

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JIM INHOFE
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

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*To receive testimony on the posture of United States Indo-Pacific Command and
United States Forces Korea*

(as submitted for the record)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, thank you both for your distinguished service to our country, more now than ever.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy stated that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is our pacing threat. I expect the 2022 National Defense Strategy will say much the same.

As many of our military officials have testified, the scale and scope of China's conventional and nuclear military modernization is unprecedented in modern history. The capabilities the North Koreans develop continue to surprise us, as well.

Every day, it becomes clearer that the Chinese Communist Party is fundamentally opposed to our core U.S. interests and values. Watching their support of Russia in Ukraine has crystallized that.

So, there's no getting around this competition and confrontation. Last week, this committee received a briefing from the Office of Net Assessment with a comparative analysis of U.S. and PRC capabilities. It's two decades of bad trends, with two more coming.

While it's a sobering brief, it's no surprise that we find ourselves where we are.

For a decade, we've been cutting defense on and off, and now we're losing buying power to historic inflation, while the PLA has enjoyed real growth every year. Just last week, they announced another 7.1 percent defense budget increase in 2022.

First, we know we need to get to real growth in the defense budget. I know President Biden would prefer to focus on other issues, but he needs to be the president for the world we live in. So we need to stop admiring the problem, stop making excuses and start

thinking about the price we'll pay if deterrence fails. It most certainly will be much higher than if we invest more now.

Already, President Biden has failed to deter Russian aggression in Ukraine. Americans are already feeling the effects of that conflict here at home, and a deterrence failure against the PRC will be far, far worse — not to mention the effects for our allies and partners. That goes similarly for the effects of a conflict on the Korean peninsula. We cannot allow deterrence to fail in either case.

Second, we must have a laser focus on the things we can buy and do in the near term that will add credibility to our deterrent and sharpen our warfighting capability.

As an example, the European Deterrence Initiative sent \$25 billion for new posture activities to European Command, starting after the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014. That's allowed for rapid reinforcement of NATO throughout Russia's invasion in a way that wasn't possible before.

However, we can't do that in the Western Pacific, because we haven't made the investments. That's why we wrote the Pacific Deterrence Initiative in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, and why a bicameral, bipartisan coalition continues to push for a more resilient, dispersed, and robust posture for U.S. forces in the First and Second Island Chains.

The Ukraine conflict has shown us the value of putting in the work and making the right investments with allies and partners before conflict erupts, not after.

We've got a lot of work to do with the Quad countries, with Southeast Asia, with the Pacific Islands and with Taiwan.

With more resources, smarter choices, bolder political support, and additional authorities, we can give you the tools you both need to ensure deterrence never fails in your theater.

Thank you both for testifying today. Mr. Chairman.

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