, we then  
24 provide to the greater INDOPACOM family, that we might be  
25 another resource used in time of conflict.

1           Senator Duckworth: Thank you. I want to pivot to the  
2 critical platforms we need to project and sustain forces in  
3 a contested logistical environment, especially our sealift  
4 fleet. Admiral Paparo, do you agree that INDOPACOM would  
5 benefit from the ability to surge replacements of naval  
6 auxiliary vessels or to conduct battle damage maintenance  
7 of these vessels within the region, closer to the point of  
8 need?

9           Admiral Paparo: Strongly, I urge for that, Senator.

10          Senator Duckworth: Because I am concerned that in a  
11 war, naval auxiliary vessels would be easy targets. We are  
12 going to have to fight our way in and fight our way out.  
13 What can we do to help you with that effort?

14          Admiral Paparo: Well, as we enhance our protection  
15 capability, we enhance our ability to see/understand the  
16 operational environment, to build windows of opportunity to  
17 execute sustainment capability, you know, nine classes of  
18 supply, medical, and so forth, in those areas. So first it  
19 is just the quantities, the quantities of TA/Kes, AOs, the  
20 quantity of "gray tails," C-17s, tankers. That is  
21 critical, and then the ability to exercise it.

22          Senator Duckworth: What about close sustainment with  
23 our allies, like Japan or the ROK, of those vessels,  
24 because they certainly have the capabilities, especially  
25 the auxiliary vessels.

1           Admiral Paparo:  When we game this we frequently rely  
2   on one another to do this.  And then while operating at  
3   sea, sometimes, actually, the necessity of having one leads  
4   us to use a Japanese oiler, or for an American oiler to  
5   refuel a coalition ship.  And so we have to be able to sum  
6   all of those sustainment capability among us, have the  
7   authorities to do so, so we can turn to it with alacrity.  
8   But I would be more comfortable with our own ability, to  
9   contribute to that effort with U.S. capability.

10           Senator Duckworth:  Thank you.  Thank you, Mr.  
11   Chairman.

12           Senator Kaine:  [Presiding.]  The momentary substitute  
13   Chair recognizes Senator Rosen.

14           Senator Rosen:  Well, thank you, momentary substitute  
15   Chair.  Thank you actual Chair, Senator Wicker, and of  
16   course, Ranking Member Reed, for holding, of course, a  
17   really important hearing.  I want to thank Admiral Paparo  
18   and General Brunson for your service, for your support and  
19   your care in everything that you do.  Thank you.  Thank  
20   you.

21           So I want to talk a little bit about attacks on  
22   digital infrastructure by the PRC.  Admiral, our growing  
23   concern about the vulnerability of Taiwan's digital  
24   infrastructure is highlighted by the frequent attempted  
25   sabotage of undersea internet cables.  These events are

1 part of a larger trend of gray zone operations, where  
2 actions short of war, often involving non-military forces  
3 or proxies, are used to exert pressure or destabilize  
4 regions. The PRC's reckless, coercive, and aggressive  
5 activities pose a threat to democracies around the globe,  
6 and its sabotage of those undersea cables has emerged as a  
7 particularly alarming tactic.

8         These cables are essential for our global  
9 communications, transmitting around 95 percent of global  
10 internet traffic. They facilitate financial transactions,  
11 bolster our security and the security of our partners and  
12 allies.

13         Admiral, while some experts view incidents like the  
14 damage to Taiwan's undersea cables as merely a test or low-  
15 level enhancement, others warn they could be part of a  
16 broader Chinese strategy to prepare for future coercion or  
17 even invasion of Taiwan. So given this, what do you see is  
18 the actual threat these incidents pose to U.S. national  
19 security, and what steps is the U.S. taking to effectively  
20 counter these digital threats?

21         Admiral Paparo: Senator Rosen, you know, as ever you  
22 are quite astute in identifying this threat. Most  
23 certainly that is an element of the intention and an  
24 element of the design. They would do so likely with People  
25 Armed Forces Maritime Militia, which enables them to

1 execute this operation without potentially signaling an  
2 intent to go to war, but by weakening the information  
3 enterprise of the states over whom they are executing  
4 aggression.

5         And I think, well one, I think the first is the  
6 ability to penetrate from an intelligence standpoint and to  
7 be there in the locations where they would be otherwise  
8 cutting those cables in order to deter that activity.  
9 Second of all is the resilience to have other redundant  
10 networks that enable those states and their partners,  
11 including the United States -- Guam, Hawaii, and so forth -  
12 - to achieve what we need to do in the information  
13 environment, and that is proliferation in low Earth orbit,  
14 and not just one single constellation but multiple  
15 constellations.

16         Senator Rosen: Talk about how we can help Taiwan  
17 bolster its digital infrastructure. What do you think we  
18 can do to help them be sure?

19         Admiral Paparo: Yeah, I think training them to be  
20 able to -- I should not say training them, but enabling  
21 them to build that resiliency that is required, that if we  
22 are unsuccessful in our efforts to thwart their cable-  
23 cutting that there are other spectra and other means for  
24 information technology, so they have the proper bandwidth  
25 to prioritize those functions that they have to within that

1 bandwidth and latency that you get out of low Earth orbit,  
2 middle Earth orbit, among the many commercial  
3 constellations that are going into orbit.

4 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I want to talk a little  
5 bit about North Korean support to Russia, because we see a  
6 growing alliance between North Korea and Russia,  
7 particularly in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.  
8 It presents new challenges for us in the United States and,  
9 of course, for our allies.

10 So we know North Korea is providing troops and  
11 munitions to Russia, and the partnership has potential to  
12 fuel the conflict and challenge the global order. It  
13 raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing  
14 diplomatic strategies and economic sanctions.

15 So to both of you, the partnership between North Korea  
16 and Russia poses a serious threat to global stability. In  
17 each of your views, how should the U.S. respond to North  
18 Korea's military assistance to Russia, and what diplomatic  
19 or military strategies should we pursue to prevent further  
20 destabilization, not just there but within the  
21 international community? General, we will start with you.

22 General Brunson: Senator, one of the things that we  
23 have to do is what we are doing presently. We have got  
24 forces there, on the peninsula, that can impose costs on  
25 them. We also maintain lines to continue communication so



1 that we might not have miscalculation in the region writ  
2 large, whether that be on the MDL or across the Northern  
3 Limit Line and the West Sea. I think that we have to  
4 continue to try to communicate out, but make sure that we  
5 are always prepared in the event of a miscalculation.

6 Senator Rosen: Thank you. Admiral?

7 Admiral Paparo: Senator, hundreds of thousands of  
8 artillery shells, thousands of KN-24 missiles, and manpower  
9 is leaving North Korea with the intent of gaining  
10 concession back. So first, exposure in the international  
11 community is one, which is to not be shy about exposing  
12 this naked aggression, using all instruments of national  
13 power to impose costs on individuals to build the deterrent  
14 from this activity.

15 And then, as General Brunson has talked about earlier,  
16 being wary of what is coming back, and to be able to be in  
17 generations of overmatch with what is coming back, if it is  
18 submarine quieting, if it is air defense, if it is missile  
19 technology. But it is an area we need to work really hard.

20 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I appreciate it. I yield  
21 back.

22 Chairman Wicker: [Presiding.] Thank you very much.  
23 Senator Banks.

24 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral,  
25 great to see you again. I enjoyed our visit in my office

1 last week. And we talked about SLCM-N quite a bit. But I  
2 wanted to ask you in this setting, SLCM-N, as we talked  
3 about, will be one of the best tools to deter China in the  
4 Pacific. But can you talk a little bit about the  
5 capability gaps that it fills, why it is so important to  
6 INDOPACOM?

7 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator. First, I am a  
8 strong advocate of SLCM-N at the soonest possibility, just  
9 because of the doubt that it imposes, the potential to  
10 execute tactically. You know, presently there is a gap  
11 between low tonnage and high tonnage, on which the United  
12 States, that gap is a critical vulnerability, from 400  
13 kilotons and below. And it gives us a choice of either  
14 suicide or surrender when we have to default straight to  
15 strategic weapons. So it gives us the ability to close  
16 that asymmetry. It also imposes doubt throughout the  
17 force, and would change the calculus of aggression  
18 inherently, just because of the nature of those weapons.

19 We use nuclear weapons every single day because they  
20 deter, and we use them by not using them, by having them be  
21 a potential deterrent. And I am quoting Dr. Brad Roberts  
22 on that, who is quite expert.

23 Senator Banks: Can you talk for a minute, how does  
24 that affect the Chinese mindset or decision-making? How  
25 does it deter them?

1           Admiral Paparo: It raises the costs and the  
2 implications of attacking any unit, because it raises the  
3 stakes. So inherently it provides more stability on each  
4 side, because there is not an asymmetry to exploit.

5           Senator Banks: As you know, last year's NDAA directed  
6 the Navy and the NNSA to deploy SLCM-N no later than 2034.  
7 That is 9 years from now. Part of that delay came from the  
8 Biden administration saying that SLCM-N was not needed. Do  
9 you agree that there needs to be stability and a commitment  
10 from Congress, the DoD, and the Navy to SLCM-N to speed up  
11 that process and get it here before the 2034 deadline?

12          Admiral Paparo: I agree. 2034 is too late. Sooner,  
13 please.

14          Senator Banks: Good. I agree with that, as well.  
15 Admiral, the Army says that it will field a long-range  
16 hypersonic weapon with the U.S. Army Pacific Forces this  
17 fall. That would be the first U.S. hypersonic weapon that  
18 we have put into the field. How will this new hypersonic  
19 capability help you deter China, as well?

20          Admiral Paparo: Senator, the nature of a hypersonic  
21 weapon is to close, in time, any actor's kill chain, and if  
22 your adversary can strike you five times faster than you  
23 can strike your enemy, then it incentivizes first strikes  
24 with this capability. So, you know, the coin of the realm  
25 in the 21st century is speed. Who does things faster wins.

1 So the ability to close distance and execute before  
2 counter-fire can come, the ability to execute and then move  
3 in order to thwart counter-fire, and your ability to act on  
4 ephemeral intelligence for a target, to be able to reduce  
5 that cycle time from find, fix, target, track to engage.  
6 Hypersonic is critical to that, and it is an asymmetry that  
7 exists right now, and we must close it soonest with all  
8 elements of hypersonics, including the Navy's Conventional  
9 Prompt Strike, which is also not moving fast enough for my  
10 liking.

11 Senator Banks: Let's talk about that for a minute.  
12 How much more will it help you when the Navy deploys its  
13 hypersonic weapon too?

14 Admiral Paparo: I mean, it is step-level change in  
15 our ability to gain early leverage in any engagement and  
16 really any conflict.

17 Senator Banks: Very good. Thank you. I yield.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. I think Senator Kelly is  
19 next.

20 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, you  
21 were just discussing SLCM, and I do understand the need and  
22 desire for a tactical option in theater certainly provides  
23 a certain level of deterrence. I get that. One concern I  
24 have with upgrading Virginia-class submarines with this  
25 capability is how it impacts the conventional kinetic

1 effect of that submarine. Admiral, would you agree one of  
2 our areas of overmatch with the Chinese is in our submarine  
3 attack force?

4 Admiral Paparo: I strongly agree, Senator.

5 Senator Kelly: Do you have any concerns about the  
6 magazine depth for conventional torpedoes, if we were to  
7 add a tactical nuclear capability to Virginia-class  
8 submarines?

9 Admiral Paparo: Inherently it would occupy some of  
10 the vertical launch system that would be in a Virginia-  
11 class submarine, so there would be a cost.

12 Senator Kelly: It would be a cost involved. And do  
13 agree that the likelihood of using a tactical nuclear  
14 weapon is significantly less than the likelihood of using a  
15 conventional torpedo?

16 Admiral Paparo: Most certainly. There would be a  
17 very high threshold to employ it.

18 Senator Kelly: And are you concerned with having to  
19 take Virginia-class submarines temporarily out of the fleet  
20 and out of the AOR in order to refit this capability?

21 Admiral Paparo: My assessment is that there are ways  
22 where we can do it quickly. However, you know, I would  
23 rather not lose the availability of the platform.

24 Senator Kelly: And how about the amount of security  
25 that would have to be put on the ship and how that affects

1 the overall operation of the conventional attack role for  
2 the Virginia-class subs?

3 Admiral Paparo: My assessment is we have done it  
4 before. You and I lived in that Navy. And I am in favor  
5 of executing it and moving fast on the security  
6 requirement.

7 Senator Kelly: All right. Well, thank you. I do  
8 understand the need and the deterrence factor. I am  
9 concerned that we might go down a path and we find out,  
10 especially in a conflict, that, boy, I wish we had, that  
11 each of these Virginia-class subs were full of conventional  
12 round. So thank you for that, Admiral.

13 And General Brunson, there is recent reporting that  
14 the United States is considering withdrawing as many as  
15 10,000 troops from Eastern Europe, which would signal to  
16 Putin our commitment to our allies and partners in that  
17 theater is waning. Additionally, EUCOM handed control of  
18 the key logistics hub in southeast Poland over to other  
19 NATO forces, again highlighting this idea of wavering U.S.  
20 commitment to our allies.

21 And to underpin all of this, there are rumors within  
22 the DoD that the Department will direct a reduction of U.S.  
23 presence in South Korea or retask these forces to focus on  
24 the threat from China. So General Brunson, I acknowledge  
25 you cannot comment on the policy -- I understand that --

1 but from a strategic lens what impact would a force  
2 reduction or a retasking of forces have on your ability to  
3 deter North Korean aggression?

4 General Brunson: Senator Kelly, the 28,500 troops  
5 that we have in the Republic of Korea are responsible  
6 wholly for preserving peace on the peninsula, in the  
7 region, in northeast Asia. They are a critical component  
8 to ballistic missile defense in the region. They are a  
9 critical portion of helping the INDOPACOM command see,  
10 sense, and understand in the north and to deter a great  
11 many adversaries.

12 The NDT that we share with Republic of Korea does not  
13 mention an adversary. That has always been the way it is.  
14 Should an adversary arise, the troops that are there are  
15 prepared well, along with our Korean allies, to meet any  
16 mission.

17 Senator Kelly: And do you feel your force is the  
18 right size?

19 General Brunson: For the missions as given, yes.

20 Senator Kelly: And what do you assess the impact  
21 would be to our relationship with South Korea and partners  
22 in the region if we downsized the force on the peninsula?

23 General Brunson: What I think we ought to do,  
24 Senator, is remember that there is diplomacy and defense on  
25 the peninsula currently. We share the unique focus of

1 being able to look at our partners eye-to-eye. We recently  
2 received instructions to move assets. We were able to talk  
3 through those things. So we have got to make sure that we  
4 use strategic clarity to explain what is being asked of our  
5 forces.

6 Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you, General. Thank  
7 you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Senator Schmitt: [Presiding.] That would be me for  
9 right now, so I will recognize myself.

10 Admiral Paparo, it is great to see you. I always  
11 appreciate your testimony. It is very clear-eyed, to the  
12 point.

13 So I have long been very concerned about the Chinese  
14 presence in the Panama Canal and what they might be able to  
15 do with that if, heaven forbid, something were to happen.  
16 Could you just elaborate a little bit on how the closure of  
17 that -- let's just assume that would happen -- the closure  
18 of that or an interruption in its availability, how that  
19 would affect the flow of both combatants and support  
20 vessels to the region.

21 Admiral Paparo: Good morning, Senator. I mean,  
22 inherently the geography, you know, the alternative being  
23 all the way south around the Horn, that is about a 2-week  
24 transit. Think about how critical it is to get forces on  
25 front, when the PRC's intention is a short, sharp war that



1 provides a fait accompli to the international community.  
2 And so inherently, anything that slows us down over time  
3 and distance is bad for us.

4 Now consider that all of the shipbuilding in the  
5 United States of America is east of the Panama Canal, but  
6 the preponderance of the threat is in the Pacific. And  
7 that just shows the inherent logic of the requirement for  
8 the Panama Canal as ever.

9 Senator Schmitt: Yeah, and I think, yes, the concerns  
10 that we had when it, I think, mistakenly sort of given  
11 away, are even more concerning now as our orientation, I  
12 think, shifts to the Indo-Pacific in a more meaningful way.

13 General Brunson, it is good to see you. I wanted to  
14 ask you, and I know that Admiral Paparo got a question  
15 somewhat related to this, but concerns about airlift  
16 capabilities, and we do not have enough aircraft, and many  
17 of our C-130s do not have the survivability in a contested  
18 environment. Could you speak a little bit to the current  
19 limitations we would have supporting forces in the Korean  
20 Peninsula, given our current inventory?

21 General Brunson: It is just the amount of -- as we  
22 look at tipfit flows, sustainment, and those things that  
23 are required to prosecute, in the KTO it is why we have  
24 begun to move. It is the recognition of that is why we  
25 have begun to move with a combined logistics command. It

1 is why we have begun to look at how can we set the theater  
2 now, looking at the stores of munitions, some of which will  
3 expire soon. How do we get those replaced, and in quick  
4 fashion, so that we do not provide drain for sustainment  
5 things in order to prosecute the campaign.

6 I am readily aware of the fact that I am fighting  
7 until help comes. That is what we are expected to do there  
8 myself and the Republic of Korea forces as well as the  
9 forces apportioned to UN Command. We are fighting until  
10 they get there. So a great many of the exercises that we  
11 do, Senator, are all aimed at understanding what magazine  
12 depth needs to be resident on the peninsula, so that we do  
13 not have to count on external support coming too, so that  
14 we might not drain from the overall effort.

15 Senator Schmitt: But it is fair to say that a lot of  
16 those plans that are being drawn to account for that are  
17 meant to address the fact that we probably do not have the  
18 inventory that we need right now. Is that fair to say?

19 General Brunson: That would be accurate, and we are  
20 challenging those assumptions every day, Senator.

21 Senator Schmitt: All right. Okay. Admiral Paparo, I  
22 wanted to go back to you. I think it is related as far as  
23 maintenance and availability and execution in the Indo-  
24 Pacific. There was recently I think a big win for the U.S.  
25 and our allies with the tanker mission in South Korea, and

1 then we are also seeing this obviously with submarine  
2 maintenance in Australia. To you, what is the next big  
3 step? Because you have articulated, I think rightly, that  
4 speed is going to matter, but the logistical hurdles in the  
5 vast expanse of the Pacific, I think it is hard for people  
6 to really actually put their mind around it until you put a  
7 map up, and you see just the expanse.

8 So what is the next big step to address those  
9 logistical challenges for us?

10 Admiral Paparo: Senator, first enrich the kind of  
11 work that we are doing in our partnership yards. So beyond  
12 the standard voyage repairs is to do deeper, deeper repairs  
13 for our forward-deployed naval force is one step. And then  
14 if we can get into this space of production of that  
15 capability, of enhancing the Korean worldwide ship  
16 capacity, which is I think 23 percent of global total is  
17 built in Korea. Japan is 15 percent of global  
18 shipbuilding. The United States of America is 1 percent of  
19 shipbuilding. This confers immediately to speed.

20 So more maintenance being executed at these partner  
21 yards, where it makes sense, and then the next step, I have  
22 heard a lot of talk about this from all throughout  
23 government, which is to avail ourselves of our partners'  
24 unique shipbuilding expertise, and then while we regain our  
25 own shipbuilding expertise in the United States.

1 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. Senator Peters.

2 Senator Peters: Thank you. Gentlemen, thank you for  
3 being here today, and certainly thank you for your service  
4 to our country.

5 Admiral Paparo, as you know, exercise Northern Strike  
6 in Michigan brings over 6,300 participants from all across  
7 the United States as well as our international partners, to  
8 Michigan's National All-Domain Warfighting Center. It is  
9 the largest training area east of the Mississippi. In past  
10 briefings before this Committee you discussed the  
11 importance of exercise Northern Strike to INDOPACOM, and  
12 particularly our ability to cooperate with our partners in  
13 the region.

14 Could you elaborate on your prior comments and discuss  
15 the importance of Northern Strike to supporting INDOPACOM's  
16 mission, please?

17 Admiral Paparo: Senator, without giving more of the  
18 details of what is executed on Northern Strike, it is a key  
19 point of leverage. And I have this, even from my  
20 interlocutors, who report that those personnel that  
21 returned from Northern Strike are changed. And so I  
22 treasure it, and I want more of it, and I want to expand  
23 it, and I thank the state of Michigan for their diligence  
24 in it.

25 Senator Peters: Well, that is great to hear. I am

1 happy to hear that, and yeah, you will know that I am  
2 actually cosponsoring a proposal for the NDAA with Senator  
3 Slotkin to make Northern Strike permanent, and funding  
4 permanent, and I certainly look forward to working with  
5 members of this Committee to do that, and your words of  
6 encouragement I hope will help that process move along.

7 General Brunson, as you know, Russia is strengthening  
8 military ties with North Korea through a mutual defense  
9 pact, troop deployments to the Ukraine, and efforts to  
10 modernize North Korea's conventional forces. Meanwhile,  
11 China is mounting a pressure campaign on South Korea  
12 through political interference, economic pressure, maritime  
13 disputes, cyber operations targeting critical  
14 infrastructure, and the list goes on.

15 So my question for you, sir, is how is USFK adapting  
16 its force posture or training to counter the hybrid nature  
17 of threats, including military, cyber, and disinformation  
18 that is now posed by both Russia and China in this region?

19 General Brunson: Yes, Senator. One of the things  
20 that I believe in the future, whether it is in competition,  
21 conflict, or crisis we have got to be able to do, is we  
22 have got to be able to protect, we have got be able to  
23 sustain, and we have got to recognize that our posture,  
24 which entails our organization and a host of capabilities,  
25 has all got to be in the right place. Part of doing that

1 is by utilizing the assets that are disposable and the  
2 authorities inherent in other nations that come to join us  
3 on the peninsula.

4 So to sort of keep this clean, if you will, we are  
5 able to leverage the Special Operations Forces within the  
6 Republic of Korea. We are able to leverage our own forces,  
7 whether that be a military information support team that  
8 operates inside embassy spaces, or whether it us using  
9 them, along with our J-39, to ensure that we are not only  
10 hardening access to ports but we are also testing all our  
11 line.

12 As you know, Senator, we fight off of the CENTRIX-K  
13 network. It is important that we stay on that network with  
14 cyber defense teams and then encourage our partners to do  
15 the same thing, which is what we are doing right now to  
16 ensure that we limit access to our networks, protect our  
17 information properly, and look at those whole host of  
18 threats and how we might counter them on the peninsula.

19 Senator Peters: Very good. From your perspective, is  
20 there a risk that China and Russia could coordinate actions  
21 on the peninsula to distract or perhaps divide U.S.  
22 attention from other strategic challenges, including Taiwan  
23 or Ukraine? How concerned are you about that?

24 General Brunson: I am concerned about that from the  
25 perspective of how they might enlist the DPRK to aid in

1 some form of subterfuge, nefarious activity, or anything  
2 else that might happen in the region to keep us from  
3 focusing wholeheartedly on the mission of INDOPACOM in  
4 maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

5 Senator Peters: Thank you. Admiral Paparo, Congress  
6 created the Pacific Deterrence Initiative in fiscal year  
7 2021 National Defense Authorization Act to strengthen our  
8 military capabilities and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific  
9 region. The PDI is aimed to boost deterrence against China  
10 by investing in force posture, in logistics, missile  
11 defense, allied cooperation.

12 Sir, could you share some specific examples of how PDI  
13 funding has improved the U.S. force posture or our  
14 readiness and what steps can we take to enhance or fully  
15 operationalize PDI?

16 Admiral Paparo: Senator, an example is the Joint  
17 Fires Network and our ability to move fast in order to  
18 execute the fires function among Joint Fires faster. Our  
19 materiel improvements throughout the theater have enabled  
20 us to move faster. And enhancing Pacific Deterrence  
21 Initiative, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is an advisor to the  
22 process. The services choose which elements that they do  
23 is Pacific Deterrent Initiative. And as the AOR is 53  
24 percent of the world, almost any Joint Force element that  
25 is acquired is applicable to the Pacific.

1           So more agency for United States INDOPACOM, and able  
2 to close the seams throughout the service, would enhance  
3 the already good effect of Pacific Deterrent Initiative.

4           Senator Peters: Great. Thank you. Thank you again.

5           Chairman Wicker: [Presiding.] Thank you. Senator  
6 Sullivan.

7           Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Gentlemen, Admiral, General, I want to first begin by  
9 thanking you for your decades of service, both of you. You  
10 both do a great job. I think sometimes we do not always  
11 say that. The same with your staffs.

12           I have shown this chart to many, many, many folks here  
13 in the last few months. This is the action that is  
14 happening in the North Pacific, Admiral, as you know, up in  
15 the Arctic. Very, very aggressive Russian and Chinese  
16 actions into our ADAs, into our EEZ. And the unprecedented  
17 element of this is the joint task force nature. Russia and  
18 Chinese joint strategic bomber task forces last summer in  
19 our ADAs. Every summer now, last 3 years, we have joint  
20 Russian and Chinese naval task forces in our EEZ, very  
21 aggressive, pushing out, you know, Alaskan fishermen from  
22 their grounds. So everybody has testified we need more  
23 infrastructure up there.

24           Admiral, you, in a classified hearing, said we need to  
25 reopen this very strategic port, Navy base, ADAC. By the



1 way, I did a little geography test. It is over 1,000 miles  
2 west of Hawaii. Most people have no clue about that. It  
3 is also the gateway to the Arctic. NORTHCOM Commander has  
4 testified we need to reopen ADAC. The CNO has testified.  
5 Why do you think ADAC is so important, Admiral?

6 Admiral Paparo: Senator, it is a further western  
7 point which would enable, and along with Erickson, in order  
8 to gain time and distance on any force capability that is  
9 looking to penetrate. Russia's Pacific fleet in Russia  
10 frequently takes that Great Circle route through Alaska.

11 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

12 Admiral Paparo: And it would enable up to 10X the  
13 maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft coverage of that  
14 key and increasingly contested space.

15 Senator Sullivan: So you testified in the classified  
16 hearing you think that we should reopen that. Just now  
17 that we are in an unclassified hearing, do you want to say  
18 that in an unclassified setting too?

19 Admiral Paparo: We should reopen ADAC, and we should  
20 enhance the ability to operate out of Erickson.

21 Senator Sullivan: So thank you on that. It has 3  
22 piers, two 8,000-foot runways, a big hangar, 22 million  
23 gallons of fuel storage, one of the biggest fuel storage  
24 depots anywhere on the Planet Earth. The CNO just sent a  
25 team up there -- Navy, the State of Alaska, the Aleut

1 Corporation -- and the NORTHCOM Commander just reached out  
2 to me 2 days ago, saying they are going to have a final  
3 report completed in the next 2 weeks on a low, medium, to  
4 high reopening scenario. Can you commit to this Committee  
5 to work with NORTHCOM Commander to get that report out in  
6 the next 2 weeks?

7 Admiral Paparo: I commit.

8 Senator Sullivan: And then you also have plans, with  
9 regard to Northern Edge, in terms of that really important  
10 exercise, using ADAC. Can you talk a little bit about  
11 that, to the extent you can in an unclassified setting?

12 Admiral Paparo: The United States Air Force's concept  
13 of agile combat employment is the means by which we achieve  
14 more dynamism among the force. So the Eleventh Air Force  
15 is based in Alaska. That is an assigned force to the  
16 United States INDOPACOM.

17 Senator Sullivan: Eleventh Air Force, with over 100  
18 fifth-generation fighters up there.

19 Admiral Paparo: The preponderance of INDOPACOM's  
20 fifth-generation fighters is in Alaska. So we will be  
21 exercising the agile combat employment concept in this  
22 summer's Northern Edge exercise.

23 Senator Sullivan: And ADAC is going to be part of  
24 that?

25 Admiral Paparo: They will operate out of ADAC.

1           Senator Sullivan: Great. Let me mention one other  
2 thing. You know, when the President, after his election,  
3 he actually put a statement out saying, "We want to ensure  
4 Alaska gets increased defense investments as we fully  
5 rebuild our military, especially as Russia and China are  
6 making menacing moves in the North Pacific." So that is a  
7 quote from the commander in chief.

8           I know I have raised this with you, but it is a little  
9 bit of an issue just in terms of the urgency. As I  
10 mentioned, the State of Alaska, the Aleut Corporation that  
11 is the Great Alaska Native corporation that owns the land  
12 there, and the U.S. Navy were at ADAC a couple of weeks  
13 ago, doing a site assessment. They are going to get that  
14 to us soon. The Aleut Corporation I have talked about --  
15 and these are great patriotic Americans, Alaska Natives,  
16 served at higher rates in the military than any other  
17 ethnic group in the country -- they would love to do a deal  
18 with the Navy, 99-year lease or something like that.

19           But you know who checks in with them once a year,  
20 Admiral, about leasing ADAC?

21           Admiral Paparo: I would guess it is not a friendly  
22 power.

23           Senator Sullivan: It is not. It is a Chinese  
24 shipping company that is certainly, in my view, a front  
25 company for the PLA. So how embarrassing would it be to

1 the Pentagon or the Navy -- these guys would never do it.  
2 The Aleut Corporation is all patriotic. But let's assume  
3 they were not, and somehow they signed a 100-year lease  
4 with a, quote, "Chinese shipping company" that is always  
5 out there looking at ADAC, do you think that would be  
6 embarrassing for the U.S. Navy and the Pentagon?

7 Admiral Paparo: On substance I think it would be bad,  
8 because this is the modus operandi in the Belt and Road  
9 Initiative. Imagine having the Belt and Road Initiative  
10 include Alaska.

11 Senator Sullivan: And one of the most strategic ports  
12 in the world.

13 Admiral Paparo: Amen.

14 Senator Sullivan: So we have a sense of urgency on  
15 this, and I look forward to working with you and the  
16 Committee, Mr. Chairman, on this important issue. Thank  
17 you.

18 Chairman Wicker: I sense a sense of urgency.

19 Senator Sullivan: Yes, sir.

20 Chairman Wicker: Senator Blumenthal.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you  
22 both for your service. Admiral, I want to ask you some  
23 questions based on your extraordinarily impressive  
24 experience as an aviator as well as combatant commander.  
25 We are building new aircraft carriers, at huge expense.

1 Are you concerned about their vulnerability in light of the  
2 increased Chinese capabilities that you mentioned in your  
3 testimony -- AI, cyber, hypersonic missiles? My guess is  
4 the everyday American sees an aircraft carrier as a huge  
5 sitting duck out there in the middle of the Pacific. Are  
6 you concerned?

7 Admiral Paparo: It is a moving duck with the ability  
8 to defend itself, unique among airfields as a mobile  
9 capability. It is not uniquely vulnerable, but it is  
10 uniquely valuable, and the PRC seeing that value have made  
11 it a focus, because they have every other fixed, land-based  
12 targeting complete. Its value lay in the enormous variety  
13 and the enormous mass of fires. So it is not more uniquely  
14 vulnerable to the PRC. It is more uniquely threatening to  
15 the PRC, which is why they are working so hard to strike  
16 it. And I hear people say, well, in war games we lose  
17 these aircraft carriers. The war games must have a  
18 terrible Paparo simulator, because I am going to put them  
19 into harm's way judiciously, and when they can strike, and  
20 it will be my job to return those aircraft carriers to  
21 their home bases after they have done their duty.

22 So I am no more concerned about aircraft carriers than  
23 I am about destroyers, submarines, squadrons, wings,  
24 battalions, regiments. But those fires, the mass of fires  
25 that they bring are absolutely unique, step-level change

1 above any other particular single unit. And you pay me to  
2 find ways to protect those aircraft carriers, along with  
3 everything else that is in the Joint Force. For every one  
4 maritime-oriented missile there are eight others that are  
5 designed to strike land targets.

6 And so I note that. You know, this topic comes up  
7 frequently. But you have my opinion on it, is that instead  
8 of waxing into a culture of, well, we should give up on  
9 this capability, no, we should do something about it. And  
10 we are doing something about it, and that is well-included  
11 in my integrated priorities list that I presented to the  
12 Committee.

13 Senator Blumenthal: I think that answer is extremely  
14 compelling, and thank you for it.

15 Turning to submarines and asking the same question in  
16 a different form, are submarines more vulnerable today  
17 than, say, 3 years ago, 5 years ago, because of those  
18 advanced detection and countermeasures that the China or  
19 other adversaries could have?

20 Admiral Paparo: The PRC is growing in their  
21 capability on anti-submarine warfare, which I would expect  
22 them to do. I respect them for doing it. They are more  
23 vulnerable than they have been before, and that equally  
24 confers the responsibility for the command, to take the  
25 steps that gain more margin. I mean, the United States has

1 a generational lead on undersea warfare, and it remains  
2 critical, absolutely one of my highest priorities.

3 The introduction of quantum computing could well  
4 enhance the PRC's ability to flood the zone and to target  
5 submarines and to take that away. They are pushing sensors  
6 into the sea to find them. They are working very hard to  
7 find them, and they are working very hard to counter them.  
8 I have an equal duty to protect those and to preserve the  
9 unusual, the outsized combat capability of those  
10 submarines, and I take a similar view of refusing to quit  
11 on a unique capability.

12 And on that front, if I leave the space between the  
13 surface and the Kármán line, our adversaries are going to  
14 flood that space with capability and become even more  
15 effective against our submarine force.

16 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I thank you for both of  
17 those answers, which again, I find very persuasive. We  
18 cannot quit on those weapons platforms. We just need to  
19 make them more capable and stronger, and I look forward to  
20 working with you on that mission. Thank you very much,  
21 Admiral. Thank you both for your service to our nation.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, all. Senator Slotkin  
23 will be in in just a moment. Let me ask you, in a follow-  
24 up to Senator Blumenthal's line of questioning on  
25 submarines, we still need a lot more submarines, do we not?

1           Admiral Paparo: I strongly agree. We have to  
2 increase our production rates. We have to invest in the  
3 submarine industrial base. We have to increase the rates  
4 of the number of submarines, and we have got to increase  
5 the availability of our submarines.

6           Chairman Wicker: And you had a valuable exchange with  
7 Senator Banks about nuclear weapons. And I understood you  
8 to say they are useful to us every day because of their  
9 deterrent effect. Is that correct?

10          Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

11          Chairman Wicker: And also, just because we do not  
12 often hear about this, the doctrine of the United States,  
13 for years, has been not to rule out a first strike. Is  
14 that correct?

15          Admiral Paparo: I affirm that.

16          Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much. Senator  
17 Slotkin.

18          Senator Slotkin: Thank you. Apologies for being  
19 late. Welcome. Glad to have you here.

20           I would just like to talk about strategy vis-à-vis  
21 China and Taiwan. I am sure you have gotten a lot of  
22 questions on this. I am trying, as the co-chair of the  
23 bipartisan Taiwan Caucus, to understand what our approach  
24 is, given that we talk about the Chinese threat, right, to  
25 Taiwan, we talk about that we are in a period of



1 vulnerability, right. We want to make sure to be  
2 particularly watchful about what is going on in Chinese  
3 military intentions. But at the same time, we are calling  
4 into question the commitments by allies and partners, who  
5 we would need, I think, in any Taiwan contingency scenario,  
6 right. I think even the Trump administration's interim  
7 National Defense Strategy talks about the importance of  
8 allies and partners. And I have seen public reports from  
9 CSIS and others that say that actually if there was a war  
10 with China over Taiwan, if they tried to take over Taiwan,  
11 we could not manage that situation to satisfaction if  
12 allies and partners were not with us in that fight. That  
13 we are so far away, the tyranny of geography, what we  
14 always talk about.

15 And I am just concerned that our approach to allies  
16 and partners is threatening the very thing that I think we  
17 believe in, on a bipartisan basis, on this committee, that  
18 we need to have a muscular deterrent approach.

19 So can you tell me about the value of allies and  
20 partners to whatever you need to do in that region,  
21 understanding we are in an unclassified space, and the  
22 dependence we have on other nations hosting our forces,  
23 allowing operations from their land. Can you walk me  
24 through it, please?

25 Admiral Paparo: Senator, good morning. Allies and

1 partners have an outsized effect. It is the strategic  
2 center of gravity of the United States of America. And by  
3 having access basing and overflight with our allied  
4 partners we have the ability to achieve the principles of  
5 expanded maneuver, and that is to have multiple attack  
6 vectors across multiple domains. Where our adversary would  
7 potentially just be focused on the one point, there would  
8 be threats coming from multiple points. It confers  
9 legitimacy on the force. It confers greater access basing,  
10 overflight, freedom of movement of the force. And then to  
11 the extent that allies and partners are participating in  
12 the operation, it enhances your fires capability, as well.  
13 So all across those front allies and partners are critical.

14 You do pay me to build a plan that does not fall on  
15 the loss of a partner, but the cost, the bill comes in the  
16 form of people, capability, money, and time. The more  
17 partners and allies that we have, the less it will be to  
18 bill across those four domains.

19 Senator Slotkin: So I guess my confusion comes with  
20 my view -- again, my view as a Senator here -- that this  
21 Administration is implementing a strategy of cozying up to  
22 our adversaries and kicking our allies in the teeth. And I  
23 say that as someone who is a border state and lives right  
24 next to Canada. You know, we can go to a concern in  
25 Canada. The idea that we need partners to make deterring

1 China affordable and approachable, but that we are going to  
2 attack our allies, put significant tariffs, on again, off  
3 again, on these allies, we are going to humiliate them in  
4 public, speak badly and speak ill of them, including  
5 countries we share intelligence with, is, to me, the most  
6 strategic thing I have seen in a national security approach  
7 to China.

8         So for all someone claims they care about deterring a  
9 military threat from China, if your approach -- and thank  
10 you for your incredibly articulate description of how our  
11 allies and partners are the center of gravity, your words.  
12 I believe it to my core -- I cannot, for the life of me,  
13 say with a straight face that for all the huff and puff  
14 this Administration puts on about China that they actually  
15 give a crap about deterring them, because then you would  
16 not be alienating all the allies and partners who live  
17 around China.

18         And I am watching the Chinese put in a base in  
19 Cambodia. Sounds like a terrible vulnerability for us that  
20 other allies and partners are cozying up to China.

21         So I deeply appreciate the work that you do. We  
22 depend on you. We need you all to do your work well. But  
23 for the life of me I think whatever bravado this  
24 Administration has about China, the play is actually being  
25 undermined every day by the way that they kick our allies

1 in the teeth.

2 I yield back.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Slotkin. That  
4 concludes the hearing. We appreciate the testimony, both  
5 in the closed session and in this open session. And with  
6 that this hearing is adjourned.

7 [Whereupon, at 11:37 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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