

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF: ADMIRAL SAMUEL J.
PAPARO, JR., USN FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF
ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-
PACIFIC COMMAND

Thursday, February 1, 2024

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW
10TH FLOOR
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6
7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services,

9 Washington, D.C.

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11 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m.,
12 in Room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,
13 chairman of the Committee, presiding.

14 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],
15 Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters,
16 Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton,
17 Rounds, Erns, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin,
18 Budd, and Schmitt.

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

3 Chairman Reed: Good morning. The committee meets
4 today to consider the nomination of Admiral Samuel Paparo
5 to be the next Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, or
6 INDOPACOM.

7 Admiral, congratulations on your nomination and thank
8 you for stepping forward to lead at this critical time. We
9 would also like to recognize your family, particularly your
10 daughter Regina, who was scheduled to be here.

11 And, in a few moments, Senator Hirono will formally
12 introduce you. And let me thank your family for all of the
13 years they have dedicated to the service of this nation and
14 the Navy. I would also like to thank the current INDOPACOM
15 Commander Admiral John Aquilino, who will retire later this
16 spring.

17 Admiral Aquilino has served the nation with skill and
18 honor for nearly four decades, and we congratulate him on
19 his retirement. Admiral Paparo, you are well qualified to
20 lead INDOPACOM.

21 As the current Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet,
22 you have led our maritime forces in the region during a
23 momentous time. You bring a record of successful
24 leadership around the globe and command experience at all
25 levels of our militaries.

1 If confirmed, you will lead America's military forces
2 in the most consequential theater in the world, the Indo-
3 Pacific. There is a common understanding that the future
4 of our National Security is tied to our competition with
5 China.

6 This competition is occurring right now across every
7 field of national power, military, economic, political,
8 technological, and more. Maintaining America's advantage
9 will require a whole of Government effort, but INDOPACOM
10 will continue to hold the leading edge of our strategy.

11 As INDOPACOM Commander, you will need to understand
12 China's competitive tactics, develop new competitive tools
13 of our own, and integrate our activities with those of our
14 allies and partners. For several decades, the People's
15 Liberation Army has studied America's way of war and
16 focused their efforts on countering our advantages.

17 China has invested in offsetting technologies like
18 anti-access and aerial denial systems, artificial
19 intelligence, unmanned vehicles, hypersonics, and, of
20 course, nuclear weapons. Further, Beijing has leveraged a
21 combination of military and civil power against its
22 neighbors, including statecraft, economic pressure,
23 coercion, and deception.

24 China has sought ways to achieve its national
25 objectives while avoiding a direct confrontation with the

1 United States military. As the Defense Department's new
2 joint concept for competing states, China seeks to win
3 without fighting.

4 The strategy warns that if we do not adapt our
5 approach to compete more effectively, the United States
6 risks ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage
7 while preparing for a war that never occurs. Indeed, the
8 document warns that the U.S. could lose without fighting.
9 Just as Chinese leaders have studied America's way of war,
10 we need to start it theirs.

11 With that in mind, I would ask for your assessment of
12 how China is evolving its competitive strategies and
13 objectives. I would also appreciate your views on what
14 military and nonmilitary factors are most likely to impact
15 Chinese decision making with respect to potential action
16 against Taiwan and our regional partners.

17 Indeed, our network of allies and partners will be the
18 decisive factor in this competition. We have seen the
19 power of this approach through the coalition effort to
20 support Ukraine, and this strategy should continue to be
21 pursued in the Indo-Pacific as well, particularly as we
22 strive to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan.

23 We are making good progress through networks like
24 AUKUS and the Quad, which is made up of United States,
25 Australia, India, and Japan. Each of these partnerships

1 provide valuable blueprint for the future.

2 There has also been momentum in a number of other
3 relationships, including our new basing agreement with the
4 Philippines, our remarkable transformation in Japan's
5 defense strategy, and an historic cooperation announced
6 between South Korea and Japan. Admiral, I would ask for
7 your views on how we can build upon these multilateral
8 efforts and pursue more opportunities to engage our
9 partners in the Indo-Pacific.

10 Admiral Paparo, if confirmed, you will lead INDOPACOM
11 at a critical time. I am grateful for your willingness to
12 step forward to meet this challenge. Thank you, and I look
13 forward to your testimony.

14 When Senator Wicker arrives, I will ask for his
15 testimony if he wants to deliver it or to submit it for the
16 record. At this point, I would like to call upon Senator
17 Hirono to introduce you for your opening statement, Admiral
18 Paparo. Senator Hirono.

19 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
20 welcome, Admiral. And, to you and your family,
21 congratulations on your nomination. I am here today to
22 introduce Admiral Samuel Paparo, President Biden's
23 nomination for the next Commander of U.S. INDOPACOM. And
24 as the chairman noted, this area of responsibility is one
25 of the most critical to our national defense.

1 As Commander of INDOPACOM, Admiral Paparo would be for
2 all military operations in the Pacific, a priority theater
3 with great and growing strategic importance for the U.S.
4 and our partners and allies.

5 If confirmed, Admiral Paparo will be responsible for
6 operations in the Pacific and integrating multiple
7 components, including U.S. forces in Korea and Japan. U.S.
8 Special Operations Command Pacific, the U.S. Pacific Fleet,
9 U.S. Marine Forces Pacific, U.S. Pacific Air Forces, and
10 U.S. Army Pacific.

11 He will continue protecting 65 percent of the world's
12 oceans. This is why the Indo-Pacific area responsibility
13 is so important because it is geographically the largest
14 combatant command. So, in addition to 65 percent of the
15 world's oceans that you have to oversee, that you will be
16 overseeing 66 significant defense sites, which are home to
17 375,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel serving in the
18 region.

19 In this role, Admiral Paparo would also be in charge
20 of overseeing the military's presence in Hawaii, which is
21 home to all branches of the military, with 14 key military
22 installations and more than 55,000 active duty service
23 members and their families.

24 Hawaii's Central Pacific location has been a
25 significant military location since Pearl Harbor was

1 established in 1899 and continues to be invaluable for
2 strategic defense in the Pacific.

3 As a senior military officer on the island, I will
4 look to Admiral Paparo to lead on all issues in Hawaii,
5 including the successful and permanent closure of the Red
6 Hill bulk fuel storage facility on Oahu and transparent,
7 open communications with the community.

8 While we have made great progress in safely refueling
9 Red Hill, just this week, new reports have emerged
10 regarding tap water and air quality issues from Navy water
11 system users near Red Hill, leading to testing of the
12 water.

13 I continue to hear from families impacted by Red Hill
14 and the continuing impacts they face, underscoring the need
15 for an INDOPACOM Commander familiar with this issue and the
16 work that lies ahead to permanently, safely close Red Hill
17 and remediate the area, while protecting our communities.

18 I have shared these concerns with Admiral Paparo and
19 my expectations for him, if he is confirmed. INDOPACOM
20 Command is a critical role, especially as we work to
21 counter threats across the region from Russia, China, North
22 Korea, and others.

23 And that is why it is important we have a Commander
24 who understands the region, the threats we face, and the
25 communities in which our troops serve. Mr. Chairman,

1 Admiral Paparo has dedicated his adult life to serving our
2 nation.

3 With more than 37 years of service in the Navy and as
4 U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander based in Hawaii, he currently
5 oversees all naval operations in the Pacific. Before
6 becoming Pack Fleet Commander, Admiral Paparo served on
7 numerous operational and staff tours around the world and
8 was also a Top Gun fighter pilot.

9 I know he will speak more about his background in his
10 remarks but suffice to say his experience is extensive.
11 That experience informs his leadership mentality. To quote
12 him, "never ready enough," which I appreciate as chair of
13 the Readiness subcommittee of SAS. That mentality will
14 serve him well, if confirmed.

15 As the next INDOPACOM Commander, he will have his work
16 cut out for him. In addition to ensuring the readiness and
17 operational capabilities of troops in our priority theater,
18 the next INDOPACOM Commander will face many issues with
19 wide impacts on the State of Hawaii.

20 In addition to Red Hill's closure, Admiral Paparo will
21 also play an important role in the renegotiation of land
22 leases between the Department and the State of Hawai'i for
23 several critical training areas, including Waikoloa
24 Training Area on the Big Island.

25 These negotiations will significantly impact the way

1 the training is conducted in the State and could put at
2 risk the continued training of land forces in Hawaii, if
3 not successfully and mutually conclude it. An
4 understanding of and appreciation for Hawaii's unique
5 culture and history are vital to any INDOPACOM Commander's
6 success.

7 Having lived and worked in Hawaii for several years,
8 Admiral Paparo has shared with me his interest in
9 developing Hawaii's defense industrial workforce and
10 collaborating more closely with Hawaii's universities and
11 institutions.

12 I have appreciated having strong working relationships
13 with Admiral Aquilino and his predecessors at INDOPACOM,
14 and if confirmed, I look forward to working with Admiral
15 Paparo to support our troops, our communities, and our
16 National Security. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Hirono. Admiral
18 Paparo, Senator Wicker has arrived. I will recognize the
19 member's statement, then I will recognize you for your
20 statement. Senator Wicker, please.

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

3 Senator Wicker: What he is saying is you are
4 eventually going to get to talk, Admiral. Let me first of
5 all say, though, that this is a special day in the life of
6 one of our committee members. Senator Sullivan will be
7 retiring from the Marine Corps this afternoon.

8 He is certainly not retiring from the Senate or from
9 this committee. But I want to mention that to our fellow
10 members of the committee to congratulate Senator Sullivan
11 on his service to the United States.

12 [Applause.]

13 Senator Wicker: And, Admiral, I want to welcome you
14 and thank you for your service. You are clearly carrying
15 on a proud tradition. Your grandfather served as an
16 enlisted sailor during WWII.

17 Your father served as an enlisted Marine. I speak for
18 everyone when I say I am grateful for the legacy of
19 service. I am confident that you are exceptionally
20 qualified to lead our forces in the Pacific.

21 We need another great leader to take the baton from
22 Admiral Aquilino for this important command. Senior
23 defense leaders have stated before this committee that the
24 United States is facing the most dangerous National
25 Security environment since WWII. Nowhere is that fact more

1 evident than in the INDOPACOM theater.

2 Beijing has conducted the largest and most rapid
3 military buildup in modern history, surpassing our own
4 military in many categories. The Pentagon's most pressing
5 task remains deterring conflict in the Indo-Pacific.
6 Failure to prevent aggression there would have an enormous
7 -- would have enormous consequences.

8 Trillions of dollars would be wiped away. The loss of
9 lives would be enormous. Admiral, if confirmed, you would
10 take command at a time of great challenge, and you would be
11 a crucial part of our ability to overcome these
12 difficulties. You will be part of history, sir. In the
13 South China Sea, Beijing wants total control.

14 China continues to undermine the Philippines'
15 legitimate maritime claims at Second Thomas Shoal, firing
16 water cannons and lasers at Filipino vessels. China is
17 also intent on destabilizing the Korean peninsula.

18 By refusing to enforce sanctions or apply pressure to
19 the Kim regime, China is actively encouraging an arms race
20 between North and South Korea. The United States must be
21 prepared to meet that challenge through resolute support
22 for our allies, South Korea and Japan. This will require
23 our uniformed leaders to provide honest and realistic
24 assessments of the relevant threats and enemy capabilities.

25 Congress has required the Commander of INDOPACOM to

1 provide an independent assessment of the resources
2 necessary to meet the challenge. If confirmed, I trust you
3 would continue to be open and direct about what you need.

4 There is much more that we can and should do. The
5 Pacific Deterrence Initiative has failed to transition into
6 a real tool of budgetary change at the Pentagon. We have
7 made minimal progress in bolstering deterrence in the
8 Western Pacific. The United States must also improve our
9 munitions procurement and production.

10 Deterring conflict will require the defense industrial
11 base and the Pentagon to build the right systems.
12 Insufficient quantity at the speed of relevance. We need
13 an operational joint task force. But so far, that wish,
14 that directive in fact remains unfulfilled. The enabling
15 infrastructure is not expanding fast enough to support
16 distributed military operations in the near future.

17 We have barely begun building contested logistics
18 plans. This will include taking a hard-nosed look at what
19 we need in order to maximize our operational capacity on
20 strategically vital Guam and on other islands in the first
21 and second island chains that would be essential in a
22 contested logistics scenario.

23 The United States alliance structure needs further
24 modernization, and we should include command and control
25 and joint planning operations. We cannot wait for conflict

1 to begin to make these updates.

2 Congress can help deter war in the Pacific, but our
3 window to do so is rapidly closing. We need to build on
4 last year's work with this year's NDAA. Admiral Paparo, I
5 think you are exceptionally qualified, and I look forward
6 to working with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Admiral
8 Paparo, your statement, please.

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1 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. PAPARO, JR., USN, FOR
2 REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND TO BE COMMANDER,
3 UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

4 Admiral Paparo: Good morning to all, Chairman Reed,
5 Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished members of the
6 committee. Thank you very much for the opportunity to
7 appear. Senator Hirono, thank you for the kind
8 introduction. Senator Sullivan, Oorah, Marine.
9 Congratulations, sir.

10 I thank the President and the Secretary of Defense for
11 the trust and confidence in this nomination. I have great
12 admiration and gratitude for my friend and mentor, Admiral
13 John C. and Lara Aquilino, as they transition from 40 years
14 of dedicated service to the nation.

15 I am grateful to the Committee and to Congress for
16 your continued support of the members of the armed
17 services, their families, and DOD civilians. They are our
18 nation's very best, and your support enables their success.
19 I serve as Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet. I am a sailor,
20 a naval officer, and a fighter pilot.

21 But foremost, I am a husband to Maureen Connolly
22 Paparo, and father to our six children, Regina, her husband
23 Christopher, Samuel, his soon to be wife Katie, Elizabeth,
24 John, Joseph, and Michael. Together, we have served at 15
25 duty stations around the world, and each of our children

1 has attended more than five schools. Most of our children
2 have attended three high schools.

3 I am so very grateful for their wisdom. In the case
4 of mentors, my greatest mentor is Maureen, whose wisdom and
5 serenity have been my greatest influence throughout my
6 life. Our family is from Delaware County, Pennsylvania and
7 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

8 My single mother, Suzanne Paparo, as a young mother
9 gave up her dreams to raise my brother and my sister and I
10 working in a barber shop in South Philly and a makeup
11 counter. My dear father, a former enlisted Marine and a
12 shipyard worker also had tremendous influence in my
13 service.

14 I would like to also acknowledge Maureen's late
15 parents, her father an Army veteran, the late Jim and
16 Regina Connolly, and our sisters and brothers, all of whom
17 are located in that Southeastern Pennsylvania area. We
18 have a very close knit and rooted family that give us
19 strength and keep us rooted through the many moves around
20 the world.

21 I would like to acknowledge my mentors in all services
22 above the chain of command, and maybe most assuredly below
23 the chain of command. My commanding officers, but also
24 leaders from the hardest working, most dedicated young
25 enlisted, to the senior, most admirals and generals who

1 have guided and mentored me.

2 Most of all, I would like to thank the senior
3 noncommissioned leaders, the chief petty officers, the
4 sergeants major, the gunnies, and the first shirts who have
5 guided me. The senior NCO corps is the strength of the
6 Joint Force and is the asymmetric advantage of the American
7 Joint Force.

8 As Commander of the United States Pacific Fleet, for
9 the last three years, I have led INDOPACOM's maritime
10 component and integrated operations of the Joint Force for
11 deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

12 Other operational tours include United States Central
13 Command Director of Operations, Director of the Air and
14 Space Operations Center in Al Udeid, Qatar. I have served
15 with the U.S. Air Force flying the mighty F-15 Sea Eagle.
16 I have also served with the U.S. Army as a Provincial
17 Reconstruction Team Commander in the Eastern Zone of
18 Afghanistan in the Nuristan province, and have had
19 operational tours, including operational command in Japan
20 and having deployed, fly -- flown and served throughout the
21 Pacific and the Indian Ocean region.

22 As stated by the Chairman, Ranking Member, and Senator
23 Hirono, it has never been more critical for the Joint
24 Force, along critically with our allies and partners, to
25 operate confidently, professionally, and responsibly.

1 Together, we strive to maintain regional stability in
2 this consequential theater and safeguard the sovereign
3 rights of nations through posture and dynamic operations
4 and exercise. Our joint and combined operations are
5 increasingly frequent, complex, multilateral,
6 interoperable, and interchangeable.

7 But as Senator Hirono stated, we must never consider
8 ourselves ready enough. We must always be improving our
9 position. If confirmed, I pledged to work with this
10 committee to ensure that we meet the top defense priorities
11 in the National Defense Strategy, and most especially,
12 deterring conflict as the PRC, our pacing challenge,
13 continues to escalate its aggressive behavior.

14 The PRC is our only competitor with the will and with
15 the capability to reshape the international order to suit
16 its autocratic preferences. We will work closely with our
17 interagency teammates and our allies and partners as we
18 also face the challenge of Russia, of North Korea, and
19 violent extremist groups.

20 If confirmed, I will ensure that we maintain the
21 overmatch that preserves stability today, tomorrow, next
22 week, and for the decades to come. Thank you, Chairman
23 Reed, Ranking Member.

24 [The prepared statement of Admiral Paparo follows:]

25

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral. I have
2 a series of standard questions that nominees must respond
3 to. Please respond appropriately. Have you adhered to
4 applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of
5 interest?

6 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator.

7 Chairman Reed: Have you assumed any duties or taking
8 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the
9 confirmation process?

10 Admiral Paparo: No, sir.

11 Chairman Reed: Exercising our legislative and
12 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
13 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
14 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
15 reports, records, and other information from the Executive
16 Branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to
17 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

18 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

19 Chairman Reed: Do you agree, when asked before this
20 committee to give your personal views, even if your views
21 differ from the Administration?

22 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator.

23 Chairman Reed: Do you agree to provide records,
24 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner
25 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or

1 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult
2 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith
3 delay or denial in providing such records?

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

5 Chairman Reed: Will you ensure that your staff
6 complies with deadlines established by this committee for
7 the production of reports, records, and other information,
8 including timely respond to the hearing questions for the
9 record?

10 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator.

11 Chairman Reed: Will you cooperate in providing
12 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional
13 requests?

14 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

15 Chairman Reed: Will these witnesses and briefers be
16 protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

17 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Admiral Paparo.
19 We are in the moment, a historic moment, conflict in
20 Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East, tensions in the Indo
21 Pacific.

22 One of the issues revolving around Ukraine is the -- I
23 think China is looking very closely at what we are doing,
24 and our current difficulty in providing resources to
25 Ukraine is not going unnoticed in China.

1 As the CIA Director Burns pointed out, no one is
2 watching U.S. support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese
3 leaders. One of the surest ways to rekindle Chinese
4 perceptions of Americans' fecklessness and stoke Chinese
5 aggressiveness would be to abandon support for Ukraine. Do
6 you concur in that observation?

7 Admiral Paparo: Sir, I do concur. Russian failure to
8 achieve its aggressive -- its aggressive actions directly
9 aid deterrence in the Western Pacific, and directly
10 reassure partners our key strategic, competitive advantage.

11 Chairman Reed: And so, the most decisive thing we can
12 do in a moment and absolutely necessary is to pass the
13 supplemental, in your view?

14 Admiral Paparo: Sir, I do agree.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you. What are the lessons you
16 believe that China is taking from the battle in Ukraine?

17 Admiral Paparo: The first is -- the first lesson is,
18 instead of seeing the Ukraine conflict and decide this is
19 too hard, their intention on the other hand is, is to take
20 note of the actions of Russia in order to effect a short,
21 sharp, fait accompli conflict that presents a fait accompli
22 to all of the world.

23 And so, rather than take the strategic lesson of the
24 futility of aggression, instead it is doubling down on
25 their ability to shrink strategic, operational, and

1 tactical warning and acts quickly.

2 Chairman Reed: Now, another aspect of this
3 supplemental is the direct support to our military. \$2
4 billion military financing for the Indo-Pacific, which I
5 presume is absolutely critical.

6 I also want to commend Senator Wicker as he has worked
7 very hard to get additional money for our industrial base
8 and submarine industrial base. This is necessary, I
9 presume, in fact, critical. Is that your view?

10 Admiral Paparo: Absolutely critical. Yes, sir.

11 Chairman Reed: And in INDOPACOM, that will help you
12 dramatically help Taiwan to take the lessons of Ukraine
13 themselves and turn them on to Chinese?

14 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. Taiwan itself is taking
15 the lessons of Ukraine, and they are acting with dispatch.
16 And I have great admiration for that. And it will directly
17 aid deterrence in the Pacific with tremendous leverage.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, sir. One of the perennial
19 questions which affect the United States relations with
20 Taiwan is the issue of strategic ambiguity. You are
21 operating under the Taiwan Relations Act, which is
22 ambiguous at best. This question has come up -- came up
23 repeatedly.

24 When Avril Haines was the Director of National
25 Intelligence, he said if adopting an explicit commitment

1 would be deeply destabilizing, it would solidify Chinese
2 perceptions that the U.S. has been on constraining China's
3 rise, including through military force, and will probably
4 cause Beijing to aggressively undermine U.S. interests
5 worldwide, and, in fact, accelerate their interests. What
6 is your perception of this issue?

7 Admiral Paparo: Obvious, Senator, is that the Taiwan
8 Relations Act, the three communiques, and the Six
9 Assurances, have served the nation well for the last 45
10 years, and there is no ambiguity for the Joint Force.

11 There is just the mission clarity contained within the
12 Taiwan Relations Act that the Department will aid Taiwan's
13 ability to defend itself from having matters that resolve
14 to Taiwan Strait issue with force, or the logic of force,
15 and that the Department will be ready to come to Taiwan's
16 aid.

17 Chairman Reed: So, in a sense, at the diplomatic,
18 Presidential level, there is -- there is ambiguity, but in
19 your command, you are preparing for every potential, which
20 includes active combat.

21 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. Clarity and mission focus.

22 Chairman Reed: Senator Wicker raised an interesting
23 fact. Very important question about the joint all domain
24 command and control. I presume he is going to raise that
25 again, so I will defer. And at this point again, Admiral,

1 thank you for your service and your family's service. And
2 I will respond -- I will refrain from any comment on the
3 football game. Senator Wicker.

4 Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I hope
5 it is clear that I would have asked the very same questions
6 the chair has asked. We are really totally united on the
7 issues that he brought forward.

8 Let me just make this -- see if I can understand
9 clearly, and if those listening outside the hearing room
10 understand this clearly.

11 We can do what we are doing to help our Ukrainian
12 friends and still not miss a beat in managing risk in the
13 Indo-Pacific. Is that correct?

14 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. In two years, where they
15 force capabilities that are relevant to deterring and the
16 force capabilities that are relevant to prevailing in major
17 combat or operations in the Pacific, I have not seen a
18 single force element that has that -- where in the Indo-
19 Pacific for any other theater that has contributed to
20 deterrence in any other of the other theaters.

21 Senator Wicker: And can we manage risk in the Middle
22 East, without harming in any way your job in the Indo-
23 Pacific?

24 Admiral Paparo: I believe we can, Senator. But
25 however, the expenditures of some capabilities against a

1 global inventory will increase some of the demand for
2 particularly precision weapons.

3 Senator Wicker: And so, we need to give attention
4 immediately to that inventory. Do we not?

5 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. We do.

6 Senator Wicker: All right. Now, let me then get to
7 the joint task force structure.

8 I don't know what more we need to do on our
9 authorization act annually to make it clear that we would
10 like for the Department to carry out the creation of a
11 standing permanent joint task force structure with a three
12 star general or three star admiral under the INDOPACOM
13 commander to focus on command and control warfighting.

14 Now, you, as Pacific Fleet Commander, you are dual
15 hatted as the Joint Task Force Commander within INDOPACOM.
16 That is correct?

17 Admiral Paparo: I am. I continually qualify the
18 Pacific Fleet headquarters as a JTF headquarters. As I
19 utter these words, we are executing a command post exercise
20 along with the Australia and Japan Joint Operations
21 Command.

22 I have not operated as the joint task force commander,
23 but under a different command arrangement, as a supported
24 commander, a term and doctrine, and have integrated the
25 operations and the activities of the Joint Force for

1 deterrence.

2 Senator Wicker: Are you familiar with what we believe
3 we have mandated in the NDAA?

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

5 Senator Wicker: And have you -- do you have any
6 dedicated staff to carry out the joint task force's
7 responsibilities? The chair and I, and I think the members
8 of this committee overwhelmingly are united that we need a
9 three star billet. And staff actually in the hundreds have
10 carried this Act.

11 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. I augment that the staff.
12 We augment the staff with reservists and with embeds from
13 the other services when we execute as a JTF staff. And for
14 the U.S. Pacific Fleet, in order to achieve at scale and in
15 time, would require the augmentation of several hundred
16 permanent staff across all services.

17 Senator Wicker: It seems to me we are really not
18 ready unless we do that. Is that correct?

19 Admiral Paparo: We will be readier when we do, sir.

20 Senator Wicker: Okay. So, what more do you need from
21 the Congress? What more do you need from the members of
22 this committee in this regard?

23 Admiral Paparo: Sir, I have clear guidance from the
24 Congress, from the NDAA. And, if confirmed, I pledge to
25 work with this committee and the Department with dispatch.

1 Senator Wicker: Mr. Chairman, I think we have a very
2 explicit statement from the witness.

3 Chairman Reed: I concur.

4 Senator Wicker: Thank you. Thank you.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator
6 Shaheen, please.

7 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. And congratulations,
8 Admiral, on your nomination. Thank you to you and your
9 family for all of your years of service. And thank you for
10 taking time to meet with me yesterday. I want to -- I
11 appreciated both Senators Reed and Wicker questions about
12 Ukraine.

13 And as I understood, Senator Wicker asked if we can do
14 what we need to do in the Indo-Pacific and still help
15 Ukraine. I actually understood you to say that not only
16 can we still do what we need to do in the Indo-Pacific, but
17 it actually helps us with deterrence from China if we
18 support Ukraine in their efforts against Putin. Is that an
19 accurate assessment of what you said?

20 Admiral Paparo: I am sure it has a direct and
21 positive impact on deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. One of the things I
23 appreciated in our conversation yesterday was our
24 discussion about the importance of our diplomats in
25 countries throughout the Indo-Pacific. Can you talk about

1 why that is helpful to you as somebody who is trying to
2 help maintain stability?

3 Admiral Paparo: Well, the Chairman Reed and Ranking
4 Member Wicker, among all, noted that the asymmetric
5 advantage among the allies and partners is our alliances
6 and partners.

7 And accordingly, the chiefs of mission are the prime
8 movers in effecting those alliances and partnerships and
9 not just their chief of mission, but all of the heroic
10 foreign service officers and all of the people that work
11 there at the embassy.

12 I have close relationships and tremendous admiration
13 for the diplomatic corps, and they are our first mover in
14 our key asymmetric advantage.

15 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I agree with that. And
16 it does send a message to those countries if we go for long
17 periods of time without ambassadors in place, does it not?
18 It raises concerns in the countries about how important we
19 think they are to the United States.

20 Admiral Paparo: It certainly doesn't demonstrate
21 commitment.

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Our public shipyards,
23 such as Portsmouth, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, are
24 expanding and modernizing facilities for U.S. domestic and
25 AUKUS efforts. It is one of the areas where we still have

1 a competitive advantage with our undersea warfare.

2 And I wonder if you could talk about how important
3 AUKUS is going to be. You mentioned the importance of our
4 allies and partners, and how is that going to be helpful as
5 we are thinking about deterrence? And what do we need to
6 do to ensure that that continues to move along in an
7 expeditious way?

8 Admiral Paparo: AUKUS is a generational partnership
9 that combines all of the talent of the United Kingdom, of
10 Australia, the United States against a key asymmetric
11 advantage in our undersea dominance.

12 It is absolutely critical for deterrence in the 21st
13 century, and we must affect the improvements in the
14 shipyard integrated optimization program to bring our
15 public shipyards with its world class workforce up to 21st
16 century industrial standards, so we can meet the threat at
17 scale.

18 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I know Senator
19 King and I both agree with that. Last night, and this
20 morning, FBI Director Wray was all over the news talking
21 about the irregular and cyber intrusions that China is
22 prepared to make in our infrastructure in the United States
23 and the advantage that it would give them.

24 One of those other areas is around the information
25 sphere and information warfare. Can you talk about how

1 important you think it is for us to engage in being able to
2 respond to disinformation?

3 Admiral Paparo: It is, you know, absolutely critical.
4 You know, we as an open society with freedom of speech have
5 an inherent vulnerability to this. The PRC sees that
6 vulnerability to information operations, that is a societal
7 strength, is freedom of speech and our values.

8 And we have got to work -- we have to work very hard.
9 And Director Wray also talked about the -- talked about the
10 penetration of much of our critical infrastructure
11 throughout the country. Also, critical that we close those
12 gaps, and we are ready to counter.

13 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you very much. My time
14 has expired. But I also want to again commend you and
15 everyone at INDOPACOM for all of your efforts on women,
16 peace, and security, and recognizing how important that is
17 to stability.

18 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
19 Fischer, please.

20 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome,
21 Admiral, and thank you for your service to this country and
22 that of your family.

23 The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, it
24 extended the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, as well as the
25 requirement for the commander of INDOPACOM to provide an

1 independent assessment on resources for the Indo-Pacific.

2 If confirmed, how would you use those tools to work to
3 effectively communicate not just with Congress, but also to
4 the American people on what investments are needed in the
5 Indo-Pacific and why they are needed.

6 Admiral Paparo: Senator, as the Pacific Deterrence
7 Initiative is different in its makeup than the European
8 Defense Initiative -- European Deterrence Initiative. And
9 accordingly, the expression of those priorities goes
10 through the prism of the integrated priorities list of each
11 of the components.

12 A tight connection between U.S. INDOPACOM and to
13 ensure the coherency of the service, expressions of those
14 elements within the Pacific Deterrent Initiative, is
15 important. I submit a specific Indo-Pacific Integrated
16 Priority list to the Chief of Naval Operations that is
17 focused on the Pacific.

18 For that -- for those elements that are not within
19 that, in accordance with Title 10, U.S. code, Section 222
20 (a), I am required, if confirmed, to submit a 12-x-x report
21 this year, it will be 12-0-2, that explicates those
22 unfilled requirements that do not go through the components
23 in a tight lash up.

24 And so, following my oath, and the letter I signed and
25 the pledge I made to Chairman Reed, I will do so with a

1 strict focus on our military capabilities and submit that
2 same report to the Department as required.

3 Senator Fischer: Without presupposing the outcome of
4 our Fiscal Year 2025 budgetary decisions, are there
5 capabilities -- and you have alluded to the priorities that
6 are out there, but are you looking at things like
7 munitions, specific other weapons systems, that you would
8 prioritize based on your experience that you have had with
9 PAC fleet?

10 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator. And, if confirmed, I
11 will meet my obligations to share those. Many are at a
12 classified level, and I will make myself available to the
13 members.

14 Senator Fischer: Okay. Thank you. When we look at
15 what is going on in North Korea, you know, last month they
16 announced that it -- that they would no longer strive for
17 peaceful reunification with South Korea, and it continues
18 to advance its nuclear weapon program and develop their
19 strike capabilities.

20 With recent developments in mind, can you comment on
21 how important our extended nuclear deterrence commitment is
22 to the United States and the South Korea alliance?

23 Admiral Paparo: Senator, absolutely critical. The
24 Republic of Korea is the linchpin of peace, stability,
25 security in the Pacific. We seek a denuclearized Korean

1 Peninsula. Whatever the public statements, you know, as a
2 military commander, I must look at the capability
3 development.

4 And to be able to pace that, to deter that extended
5 deterrence, particularly with U.S. strategic forces, is
6 absolutely essential.

7 Senator Fischer: Do you assess that the security
8 dynamic on the peninsula is changing in any way, and if so,
9 can you tell us a little bit about what you see?

10 Admiral Paparo: I can't speak fully to it because I
11 am still the Pacific Fleet Commander, and in my current
12 role, I would support General LaCamera in a, you know, in a
13 -- General LaCamera United States Forces Korea.

14 But the changing dynamic is continued saber rattling,
15 continued proliferation, greater volume of testing and
16 weapons demonstrations on the part of the North. And in
17 response, South Korea has increased its intelligence,
18 surveillance, and reconnaissance activities in the vicinity
19 of the North.

20 And so, despite the public statements, it continues to
21 be tense.

22 Senator Fischer: What is your assessment on the
23 deepening security assistance ties between Russia and North
24 Korea?

25 Admiral Paparo: It is concerning, deeply. It is

1 symbiotic. It closes gaps, each for the other, providing
2 conventional weapons to Russia from North Korean industry,
3 providing sanctions, evading materials and high end,
4 potentially high end technology to North Korea. In all
5 cases, it runs counter to the principles of peace and
6 stability in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

7 Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator
9 Hirono, please.

10 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To ensure
11 the fitness of nominees to serve, I ask the following two
12 initial questions of all nominees who appear before any of
13 the committees on which I sit.

14 Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made
15 unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal
16 or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

17 Admiral Paparo: No, Senator.

18 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
19 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

20 Admiral Paparo: No, Senator.

21 Senator Hirono: Admiral, you noted the importance of
22 our allies and partners as a very critical aspect of our
23 asymmetric advantage, and this includes our compact nations
24 partnerships.

25 So, I would like you to acknowledge the importance of

1 Congressional action in support of our negotiated compacts
2 with Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands.

3 Admiral Paparo: A Compact of Free Association is
4 absolutely critical for multiple reasons. The first is
5 that People's Republic of China is attempting to drive a
6 wedge through traditional partnerships and through
7 traditional people to people ties across the Pacific. They
8 employ corruption and elite capture to do so.

9 The COFA states, on top of a moral duty, as a result
10 of years and years of partnership with the COFA states, are
11 historical ties, are people to people ties. In fact, a
12 little known point is that young people from the COFA
13 states enlist in the U.S. armed services at higher rates
14 than U.S. citizens do, and I have had the honor of serving
15 with Yap Islanders, Truk Islanders, and Pohnpei Islanders
16 throughout the course of my career.

17 And then finally, in accordance with the sovereign
18 wishes of the COFA states, they offer tremendous potential
19 for a theater posture that will aid the Joint Force and the
20 allied force in achieving the principles of expanded
21 maneuver and conflict in the Western Pacific.

22 Senator Hirono: Thank you for acknowledging the
23 importance. And we have this year -- we have the important
24 duty to approve these compacts, and let's get it done. I
25 know that you are aware of my focus on infrastructure.

1 I have had discussions with you, and of course, I
2 mentioned the -- what happened to Red Hill. And so, over
3 the last few years in Hawaii alone, there have been water
4 main breaks, power outages, and spills, including, of
5 course, the catastrophic events at Red Hill, as well as
6 unnecessary drydock replacement.

7 Although you will not be directly responsible for
8 improving infrastructure in Hawaii, yours will be an
9 important voice on the issue, especially as it impacts
10 readiness. If confirmed, how do you intend to approach the
11 infrastructure challenges in the region, including in
12 Hawaii?

13 Admiral Paparo: Senator, if confirmed, the first is a
14 critical eye with worst case thinking. And that is a
15 critical eye to look at the at the critical infrastructure
16 and have a risk management standpoint that looks -- instead
17 of saying, I hope it is going to be okay, the approach to
18 say, how can this go wrong?

19 You mentioned the water main, when we unearth that
20 water main, we found that it was 75 years old. Red Hill
21 itself was 80 years old at the time. This focus on
22 critical infrastructure is going to require critical
23 thinking.

24 It is going to require integration among the
25 components. And leaders holding each other to account, and

1 holding the services to account, to ensure that the
2 foundation of the Joint Forces, the bases, the piers, the
3 airfields, the refueling points are going to support combat
4 operations, and by doing so, support deterrence.

5 Senator Hirono: You mentioned that your father was a
6 shipyard worker. So, I know that you have an appreciation
7 of the importance of the four public shipyards, including
8 Pearl Harbor, and one of the biggest issues that we are
9 going to face is the drydock replacement to enable us to
10 repair and maintain our ships.

11 So, that is an infrastructure that I would like you to
12 pay particular attention to as we go forward. I mentioned
13 Redhill as symptomatic of the importance of public
14 engagement. And, you know, I like your commitment that you
15 will continue to focus on how important it is to basically
16 repair the breakdown in trust and questions that arose as a
17 result of the handling of the Red Hill situation.

18 So, I would like your public commitment that you will
19 be -- you will continue to focus on restoring trust between
20 the people of Hawaii and our military in Hawaii.

21 Admiral Paparo: If confirmed, I commit myself to it.
22 Senator.

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

24 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Hirono.
25 Colonel Sullivan.

1 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral,
2 great to see you. Thank you and your family for your
3 exceptional service. I think you are extremely well
4 qualified. I certainly plan to provide my strong support
5 for your confirmation. I also appreciate what the chairman
6 said about Admiral Aquilino and his wife, Laura.

7 They have also undertaken exceptional service to our
8 country. I hope when your change of command comes, that
9 Admiral Aquilino's service to America is not over. I
10 highly doubt it will be over.

11 Let me focus on an issue I know you are focused on now
12 in your current billet, the PRC's focused and rapid naval
13 buildup has highlighted our own shipbuilding deficiencies.
14 Numerically, they now have a larger navy, roughly 370
15 ships, to our 291 ships.

16 Last year, they added 30 ships to their fleet. 15
17 were large surface combatants, including cruisers,
18 destroyers, and another aircraft carrier. We added two.
19 At the same time, the current Biden budget shrinks the
20 Navy.

21 It is going to be shrinking our Navy for some time.
22 If deterrence fails and we go to war in the near term with
23 China, we have to fight with the fleet we have today. You
24 are very aware of that fleet's capabilities.

25 Can you describe the impact of the PRC's naval buildup

1 and how we need to equip the Joint Force to deter and
2 defeat the PLA Navy today, should conflict occur?

3 Admiral Paparo: So, the PLA Navy has been on an
4 historic trajectory these last 25 years. And while we are
5 -- I am confident that we would prevail in combat, it is a
6 concerning trajectory.

7 Senator Sullivan: Are we overmatched in the
8 INDOPACOM?

9 Admiral Paparo: We are not overmatched, but I don't
10 like the pace of the trajectory. And in answering the
11 question, on the other capabilities that can be brought to
12 bear is -- we are a Joint Force that thinks in a multi-
13 domain mindset. And that is the kind of formations in
14 maritime terrain.

15 Those are forces on land that can affect events at the
16 maritime. They can shoot, move, communicate, and impose
17 costs against a naval force to augment the Navy force at
18 sea. And then further, the 21st century capabilities,
19 unmanned capabilities from the seabed to the heavens that
20 can also effect --

21 Senator Sullivan: I mean, Admiral, sorry to
22 interrupt. I got a few more questions. I want to talk
23 about some of those forces. While test -- that you are
24 going to be in charge of.

25 While testifying in front of the Congress in 1935,

1 General Billy Mitchell, often referred to as the father of
2 the U.S. Air Force, said this, I believe that in the future
3 whoever controls -- and then he said, a piece of strategic
4 territory, this territory, this land, controls the world.

5 It is the most strategic place on the planet. Do you
6 know what piece of terrain Billy Mitchell was talking
7 about?

8 Admiral Paparo: Alaska.

9 Senator Sullivan: Correct. Now, with regard to
10 Alaska, you will own the forces in Alaska. That includes
11 over 105th generation fighters. The 11th Airborne Division
12 of the U.S. Army. Those will be under your command.

13 I would like to do in just a quick geography test,
14 because sometimes even our four star admirals and generals
15 miss this. Which forces are closer to Japan? The Joint
16 Force in Alaska or Joint Force in Hawaii?

17 Admiral Paparo: Alaska.

18 Senator Sullivan: About which forces are closer to
19 Korea? Forces in Hawaii or Alaska.

20 Admiral Paparo: Alaska, Senator.

21 Senator Sullivan: And one more, Taiwan Strait. Which
22 forces are closer to the Taiwan Strait?

23 Admiral Paparo: Alaska, Senator.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Admiral. You would be
25 amazed how many four star admirals and generals don't pass

1 that simple geography test.

2 So, very quickly. Two summers ago, we had a joint
3 Russia, China naval task force, seven ships that was off
4 the coast of Alaska. We sent 150 foot Coast Guard cutter
5 to intercept it. Was that appropriate? Was that a show of
6 American deterrence? You had --

7 Admiral Paparo: It was a risk that the Joint Force
8 took in putting force elsewhere, and it is a risk we would
9 rather not take.

10 Senator Sullivan: So, this summer, we had an 11 ship
11 joint Russia, China task force, naval task force, off the
12 coast of Alaska. We sent four destroyers and P-8s. I
13 think that is a better answer. Could you commit to -- if
14 we do that again, and they will do it again next summer
15 with a bigger joint task force, hit them with an
16 appropriate size response?

17 Admiral Paparo: I will intend to do so, and we will
18 do so across the Joint Force, Senator.

19 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. A final question.
20 Admiral, I know you are very well read. Very, very smart.
21 Have you happened to read this book, This Kind of War by
22 T.R. Fehrenbach, the classic Korean War history.

23 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. My dear son, gave it to me
24 for Christmas when he was at the Naval Academy. I have it
25 on my shelf.

1 Senator Sullivan: Well, he beat me to it because I
2 was going to give it to you. But every one of your Marine
3 Corps and Army senior officers will have read it. The
4 lesson is very simple, and it is a great book.

5 I highly recommend it. I give it to everybody who is
6 up for senior positions, particularly civilians who don't
7 know a lot about readiness in this Administration. But the
8 lesson is this, 1945, we had the most fearsome, lethal
9 military, probably in the history of the world.

10 Five years later, in 1950, our military couldn't stop
11 a Third World peasant army as it invaded South Korea
12 literally, and thousands of young Americans died in the
13 summer of 1950 because we had weak civilian and weak
14 uniformed military leadership. So, I would just commend
15 you to read this.

16 Compliments to your son for getting into you before I
17 did, but it is a really important book. And I worry, as we
18 are shrinking the Army, shrinking the Navy, shrinking the
19 Marine Corps at one of the most dangerous periods we have
20 seen since WWII, not enough members of the Pentagon know
21 what is in this, have read history.

22 We can't repeat history. We can't have another Task
23 Force Smith. And appreciate you taking a look at this
24 book.

25 Admiral Paparo: I will re-read any -- he stole it

1 back, so I will accept it, if you give it to me.

2 Senator Sullivan: I will give it to you. Thank you.

3 [Laughter.]

4 Chairman Reed: Now that we settled that, Senator
5 Rosen, please.

6 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, for
7 holding this hearing. And, Admiral, I want to thank you
8 for your service to our nation. Congratulations on your
9 nomination.

10 We had such a great visit last week talking about
11 computing and cyber security, my civilian cyber reserve
12 pilot program. I look forward to working with you on all
13 of that. But I really want to focus now for a moment on
14 space and cyber resilience.

15 So, in our meeting last week, you said the first
16 battle in future conflict is likely to be fought in the
17 cyber and space domains. And so, could you elaborate on
18 what steps you would take, if confirmed, to further prepare
19 our forces for the challenges in these domains, and how you
20 would ensure that our capabilities are not just current,
21 but also adaptable to the rapidly evolving nature of cyber
22 and space warfare.

23 And I don't know how I follow up -- I don't have a
24 book to give you. A computer program, perhaps.

25 [Laughter.]

1 Admiral Paparo: Senator, in saying that the first
2 battle will be space and cyber, is because in the 21st
3 century, the next advantage is who can see, decide, and act
4 faster. And increasingly, we are dependent on our cyber
5 networks and in our constellations to be able to see,
6 understand, make sense of, and to act.

7 And accordingly, we must build the resiliency of our
8 constellation of sensors on orbit, as well as our
9 constellation of -- or of sensors from the seabed to the
10 Karman line. It must be resilient. There must be
11 redundant.

12 It must include the elements of graceful degradation,
13 so that when one thing is out, it is just a small loss in
14 capability, but it still provides enough. And we have got
15 to work tirelessly to close those gaps. Thank you.

16 Senator Rosen: And I want to build on that,
17 resiliency, particularly in Taiwan.

18 So, this last year's NDAA includes the Taiwan
19 Cybersecurity Resiliency Act, bipartisan legislation that I
20 introduced alongside with Senator Rounds to expand military
21 cyber security with Taiwan, to help them counter these
22 cyber-attacks from China, building in that resiliency,
23 redundancy, all of those things.

24 So, if confirmed, what other allies and partners in
25 the Indo-Pacific region would you prioritize for our cyber

1 collaboration?

2 Admiral Paparo: Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia,
3 of course. And there is already tight partnerships among
4 them all, but we can never be satisfied. I work really
5 with every state that is an ally and partner, and that is a
6 deep list.

7 You know, that is the key advantage. But all allies
8 and partners that are willing to work with us are you know,
9 key focus of that effort.

10 Senator Rosen: Of creating this broad net of cyber
11 resiliency -- really important. And again, you work with
12 everyone. So, you are a coalition builder, and this is
13 really important not just in this region but every region.

14 And of course, the Houthi's recent attacks on
15 commercial shipping in the Red Sea, it highlights how less
16 sophisticated adversaries can disrupt international
17 commerce and challenge the freedom of our navigation.

18 And I am increasingly concerned about the
19 capabilities, of course as you are and everyone has been
20 talking about, sophisticated adversaries, China for
21 example, to take similar aggressive actions like they are
22 doing in the Red Sea and in the Indo-Pacific.

23 So, how does INDOPACOM, how would you plan to
24 collaborate with allies and partners in the region to share
25 their responsibilities and resources so there is freedom of

1 navigation in the Indo-Pacific? We see the challenges we
2 have now.

3 Admiral Paparo: Coalition building. And one of the
4 key efforts within this is currently under the current
5 -- under Admiral Aquilino, is the INDOPACOM mission network
6 that is going to create secure layers of intel sharing
7 where it is just not U.S. sharing with allies and partners,
8 but it is all of the allies and partners sharing, to build
9 a common picture of malign activity at sea, which will give
10 all of the allies and partners the ability to act quickly
11 and to counter the threats.

12 Senator Rosen: Like you said, intelligence, cyber
13 security, this is key for our maritime defense. So, could
14 you talk a little bit, in my last few seconds, about how
15 increased joint training programs could really benefit our
16 mutual defense capabilities and this interoperability and
17 collaboration that it supports.

18 Admiral Paparo: Our joint training programs, and I
19 would like to especially acknowledge our State partnership
20 programs, in being absolutely critical in raising the
21 capability in bringing skill sets to each other and
22 learning from each other, as well as building the people to
23 people ties that will help speed the coalition along when
24 we reach that unforgiving hour when we need it.

25 Senator Rosen: Yes. Thank you very much. Mr. Chair,

1 I yield back.

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator
3 Scott, please.

4 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman. Admiral, thanks
5 for being here. Thank you for your service. Thank you for
6 your commitment. Thanks -- we had a great conversation the
7 other day. So, the world is pretty dangerous.

8 We weren't able to deter Russia in Ukraine. We walked
9 out of Afghanistan. Now we got the Houthis shooting at us.
10 We have lost two seals, three servicemen and women. We
11 watched what Hamas did.

12 We watched how much money Iran has. When you look at
13 the -- what Senator Sullivan said, the size of the Chinese
14 military versus, you know, what we are doing, trajectory
15 -- so if you are a Xi Jinping, what are you thinking?

16 Admiral Paparo: First, Senator, I will share with you
17 to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of our five fallen
18 heroes, along with their family. I think, you know, I
19 can't directly express Xi Jinping's, attitude, but I do see
20 the actions of the People's Liberation Army.]

21 And I see an undaunted effort to extend its aggression
22 as a revanchist, revisionist, and expansionist state, to
23 reset the borders based on the logic of their military
24 power. And I think we are in a global environment that has
25 increasingly disordered, increasingly chaotic.

1 The logic of rules is being replaced with the logic of
2 power and we must, as a nation, counter that logic with
3 comprehensive national power across all levers of
4 statecraft.

5 Senator Scott: So, we have a lot of servicemen and
6 women stationed in the Indo-Pacific. We spend a lot of
7 money in the Indo-Pacific.

8 So, if you are talking to just an average American
9 that is writing the check, what won't you tell him, why?

10 Admiral Paparo: First. 60 percent of the world
11 population, 60 percent of the world's economy, and seven of
12 the world's ten largest militaries is in the Indo-Pacific.
13 And if that disorder extends to aggression in the Indo-
14 Pacific, we risk greater conflict. We risk proliferation.
15 That makes the world a more dangerous place.

16 And so, success in aggression, anywhere in the Western
17 Pacific has a direct effect on the security of the United
18 States. The integration of the economies, particularly in
19 semiconductors, according to many think tanks could result
20 in up to a double digit contraction in GDP, greatly
21 affecting people's lives and their well-being.

22 And then finally, democracy and our values, which is
23 the ties that connect. For all of those reasons, it is in
24 America's direct physical interest to deter conflict by
25 being ready to fight and to win.

1 Senator Scott: How important is Taiwan?

2 Admiral Paparo: Critical for the reasons that I spoke
3 to earlier. Even more so in the case of the economy.

4 Senator Scott: So, if China continues to build their
5 economy, and eventually, you know, they would have about
6 -- now three times the number of people -- if they continue
7 to build their economy and they build an economy bigger
8 than ours, is that a threat to the United States?

9 Admiral Paparo: One would hope not. You know, I
10 wouldn't think -- I don't think we are competing on who has
11 the bigger economy. We are competing on values. And, for
12 me, what I am looking at as I am looking at the military
13 instrument.

14 And in many ways, the military instrument is directly
15 related to the economy. And what I see is generational and
16 concerning in terms of the activity and the buildup of the
17 PRC.

18 Senator Scott: We talked about this a little bit last
19 week, the recapitalization of the C-130s. I think the Air
20 Force has done about 50 percent. National guard has done
21 about 35 percent. Marines are 100. But the Navy's had
22 zero. Does that concern you?

23 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. Our logistics enterprise
24 is built on the principles of efficiency over, you know,
25 over the -- over a time when we were focused on regional

1 conflicts.

2 Now, under the contestation that we see from actors,
3 we have got to build a logistics enterprise that is based
4 on the principles of effectiveness under fire.

5 Senator Scott: Can you tell me the importance of
6 having a defense alliance with the Philippines?

7 Admiral Paparo: It is one of our oldest alliances.
8 It is based on close, people to people ties. It is key
9 geography within the Western Pacific.

10 And our continued commitment to our defense alliance
11 with the Philippines has the same effect as our alliances
12 and our security guarantees throughout the Western Pacific.
13 But the people to people ties are very important to us.
14 The values ties are important to us, and the geography.

15 Senator Scott: Thank you, Admiral.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
17 Kaine, please.

18 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Admiral Paparo,
19 congratulations. I enjoyed our visit the other day. The
20 chairman's opening comments referred to a CCP strategy
21 drawn from Chinese military tradition of -- to win without
22 fighting.

23 And he referred to the danger of losing without
24 fighting. I am also worried about the danger of losing
25 while fighting. I think our fighting force is second to

1 none, and yet you can lose while fighting if you fight the
2 wrong war, and if you allow wrong wars to direct resources
3 and attention away from the most critical.

4 I am very, very concerned about the escalation in the
5 Middle East right now. I think we need to provide support
6 for allies. Certainly, I think alliances are strong, but
7 the U.S. being involved in an escalating war without a
8 Congressional dialog before the American public about
9 whether that would be wise is really troubling me.

10 The U.S. is protecting global shipping through the Red
11 Sea. Only the UK is joining with the U.S. in our military
12 efforts against the Houthis. The transit of ships through
13 the Red Sea is global. There aren't a lot of U.S. flag
14 ships that go through the Red Sea. And so, protecting U.S.
15 ships, U.S. flagships, U.S. military assets, of course, is
16 something we should do.

17 But when we take on the global burden of protecting
18 others and they are not participating in it, that is the
19 kind of thing that diverts attention and resources away
20 from what I believe our most significant challenge is,
21 should be -- that should be directing our efforts going
22 forward. But let me move now to some questions.

23 Your next position involves commanding personnel from
24 multiple services to maintain the free and open Indo-
25 Pacific. You just command the naval component of

1 INDOPACOM. So, brag about the service members, DOD
2 civilians, and their families and the value that they bring
3 to the Indo-Pacific region.

4 Admiral Paparo: And for all members of the committee,
5 I would welcome you to join us on a ship visit and to see
6 what you can see in the young people's eyes that stare back
7 at you and the commitment.

8 And that fleet and family service centers and child
9 development centers, just to see the dedication of our
10 service members and the dedication of their families, and
11 what they do within their families, in order to bring their
12 licensure to places and to find meaningful employment for
13 working families.

14 But, for all the discussions about the Joint Force,
15 your brain chemistry is instantly transformed when you see
16 the intellect, the dedication, the esprit de corps, the
17 cohesiveness of the Joint Force.

18 And so, it is just such -- and it is great, it is just
19 great to get out there and to visit with the fleet to hear
20 their concerns. And always their concerns are not, can I
21 have this, or can I have that, but it is, how can we do our
22 job better? It is absolutely inspiring.

23 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Admiral. Senator Shaheen
24 asked you questions about AUKUS. I am very focused on that
25 as well. A lot of the work on pillar one with respect to

1 submarines will happen in Virginia.

2 And she already asked you a little bit about that.

3 Let me ask about pillar two. A lot of the discussion has
4 been about prepping for the pillar one submarine industrial
5 base and working with Australian and first Virginia class
6 subs, but then their development of their own industrial
7 capacity to produce nuclear submarines.

8 Talk about the kind of more open ended but equally
9 exciting pillar two capabilities in this AUKUS framework.

10 Admiral Paparo: Very exciting. Cyber, unmanned,
11 seabed warfare, among them. Unmanned capabilities, AI, all
12 of these are -- have importance key leverage making effects
13 on the ability of the joint and the allied force to fight.

14 Just in November, I was in Sydney Harbor, where U.S.
15 Pacific Fleet conducted integrated battle problem 23.1,
16 where Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Soldiers from the United
17 Kingdom, from Australia, and from -- INDOPACOM all
18 assembled to begin the real work of sharing technology, of
19 sharing information, of combining the talent to achieve
20 those key 21st century advantages that will augment the
21 asymmetric advantage of our submarine forces. Exciting.
22 Every bit as critical as pillar one.

23 Senator Kaine: Let me ask one last question. You
24 have talked about alliances, AUKUS, the Quad. Senator
25 Scott asked you about the improving U.S Philippines' mil to

1 mil relationship. What is the reaction in the Indo-Pacific
2 region to the U.S., Japan, Republic of Korea summit that
3 was held in 2023 at Camp David?

4 Admiral Paparo: I think that first, I applaud the
5 courage of the leaders in the Pacific who came to that that
6 accord, and we have implemented it directly now in advance
7 of North Korean threats.

8 Frequently being postured in position to count, to be
9 able to be ready to defend if instead of a test, it is an
10 attack. We are seeing the fruits of it at the operational
11 level already every day. It is historic and it is
12 inspiring.

13 Senator Kaine: Thank you very much. I yield back.

14 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine. I will
15 recognize Senator Tuberville, but I will also allow Senator
16 King to preside as I go to the Banking committee. Thank
17 you, Admiral. Senator Tuberville, please.

18 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
19 you, Admiral, for being here. Congratulations. Good visit
20 yesterday. 375,000 military and civilian personnel, that
21 is a huge, huge undertaking.

22 We are glad you are willing to take that on. We
23 talked about the KC-46. We have I think about 10 or 12,
24 135s in my State of Birmingham. Looking forward to the KC-
25 46. Given with the issues and delays with delivering the

1 46, what concerns do you have about the availability and
2 the quality of these aircraft?

3 Admiral Paparo: No concerns about the quality. And I
4 am not yet in the duty position, but for the Airmen who
5 maintain them, I have perfect faith that no aircraft is
6 going to fly until it is ready to fly. I do have concerns,
7 if confirmed, about the ability of the Joint Force to
8 refuel what will be a dynamic force operating in the air
9 from bases on land and at sea.

10 And we have got to have a consistent critical eye.
11 And if confirmed, I will work with you and with the members
12 of the committee to be clear about the requirements are and
13 we can close those gaps.

14 Senator Tuberville: Do you think the 46 has the range
15 that we are going to need in the Indo-Pacific?

16 Admiral Paparo: With all refueling aircraft, air
17 tankers can bucket brigade themselves.

18 I am not savvy on the precise range, and it is always
19 a choice between how much gas it takes to get to the point
20 where you are refueling and how much give there is at that
21 point.

22 But I am concerned about the Joint Force's ability to
23 refuel a dynamic force operating in the air.

24 Senator Tuberville: Yes. We talked -- let's switch
25 gears a little bit. We talked a little bit about

1 Philippines. What is your biggest concerns at the moment
2 there? What do we need to do more or less for the
3 Philippines?

4 Admiral Paparo: Philippines are under intense
5 pressure with aggression against their lawful sovereign
6 rights in their EEZ. And because the Philippines are a
7 sovereign partner, our charge is to be ready to come to
8 their aid as they desire, as they navigate that problem
9 along with us.

10 For them to know that we have their back at all times,
11 and we have got capability that is ready to assist them in
12 their defense of their lawful claims. And they are not
13 claims, they are rights, and they are settled in law.

14 Senator Tuberville: How does the U.S., Vietnam
15 security cooperation, regarding what is happened in the
16 South China Sea, how has that changed in your eyes?

17 Admiral Paparo: We applaud the essential double
18 elevation to strategic comprehensive partnership with
19 Vietnam.

20 The main areas for our cooperation presently right now
21 are in the manner of medical and -- unexploded ordnance
22 removal and medical training.

23 We stand ready to partner with them more deeply as
24 they -- and we are ready to partner with Vietnam as deeply
25 as they want.

1 Senator Tuberville: I remember asking Admiral
2 Aquilino when he took over, getting ready to take over,
3 what his number one want and need was for the Indo-Pacific,
4 and he said an Aegis System at Guam. Do you have any
5 thoughts?

6 Admiral Paparo: A multi-layered, effective, capable
7 integrated air and missile defense system from the surface
8 of the sea to the heavens to defend the 170,000 Americans
9 in Guam, the American homeland. It would be my number one
10 priority, if confirmed.

11 Senator Tuberville: Being the PAC commander, what is
12 your thoughts and when did you first find out about the
13 balloon that came from China, I guess about a year ago.

14 Admiral Paparo: Represents aggression. It was
15 brazen. It was collecting information to give the PRC an
16 advantage. It violated the sovereignty of the United
17 States. It was deeply concerning.

18 Senator Tuberville: When did you first find out about
19 -- where was it -- where was it located when you got the
20 call? Hey, we got a balloon flying over.

21 Admiral Paparo: I was the Pacific Fleet Commander,
22 and accordingly, he was not in the air defense business.
23 And it was over the continental United States when it came
24 to light, and that was a different area of
25 responsibilities.

1 Senator Tuberville: So, it was over the United States
2 when you found out. Not in the Pacific.

3 Admiral Paparo: I did not have a close view of the
4 balloon's trajectory.

5 Senator Tuberville: Okay. Thank you, Admiral. Thank
6 you.

7 Senator King: On behalf of the chairman, Senator
8 Kelly.

9 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Admiral,
10 good to see you again. My brother, Scott, and your
11 training command classmate sends his regards. Admiral,
12 being the only U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduate in the
13 Congress, I pay close attention to our maritime strength.

14 You know, China is the world's largest shipbuilder and
15 controls most of the merchant ships in the world with over
16 5,500 vessels. In the United States flying under the
17 American flag, we have about 80 oceangoing merchant ships.

18 And I am concerned about the size and the capacity of
19 our U.S. merchant fleet and how this is a risk to our
20 National Security.

21 Admiral, as you know, an insufficient commercial
22 maritime capacity impacts peacetime trade and supply
23 chains, but the more important part of this is it will
24 hamper our ability to supply our own troops in a conflict.

25 And this isn't a capability that we can just turn on

1 overnight with a switch. I mean, we need investments now
2 to be ready for tomorrow. So, Admiral, how do you assess
3 the challenge of China's numerical advantage in a conflict
4 in the Indo-Pacific?

5 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I believe that the current
6 size and scope of the U.S. merchant fleet is a
7 vulnerability.

8 As discussed earlier, I believe that we have a force
9 that is sized for efficiency but has not been examined from
10 the standpoint of effectiveness under fire.

11 Senator Kelly: And does that affect how you plan for
12 operations today and how you project power across the
13 Pacific Ocean?

14 Admiral Paparo: It does in fact, and it is a
15 limitation for how forward we could put combat capability
16 and sustain combat capability that was in maritime terrain.

17 Senator Kelly: And as the future INDOPACOM Commander,
18 how do you plan to address this maritime capacity issue?

19 Admiral Paparo: In close partnership with my fellow
20 CO-COM, if confirmed, U.S. Transportation Command, identify
21 those shortfalls, along with my -- through the integrated
22 priority lists of our components, not just sealift and
23 airlift. And then, as necessary, communicate as required
24 by law.

25 Senator Kelly: So, in recent years, Congress has

1 focused on rebuilding domestic industries like, you know,
2 critical minerals, microelectronics -- manufacturing of
3 semiconductor chips has been a big focus of the Congress.

4 And we have made, you know, some great progress there.
5 We have got more to do. And this, you know, certainly
6 supports our National Security needs, but also our domestic
7 economic security.

8 Would you agree there could be National Security
9 benefits to a similar kind of focus on the maritime
10 industry?

11 Admiral Paparo: I would strongly agree.

12 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Admiral. And Admiral, as
13 you know, logistics will be, you know, it is going to be
14 critical to, you know, any future conflict. And what else
15 besides, you know, a focus like we are doing with
16 microelectronics, what else do you think we could do to be
17 addressing this strategic vulnerability now with the force
18 we currently have today?

19 Admiral Paparo: I think there are a number of
20 initiatives such as the Department of Defense's replicator
21 initiative that seeks to gain scale with innovative
22 practices, and by closing on design and invoking small
23 business, and increasing the defense industrial base.

24 I think another key point is to understand the opacity
25 of the financial community and the extent to which

1 investments in the PRC, through their civil military
2 fusion, directly could confer to weapons building that
3 could affect and could harm Americans on the battlefield.

4 Senator Kelly: Well, Admiral, thank you. And I look
5 forward to working with you on trying to solve this
6 problem.

7 It will -- you know, clearly, if we can make some
8 progress here, it will be in furtherance of, you know,
9 stronger, you know, operations in the Pacific and the
10 ability to sustain if we ever do, you know, wind up in a
11 conflict. Thank you.

12 Senator King: On behalf of the chairman, Senator
13 Cotton.

14 Senator Cotton: Admiral, congratulations on your
15 nomination and thanks for your service. There was a report
16 in Bloomberg last month, leaked from intelligence
17 assessments saying that Xi Jinping had purged numerous of
18 his military commanders, especially in his rocket forces
19 for corruption.

20 It further said that American officials had concluded
21 that Xi was so doubtful about the capabilities of the PLA
22 to execute an operation against Taiwan. Given this
23 corruption, that now that operation was less likely to
24 happen.

25 Without commenting on the veracity of the intelligence

1 report that was leaked, can you say, does that corruption,
2 which I think everyone would accept happens in the PLA and
3 in China writ large, influence your thinking about what you
4 need to deter Chinese aggression towards Taiwan?

5 Admiral Paparo: It does not, sir, and it must not.

6 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

7 Admiral Paparo: I have got to adjust to the
8 capability that we see. I see more activity further
9 afield. Greater force assembling in objective areas. A
10 shrinking of strategic and operational warnings. And I
11 must be focused on capability instead of intentions, if
12 confirmed.

13 Senator Cotton: I think that is very important. I
14 think part of our role, when we read intelligence reports,
15 whether we read them in the intelligence reports or in the
16 media, is to always express some healthy skepticism.

17 As Churchill said about civil military relations, it
18 is always right to probe. I think that is especially true
19 whenever the conclusions in intelligence reports are
20 comforting or reassuring, what we would like to believe,
21 and maybe most true when those comforting, reassuring
22 conclusions are then leaked to the media.

23 You mentioned capabilities. We have spoken in the
24 past about the very challenging strategic and tactical
25 situation you would encounter in a fight in the Pacific,

1 ranging from logistics to intelligence, surveillance, and
2 reconnaissance. What U.S. capabilities gaps currently
3 exist in your theater, and what capabilities will you
4 prioritize most highly?

5 Admiral Paparo: The race and posture that I spoke of
6 with the PRC increasingly requires persistent stare. And
7 ISR is inherently, due to the ephemera of the capability,
8 blinking.

9 The closer we can come to a persistent stare from the
10 seabed to the surface of the sea, distributed throughout
11 geography, in the air and in the constellation, all of it,
12 you must sum to a persistent stare of PRC forces in
13 response to this shrinking, strategic operational tactical
14 warning.

15 Senator Cotton: And how about countering their
16 ability to do so?

17 Admiral Paparo: It is counter -- what is called C5
18 ISR, command, control, intelligence, surveillance,
19 reconnaissance, and targeting. Behind homeland defense, is
20 the number one priority for U.S. INDOPACOM.

21 It has been the number one priority that I have
22 communicated to the Chief of Naval Operations in my
23 integrated priority list. And if confirmed, it is the
24 enabling capability to counter that, that will bring
25 victory to the allies.

1 Senator Cotton: Thank you, Admiral.

2 Senator King: On behalf of the Chairman, Senator
3 Warner -- Warren, sorry.

4 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
5 congratulations, Admiral Paparo, on your nomination. So,
6 if confirmed, you will oversee one of the most dangerous
7 National Security threats, North Korea.

8 Reports indicate that North Korea has shifted to a
9 more aggressive posture against American troops and allies
10 in the region. And in just the last few months, the
11 country has fired off hundreds of missiles as it has
12 increased its military capabilities. North Korea is one of
13 the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world.

14 So, one question is where the heck are they getting
15 the money to test these new weapons? You know, this is not
16 free. And one answer is cryptocurrency.

17 North Korea uses cryptocurrency both to evade
18 sanctions and to raise revenues. From cyberattacks against
19 banks, to strikes on crypto exchanges, to ransomware
20 attacks against American businesses and hospitals, North
21 Korea has been using crypto to generate revenue.

22 Over the past five years, it has stolen at least \$3.3
23 billion worth of crypto and those dollars matter. Experts
24 estimate that half its missile program is paid for through
25 crypto crime.

1 So, Admiral Paparo, is North Korea's reliance on
2 cryptocurrency to evade sanctions and fund its illegal
3 nuclear and missile programs a threat to our National
4 Security and the security of our allies in the Indo-
5 Pacific?

6 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator, most certainly.

7 Senator Warren: All righty. You are not the only one
8 to recognize this threat. Your predecessors have been
9 ringing the alarm for years. Former INDOPACOM Commander,
10 Admiral Davidson, who was appointed by President Trump,
11 warned this committee in 2021 that North Korea's crypto
12 crime allows it to, "raise illicit revenue to support its
13 weapons development program."

14 To underscore the sheer scale of North Korea's
15 reliance on crypto, consider that nearly a third of all
16 crypto stolen last year was stolen by North Korea, and that
17 its hacks are, on average, ten times more lucrative than
18 those linked to other actors. You know, no one needs
19 crypto more than Kim Jong Un.

20 North Korea's success in evading sanctions and funding
21 its weapons program with crypto also undermines our
22 security elsewhere.

23 North Korea is selling missiles and ammunition to
24 Russia, helping Russia evade sanctions so that it can
25 continue its war against Ukraine.

1 So, let me ask you, Admiral Paparo, would cutting off
2 North Korea's access to crypto and making it harder for
3 other countries to evade sanctions strengthen our global
4 security?

5 Admiral Paparo: Yes, Senator, directly.

6 Senator Warren: Would you like to say more about
7 that?

8 Admiral Paparo: Cryptocurrency, inherently with its
9 opaqueness, is a key enabler worldwide for proliferation,
10 for terror, for illicit trafficking, including illicit
11 trafficking in drugs.

12 While blockchain methodologies are -- have promise for
13 assurance of financial transactions, this particular use of
14 it, the usage of crypto, which is backed by nothing but
15 emotion, directly aids illicit trafficking, terror, crime,
16 human trafficking, and proliferation of weapons and makes
17 the world less secure.

18 Senator Warren: Well, that is pretty definitive,
19 Admiral. Can I just ask you, what is it that you think
20 makes crypto so attractive to countries like North Korea
21 and illicit arms dealers?

22 Admiral Paparo: People can make money outside the
23 eyes of law, and it provides a moral hazard whereby people
24 can do bad things without fear of punishment because it is
25 opaque.

1 Senator Warren: All right, so you hit it right on the
2 head, outside the eyes of the law. In November, Treasury
3 asked Congress to give it more tools to crack down on
4 crypto crime and money laundering. 20 Senators, Democrats
5 and Republicans have put together a bill that delivers
6 exactly what Treasury called for.

7 You know, it is not about who should regulate crypto
8 to protect investors. It is about dealing with the most
9 urgent crypto problem in front of us, ensuring that
10 countries like North Korea and terrorists, drug traffickers
11 and other criminals can't use crypto to undermine America's
12 security.

13 I am looking forward to working on that bill with my
14 colleagues and looking forward to working with you,
15 Admiral. Thank you.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Warren.
17 Senator King, please.

18 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Everyone,
19 your testimony today has been extremely important,
20 informative and important.

21 And one of the aspects that was so important were your
22 initial answers to the questions from the chair and the
23 vice chair in terms of the undermining of our deterrence,
24 in terms of the People's Republic of China, by unilaterally
25 abandoning Ukraine.

1 Just to confirm, you view our leaving Ukraine to be a
2 significant diminution of the deterrent that we are
3 presenting to China. Is that correct?

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

5 Senator King: I think that is very important. Now,
6 one other aspect of that is the effect of this -- of
7 leaving Ukraine unilaterally on our allies. How would
8 Japan and South Korea react to that action?

9 Admiral Paparo: All of our allies and partners are
10 under pressure. They are under coercion from other -- from
11 actors such as the People's Republic of China.

12 And frequently it is not just coercion in the military
13 sphere, but across all levers of statecraft. And they are
14 staying with the alliance, their enjoining their national
15 power to the United States is directly related to their
16 confidence in U.S. partnership when it is so committed.

17 And accordingly, our U.S. security partnerships
18 worldwide have a direct impact on the cohesion of our
19 alliances and partnerships, and any effect on that imposes
20 costs on the quality of deterrence, as our allies and
21 partnerships have our greatest leverage in deterrence.

22 Senator King: Importantly -- deterrence has probably
23 been used -- I have been counting, I think we are up to
24 about 25 times in this hearing. Deterrence is based upon
25 two things, capacity and will.

1 We can be -- usually be talk about weapons, but
2 Ukraine is all about will. We are supply -- we can supply
3 the capacity. The question is will. And as you point out,
4 it would undermine the deterrence not only of the actions
5 of China, perhaps toward Taiwan. It would certainly change
6 Xi's calculus.

7 Will the Americans actually be there, which would be
8 an important part of his consideration. But also
9 undermine, as you say, the confidence of our allies. Short
10 question. We have talked about the South China Sea.

11 We have talked about disputes with China. Would it be
12 in the national interest for this body to ratify the law of
13 the Sea Treaty?

14 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir.

15 Senator King: You are about the 20th flag officer who
16 has answered that question in exactly that way. I hope the
17 Senate will start to listen to our people that are on the
18 front lines that understand how important that would be.

19 One of the things that concerns me most urgently about
20 the relationship with China in the South China Sea is the
21 danger of miscalculation. The danger of mistakes. The
22 danger of some misunderstanding that would lead to an
23 escalating conflict.

24 Do you feel that we have sufficient military to
25 military communications with the People's Republic of China

1 in order to de-conflict a potential situation that should
2 not be escalated, but could be?

3 Admiral Paparo: Senator, as yet, I have had no
4 contact mil to mil as the U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander.
5 And, my boss and my mentor, Admiral Aquilino, has had
6 limited and seeks more for the very reasons you talked --

7 Senator King: So that's a danger to not have those
8 kinds of communication links.

9 Admiral Paparo: We are left with their activity, with
10 the guidance that we give the force and their public
11 statement. And accordingly, we must divine their
12 attentions -- divine their intentions and act accordingly.
13 With better information, we have lower risk of
14 miscalculation.

15 Senator King: I would rather have us understand
16 directly from communication their intentions, rather than
17 trying to read the tea leaves or divine it, as you suggest.

18 Finally, the nature of war, and the nature of war is
19 changing fundamentally. Hypersonics, directed energy,
20 cyber. Clearly, the next conflict will begin with cyber.

21 Are you satisfied that the Navy and the Joint Force in
22 the Pacific is at a place where it needs to be in order to
23 fight the next war, rather than based upon strategies and
24 tactics from the last war?

25 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I am never satisfied with

1 our readiness.

2 Senator King: Good.

3 Admiral Paparo: I am confident, but I am paranoid,
4 and we are working constantly. And if and when additional
5 resources are required to be more resilient in that first
6 battlefield, you will know it from me.

7 Senator King: I hope you will really press on that,
8 because all of the aircraft carriers in the world aren't
9 going to work if they -- if GPS is gone, if there is no way
10 to navigate, if they are targeted by hypersonic.

11 So, this is, I think, one of the most important areas
12 is to press the entire military establishment on electronic
13 warfare, hypersonics, directed energy. And I appreciate
14 your answers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator
16 Schmitt, please.

17 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to
18 see you, Admiral, and really appreciated our time in my
19 office. We had a chance to visit. As I mentioned in the
20 office, as we consider your nomination, the threat posed by
21 Communist China grows every single day. In my view, I
22 think you share that assessment.

23 This and other challenges around the world with the
24 Navy at an inflection point and the tone set by the next
25 commander of the U.S. INDOPACOM will prove critical in

1 strengthening our relationships with important partners of
2 the region so we can collectively deter the rise of China.
3 Your potential future actions as commander of INDOPACOM
4 will be watched and judged by the world, as you know.

5 We trust you understand the weight of the task that
6 you are taking on, and if confirmed, must demonstrate the
7 United States resolve in the region by ensuring peace
8 through strength. I have three questions.

9 So, you know, limited time we have here, but the first
10 is, just a few short years ago, Admiral Davidson was in
11 front of Congress and made an alarming assessment that
12 China would have the necessary capabilities to invade
13 Taiwan by 2027. Do you share that assessment?

14 Admiral Paparo: I know that in public statements the
15 PRC intends to be ready by 2027, but that is related to
16 nothing other than the 100th anniversary of the People's
17 Liberation Army.

18 In fact, I think they are working to be ready every
19 day, and they could go, and we have got to be constantly
20 vigilant. There is no holiday between now and when they
21 may go, and we must be ready now, next week, next month,
22 and in the decades to come.

23 Senator Schmitt: What more do you need to effectively
24 deter that?

25 Admiral Paparo: If confirmed, I will work with the

1 committee across the Joint Force and with the Department to
2 ensure that I am clear in what those requirements are in
3 accordance with my oath.

4 Senator Schmitt: Thank you. In addition to this
5 invasion scenario, one of my concerns is where the CCP
6 starts ratcheting up tensions through a blockade of Taiwan.
7 The island nation imports 98 percent of its energy and is
8 heavily reliant on food imports to feed its population.

9 If the PLA Navy was able to successfully implement a
10 blockade, it would not only be a problem, I think for that
11 island, but creates a ripple effect around the world. How
12 would you, as INDOPACOM Commander, make sure that China
13 knows that the costs of imposing a blockade like that, or
14 other acts of war, against Taiwan would be deterred -- or
15 how dire it would be?

16 Admiral Paparo: Senator, you are bringing up a great
17 point, which is that if we are just planning for an
18 invasion, we are leaving a wide range of military options
19 unplanned for. And so, planning for deterrence and
20 planning on response, across the range of military
21 operations.

22 And plans are nothing, planning is everything, as
23 Dwight Eisenhower said -- is critically important. And the
24 Taiwan Relations Act provides the Department no with limits
25 on what we should plan to. We should plan across that

1 range of military operations, if so ordered by the
2 Commander in Chief.

3 Senator Schmitt: And then lastly, one question I
4 wanted to touch on. I think we talked about it in the
5 office a little bit, but we have seen recently increased
6 activity, I think, in this sort of gray zone aggression by
7 the PLA Navy in the South China Sea, and particularly
8 directed against the Philippines, a key ally of ours in my
9 view, in areas like the Second Thomas Shoal.

10 How do you see that gray zone harassment, aggression
11 evolving over the next few years? And do you see it
12 growing in complexity and frequency? What is your
13 assessment of that?

14 Admiral Paparo: I do see these gray zone operations,
15 which is malign activity that does not necessarily risk
16 full blown acknowledged combat.

17 This is done in the form of lawfare -- declare a law.
18 Wait a minute. Wait until people think that it is
19 symbolic, then push maritime militia into the space, under
20 the fig leaf of fisher folk or something like that. Then
21 push law enforcement into the space under the fig leaf of
22 protecting the maritime militia.

23 And then comes the uniform military as it tries to
24 wrap with its tentacles, through its expansionist desires.
25 And we must close every asymmetry with symmetry. U.S.

1 Coast Guard partnerships are absolutely critical and
2 indispensable to our success.

3 And then strengthening our allies and partners in
4 intel sharing for what those activities are to meet lawfare
5 with lawfare, gray zone with gray zone. And it must be
6 across all agencies within the Department of Defense and
7 all of the levers of statecraft for the United States of
8 America and our allies and our partners.

9 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Admiral. Thank you for
10 your service.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator
12 Manchin, please.

13 Senator Manchin: Thank you very much. Admiral
14 Paparo, thank you very much. Enjoyed the visit also. And
15 thank you for your service to our great country. First of
16 all, I want to reaffirm what I think -- Senator Hirono
17 about the COFA.

18 You know, I spoke about how important that is, and you
19 laid out to me about how important it is, and also the
20 service of the people from those areas given to our
21 country. I appreciate all that. And we really do need to
22 double down to make sure they understand that we are behind
23 them.

24 I would like to talk a little bit about technology,
25 and that is going to be Project Pele. It is basically

1 small modular reactors. We are talking about microreactors
2 now. And really I haven't seen DOD kick in the way they
3 should have kicked in because it tremendously helps, I
4 think, especially in the Indo-Pacific, where you have your
5 supply chains can be a little bit challenging at times.

6 This reactor can be housed in a 20 foot shipping
7 container. It provides five megawatts of power
8 continuously for three years. In comparison, you need six
9 diesel, large diesel generators and 9 million gallons of
10 fuel to do the same job.

11 So, I am hoping that you can bring that to the
12 attention, had the urgency, especially Indo-Pacific, what
13 it would do, because technology is almost there, and we
14 have been going - you have been running the entire military
15 fleet almost on these microreactors for many times on our
16 ships, submarines, and all that.

17 So, I don't know how high that is on your priority
18 list. I don't know if that has been brought to your
19 attention.

20 Admiral Paparo: It is compelling. And, of course, as
21 a naval officer, I have got some -- I have got a deep
22 connection with naval reactors. And, if confirmed, you can
23 count on inquiry, and as able, support for feasible
24 solutions --

25 Senator Manchin: The private sector is trying,

1 Admiral, as much as they can to advance this technology as
2 quickly as possible. But in the military, the way you all
3 would have it and the amount of need you would have showing
4 in most harsh and adverse condition would be tremendously
5 important for our country to be able to have that
6 opportunity, but also showing that it works, and the
7 savings.

8 I think in burn pits and everything else we have been
9 going through, and the pay act we have had to do and all
10 the different things, it is just -- this is a tremendous
11 opportunity for us to cure a lot of our ills. The other
12 thing I am concerned about, efforts such as Force Design
13 2030 for the Marine Corps.

14 They demonstrate modernization in the deliberate
15 manner, but also China continues to outpace us in building
16 of ships and munition output and things of this sort. What
17 is your concerns on that? Are we going to be able to meet
18 that challenge or do you think that this is the proper way
19 to go?

20 Admiral Paparo: Well, first, Force Design 2030 does
21 not relieve the Joint Force of its crisis response
22 capabilities, nor to my awareness has the Marine Corps in
23 any way walked away from the crisis response mission.

24 And particularly the Marine Corps in close partnership
25 within the Navy Marine Corps team, crisis response isn't a

1 Marine Corps mission. It is a Navy Marine Corps mission,
2 and it is also a Joint Force mission.

3 And so, I think, conceptually, we should be always
4 challenging our assumptions about our force designs when we
5 are looking off into the future. We should be planning to
6 worst case scenarios and closing gaps. And if confirmed, I
7 will work continuously --

8 Senator Manchin: Let me ask you this question. As
9 far as -- you know, you are going in the hottest area I
10 think we have as far as direct engagement, if you will, in
11 the Indo-Pacific right now. What is the greatest
12 challenge?

13 I mean, we hear about and have asked you questions
14 concerning the timing on Taiwan maybe coming to whatever
15 that outcome is going to be, in what time period, but also
16 what they have been building up as far as China and
17 shutting down the shipping lanes, making it almost
18 impossible for the Philippines to be able -- what is the
19 greatest challenge we have that you are going to be able to
20 be faced with and think you have to meet -- the highest
21 priority?

22 Admiral Paparo: The trajectory and the aggression.
23 The trajectory of the PLA, the People's Liberation Army,
24 across all of its services. And its activity and its
25 aggression, that itself is the greatest challenge.

1 And to be able to, day to day, deter conflict by the
2 dynamic demonstration of allied and joint operations, to
3 show the ability to impose costs. And if and when conflict
4 comes, it is that C5 ISR in space and cyber that shall be
5 the first battle and will be either the enabling capability
6 for the Joint Force or the Achilles heel for the PLA if
7 that day comes.

8 Senator Manchin: One more quick, if I could. I get
9 mixed signals on basically we have said that we are going
10 to defend Taiwan if they were attacked, but yet we don't
11 acknowledge them, and we still acknowledge a one China
12 policy.

13 People back home ask me, so why are we -- why do we
14 have a one China policy, but yet we don't recognize them
15 and yet we say we are going to fight for them. Is that
16 confusing?

17 Admiral Paparo: Not to the Joint Force, Senator.
18 Because the Joint Force, our mandate is the Taiwan
19 Relations Act, which is that Department shall support
20 Taiwan with defensive systems, and the Defense Department
21 shall be prepared to thwart an invasion of Taiwan, and that
22 mission is clear.

23 Senator Manchin: That is very clear, right?

24 Admiral Paparo: For the Joint Force, yes, sir.

25 Senator Manchin: So, we are behind Taiwan.

1 Admiral Paparo: The Joint Force is ready to defend
2 Taiwan and must be critical thinking and continuing to make
3 itself in the face of, of, of a concerning PRC.

4 Senator Manchin: Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate
5 it. Thank you very much -- sorry, Mr. Chairman.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Manchin. Senator
7 Budd, please.

8 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. Admiral, good to
9 see you again. Enjoyed the conversation in my office. And
10 even more in your office out in the Indo-Pacific. You are
11 a wonderful host. It was very insightful.

12 You know, some people seem to think that if China
13 successfully seizes Taiwan, then the China problem that we
14 have, it is over and that the United States won't have to
15 worry about China anymore. You know, in these people's
16 view, Taiwan is really all that Beijing wants.

17 So, do you agree with this line of thinking, or do you
18 worry that Beijing's ambitions go beyond Taiwan? And if
19 China seizes control of Taiwan, do you think it will
20 consolidate its gains and then seek to use force to expand
21 its control in other areas?

22 Admiral Paparo: I do not agree. By which I mean I do
23 not agree that all the problems are over. If the Taiwan
24 matter would be settled by force -- and that is evident in
25 their -- in the PRC's behavior, in the kind of force that

1 they are building. It is a force that lends itself to
2 power projection and --

3 Senator Budd: Not just Taiwan.

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir. In the Senkakus in the
5 South China Sea, and then even in the maps that they
6 publish in open source is an ever expanding zone.

7 Senator Budd: Admiral, would it be harder for the
8 U.S. and its allied forces, the Joint Force to deter defeat
9 Chinese aggression if Beijing is able to seize control of
10 Taiwan and station forces in Taiwan?

11 Admiral Paparo: It would be a challenge
12 geographically. And it would also be a challenge in terms
13 of the cohesion of our alliances and partnerships, who
14 would have seen a -- who would who have seen the potential
15 failure of an American security agreement.

16 Senator Budd: How would the Chinese threat to U.S.
17 territories in the Western Pacific, like Guam and the
18 Northern Marianas, change if China is able to seize Taiwan
19 and position forces there?

20 Admiral Paparo: Northern Marianas and Guam are
21 America, and it would be under greater and direct threat.

22 Senator Budd: Thank you. Former Chairman of the
23 Joint Chiefs, General Milley, testified that strengthening
24 Taiwan's asymmetric defenses is vital not only to bolster
25 deterrence against China, but also to reduce operational

1 risk to U.S. forces who may be called to help defend
2 Taiwan. Do you agree with the former chairman's testimony?

3 Admiral Paparo: I do, sir.

4 Senator Budd: Would you elaborate on that?

5 Admiral Paparo: Actions that Taiwan takes to
6 strengthen its own defenses have a 3 to 1 leverage against
7 aggression. This is military doctrine on assault ratios.
8 And accordingly, to the extent that Taiwan can make itself
9 a porcupine with sea denial capabilities, with the ability
10 to defeat an invader at sea, undersea, in the air, to the
11 invasion beaches has 3 to 1 leverage in the investment, in
12 its ability to defend itself and ensure that the straits
13 -- that the tension in the straits are resolved peacefully
14 and not by coercion.

15 Senator Budd: Thank you. So, is it fair to say that
16 the United States should be doing everything possible to
17 get Taiwan the asymmetric defense capabilities and
18 associated training and other support required to defend
19 itself against a Chinese invasion?

20 Admiral Paparo: The scale of the support is a
21 decision of the Commander in Chief and of the Congress. I
22 support any effort that makes Taiwan stronger.

23 Senator Budd: Is it fair to say that Taipei also
24 needs to be doing everything possible to strengthen
25 Taiwan's defenses, including by increasing Taiwanese

1 defense spending and making necessary defense reforms, for
2 instance, to Taiwan's reserve forces and conscription
3 program?

4 Admiral Paparo: Yes, sir, I agree. And if confirmed,
5 I will stress that.

6 Senator Budd: Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate your
7 time today. Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Budd. I
9 am informed that Senator Duckworth is on her way here. As
10 a result, I will take the opportunity to ask an additional
11 question.

12 We have talked a lot about equipment, funding,
13 etcetera, but one of the essential factors is the will of
14 the people to resistant and to fight. Can you evaluate the
15 situation in Taiwan in terms of their commitment and their
16 capabilities?

17 Admiral Paparo: In my discussions with the Taiwan
18 forces, I have seen a greater focus on the kinds of
19 operational capabilities that would make Taiwan more able
20 to defend itself. I see those investments as well.

21 And so, I am seeing it conceptually. I am seeing
22 shifts in the culture of Taiwan's military doctrine,
23 becoming more joint of seeing the problem clearly with
24 defensive, capabilities and in a will to mobilize their
25 young people.

1 You know, they have recently increased the levels of
2 their -- the time of their conscription. And so, at the
3 levels for my interlocutors, I am seeing that manifest
4 itself.

5 Chairman Reed: Let me further ask, you have mentioned
6 this before, and I think you are exactly right. The key
7 factor in our military component is the skill,
8 professionalism of noncommissioned officers.

9 We owe them a lot. To what extent are we focusing on
10 developing that skill and expertise in Taiwanese forces?

11 Admiral Paparo: I am seeing that, Senator. And if
12 confirmed, I think we should redouble it, particularly with
13 our command sergeants major, our fleet master chiefs, at
14 that level, and the relationships that we have at senior
15 levels. We must mimic, if not redouble, our efforts among
16 the professional NCO corps.

17 Chairman Reed: It strikes me one of the reasons that
18 the Ukrainian force has resisted so well and I had so much
19 flexibility and initiative at the company level and below
20 is that they have been trained by U.S. Special Forces since
21 2014, and I think showed itself.

22 One of the greatest issues, and it has been mentioned
23 several times here, is contested logistics. That -- as
24 Napoleon said, an army moves in its stomach, a navy swims
25 on its stomach, I guess is the analogy, but this could be

1 the real choke point in terms of operations in the Pacific.

2 And can you tell us what your plans would be, what
3 your emphasis would be in terms of logistics, so we avoid
4 that?

5 Admiral Paparo: Senator, we are gaming at -- we are
6 gaming, modeling, and simulating at every level to identify
7 those gaps. And it is almost a misnomer. We talk about
8 contested logistics as if it never were contested.

9 Logistics are always contested. And executing the
10 joint function of sustainment comes under all of the same
11 pressures and all of the same fog and friction, the
12 maneuver that fires -- all of the joint functions, combat.

13 At the service level, we are seeing invaluable games
14 and simulations that are informing our ability to sustain
15 the force in conflict. And if confirmed, I will continue
16 to work with this committee to identify what those gaps are
17 for rapid closure.

18 Chairman Reed: I would assume your experience
19 commanding a provincial reconstruction team reinforced the
20 nature of logistics and the fact that they all are
21 contested. Is that the experience --

22 Admiral Paparo: Did indeed. It was kind of essential
23 to my formation as a joint officer.

24 Chairman Reed: I think that is an excellent
25 experience to have when you assume joint command. We have

1 also talked about the developing relationship between the
2 Japanese and the Koreans.

3 I have traveled over there several times, and there
4 was until very recently lingering distrust because of the
5 history of those two countries over this century and the
6 previous century.

7 You are seeing now, I presume, a real cooperative
8 spirit and a new generation of leaders that understand the
9 threat is not from either of those countries, but from
10 China. Is that correct?

11 Admiral Paparo: I do see it firsthand, Senator. At
12 the senior level, there is no faking the chemistry between
13 the senior leaders that I see.

14 And more directly and probably more tellingly, the
15 Pacific Fleet headquarters is a deeply partnered
16 environment with not liaison officers, but embeds, officers
17 from other countries with enhanced clearances who do U.S.
18 jobs for a U.S. Command, Pacific Fleet.

19 And to see the chemistry between the multiple -- the
20 Japanese officers that are in the headquarters and the
21 Korean officers. And although it is a complicated and
22 difficult history, I see a bright future.

23 Chairman Reed: Wonderful. Thank you. With that, let
24 me recognize Senator Duckworth for her questions.

25 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for

1 waiting on me. Admiral Paparo, so good to see you again.
2 Good morning. It is -- welcome to you and your family, and
3 congratulations on your nomination.

4 And thank you for our wide ranging discussion on
5 Tuesday. Should you be confirmed, I look forward to
6 working with you to deepen relationships and integration
7 between the Indo-Pacific Command and Transportation
8 Command.

9 We had a good discussion on that. Transportation
10 Command plays an important role in providing unique
11 logistical capabilities to geographic combatant commanders
12 like Indo-Pacific Command.

13 Any conflict in the Indo-Pacific region would pose
14 significant logistical and maneuver challenges for the
15 Joint Force, further complicating TRANSCOM's already
16 difficult mission. I will always be this committee's
17 fierce advocate for resourcing the Transportation Command
18 and ensuring that the Command's hardworking men and women
19 are able to do their mission in any circumstance.

20 Admiral, if confirmed, how will you work with
21 Transportation Command to ensure the two combatant
22 commands' warfighting requirements and planning factors are
23 integrated and supported by rigorous exercises and
24 experimentation?

25 Admiral Paparo: Senator, absolutely indispensable

1 this relationship. And the intellect, the energy, the
2 drive, the expertise at U.S. Transportation Command, at
3 Scott Air Force Base, those relationships are absolutely
4 critical.

5 They must be honest relationships where we hold each
6 other to account, you know, in the best and most team
7 oriented way. But, in deterrence, in competition, in
8 crisis, in conflict, it is very likely the most important
9 CO-COM to CO-COM relationship we have.

10 Senator Duckworth: Can you expand on that with how
11 you would ensure a unified and coherent plan to address the
12 logistical challenges of forces operating in INDOPACOM's AO
13 would face in a contested environment specifically?

14 Admiral Paparo: As Eisenhower said, plans are
15 nothing, planning as everything. Continued planning within
16 the two commands is what builds the habits of mind and
17 habits of action that not only allows the force to plan for
18 every contingency, but to also execute against every
19 contingency when every plan fails at first contact with the
20 enemy.

21 And so, it is that habitual planning relationship, the
22 critical thinking, the combining on a common vision of the
23 operational environment, that consistent planning is that
24 that is going to deliver. Not just resilient plans for
25 conflict across the spectrum, but also effective execution

1 and teamwork when the unforgiving hour comes.

2 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. And part of the
3 teamwork that works in the Indo-Pacific region is the State
4 Partnership for Peace Program.

5 It is really important to maintaining a free and open
6 Indo-Pacific. And I think it is a great opportunity that
7 is existing, that will enhance interoperability, and
8 strengthen our allies and partners in mil to mil
9 engagement.

10 Can you chat with us a little bit about how you would
11 plan to use the National Guard's SPP program to strengthen
12 both our relationships with our allies and partners in the
13 Indo-Pacific, but also to just -- in greater engagement and
14 exercises as well.

15 Admiral Paparo: Senator, across the Pacific, across
16 the Indian Ocean, these State Partnership Programs have got
17 tremendous leverage to build those partnerships, to build
18 partner capacity for us to learn from each other.

19 And one of the unappreciated benefits of the National
20 Guard is that in addition to excellence in the military
21 occupation specialty of each of the Guard's service
22 members, they also frequently bring to bear other civilian
23 skill sets that just add value to the program.

24 So, in the Indian Ocean region, in Bangladesh, in Sri
25 Lanka, across the Southeast Asia, across the South Pacific,

1 it pays dividends.

2 Every single day has huge impact on the ability of the
3 theater to operate. And this I say, just at the
4 appreciation level, as the PAC Fleet Commander, if
5 confirmed, I will learn even more and go even deeper into
6 the State Partnership Program. But as Chairman Reed said,
7 you know, I have got a lot of experience with the National
8 Guard, so kind of as a function of my time in Nuristan, so
9 already a kind of a deep appreciation for what the Guard
10 brings to the fight.

11 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, would
12 you indulge me with one last question on aeromedical
13 evacuations? Thank you. Admiral, I would love to talk
14 about medical evacuation of wounded during a kinetic
15 conflict.

16 I would love to hear about your ideas to leverage our
17 allies and partners in the region to address INDOPACOM's
18 medical care capacity constraint, if there were a conflict
19 in the region.

20 Because we talked at length about the tyranny of
21 distance, and there is no golden hour because it is -- you
22 are going to have to fight your way in to the get the
23 wounded.

24 You are going to have to fight your way out. And even
25 Guam or Tripler is still hours and hours away.

1 Admiral Paparo: Senator, I have travelled throughout
2 the theater, you know, over 37 years. Just haven't had the
3 honor of visiting so many places. And then, among
4 countries that actually have licensure here in the United
5 States, we should be creative about how we are going to
6 think about delivering care, particularly in environments
7 with mass casualty among allies and partners.

8 And so, in addition to looking after our capability at
9 our naval and our military hospitals, we should also be
10 constantly gaming on our Medevac capability, our Casevac
11 capability, our CSAR capability, our getting patients to
12 roll two -- roll one, roll two, roll three care, and being
13 creative in the ways that we partner across the theater.

14 And you mentioned in our office call, the
15 opportunities that could be gained from a partnership
16 standpoint to train more deeply across that.

17 And if confirmed, I pledge to work with you to bring
18 that kind of creativity to bear against this -- really our
19 first duty as commanders is to look after our people.

20 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Admiral. Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Duckworth.
23 Admiral, thank you for your testimony today. Thank you,
24 particularly you and your family for your distinguished
25 service to the Navy and the nation.

1 We will move aggressively on this nomination. With
2 that, the hearing is concluded.

3 [Whereupon, at 12:06 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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