

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED  
STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES  
FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE  
AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE  
FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING  
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW  
10TH FLOOR  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005  
(202) 289-2260  
[www.aldersonreporting.com](http://www.aldersonreporting.com)

1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES INDO-  
2 PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA IN REVIEW OF  
3 THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND  
4 THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5  
6 Thursday, March 21, 2024

7  
8 U.S. Senate  
9 Committee on Armed Services,  
10 Washington, D.C.

11  
12 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m.,  
13 in Room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Jack Reed,  
14 chairman of the committee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Reed [presiding],  
16 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King,  
17 Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker,  
18 Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott,  
19 Tuberville, 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 receive testimony from Admiral John Aquilino,  
5 Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and General Paul  
6 LaCamera, Commander of U.S. forces, who are here.

7           Gentlemen, please convey my thanks to the men and  
8 women serving under your command. I must, at this point,  
9 stop. I think there is an interesting -- yes, we have a  
10 communications problem. So, let me --

11          [Technical problems.]

12          Chairman Reed: Admiral -- on behalf of the committee  
13 --

14          [Technical problems.]

15          [Applause.]

16          [Technical problems.]

17          Chairman Reed: His ambition in the region continues  
18 to grow, as does his aggressive behavior. Chinese  
19 leadership seeks greater power and influence around the  
20 world, and it is leveraging a wide range of military,  
21 economic, and political pressures against its neighbors and  
22 other vulnerable nations to advance these goals.

23          As our defense leaders have made clear, the United  
24 States does not seek conflict with China and strategic  
25 competition is not an inevitable march to conflict.

1 America has long been a Pacific nation, and we have deep  
2 economic and security interest in the region.

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

7 To that end, the Defense Department released a joint  
8 concept for competing last year, which made clear the  
9 objective of China and our adversaries is to win without  
10 fighting. The concept warns that if we do not adapt to the  
11 realities of long term competition, the United States risk  
12 ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage while  
13 preparing for war that never occurs.

14 I am interested to hear from our witnesses how they  
15 plan to utilize the joint capabilities in the Indo-Pacific  
16 and Korea to address these challenges. Recognizing the  
17 challenges in the Indo-Pacific, President Biden has  
18 requested considerable funding for INDOPACOM in the Fiscal  
19 Year 2025 budget.

20 This includes \$9.9 billion for the Pacific Deterrence  
21 Initiative, or PDI, to strengthen the posture,  
22 infrastructure, and capabilities of our forces. In  
23 addition, this PDI investment will help build the  
24 capabilities of our allies and partners through military to  
25 military training exercises, freedom of navigation

1 operations, and infrastructure improvement.

2 The PDI request is a subset of broader, Department  
3 wide investments to modernize and equip the force, much of  
4 which is focused on China as the Department's pacing  
5 challenge. I am also encouraged by the progress we have  
6 made with our allies and partners in the region.

7 These efforts captured in new agreements with Japan,  
8 Korea, the Philippines, and an initiative like AUKUS and  
9 the Quad are truly our asymmetric advantage in the long  
10 term strategic competition with China.

11 However, the most dangerous flashpoint that could turn  
12 our competition with China into a conflict remains Taiwan.  
13 In the past several years, we have seen a surge of  
14 aggressive Chinese military exercises around Taiwan's  
15 airspace and territorial waters, as well as an escalation  
16 in combative language from Beijing.

17 The world has a right to be concerned. To help  
18 strengthen our posture and develop Taiwan's capabilities,  
19 the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act included a  
20 number of important security assistance tools.

21 The bill established the Indo-Pacific Campaigning  
22 Initiative to facilitate INDOPACOM's campaigning activities  
23 in the region, including increased frequency and scale of  
24 exercises, freedom of navigation operations, and partner  
25 engagements.

1           The bill also established a comprehensive training,  
2   advising, and institutional capacity building program for  
3   the military forces of Taiwan. I understand INDOPACOM is  
4   continuing to help Taiwan to advance its defense  
5   capabilities consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, and  
6   I expect Congress will continue to support this effort.

7           Admiral Aquilino, faced with his wide ranging  
8   challenges, I would like to know your assessment of  
9   INDOPACOM's preparedness to carry out the United States  
10  strategy in the region. Key to our success in competition  
11  with China, the posture of our forces in South Korea is  
12  another vital factor.

13          I am encouraged by the recent progress we have seen in  
14  the trilateral relationship between South Korea, Japan, and  
15  the United States. In particular, last year's historic  
16  cooperation announcement between South Korea and Japan, and  
17  the remarkable transformation in Japan's new defense  
18  strategy bode well for the future of this relationship.

19          In addition, last spring, South Korean President Yoon  
20  addressed a Joint Session of Congress here in Washington as  
21  part of his State visit, just the second of President  
22  Biden's term. I understand that Japanese Prime Minister  
23  Kishida will do the same next month.

24          I hope that developments like these will provide more  
25  opportunities to engage other regional partners. General

1 LaCamera, I would ask for your views on the partnership  
2 between the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and other regional  
3 partners in addressing China, as well as North Korea's  
4 destabilizing activity.

5 We must continue to manage the threat posed by North  
6 Korea. We know that Kim Jong Un continues to view nuclear  
7 weapons as, in his words, the ultimate deterrent against  
8 foreign intervention and intends to gain international  
9 acceptance as a nuclear armed state. The goal of U.S.  
10 policy remains the denuclearization of the Korean  
11 Peninsula, but we are not taken on an all or nothing  
12 approach.

13 Instead, the Biden Administration has pursued what it  
14 describes as a calibrated, practical approach to diplomacy  
15 with the North, with the goal of eliminating the threat to  
16 the United States.

17 Gentlemen, I would appreciate your view on the current  
18 threat from North Korea, and how your forces are  
19 maintaining readiness through training and exercises with  
20 their South Korean counterparts.

21 Again, let me thank the witnesses for their testimony  
22 and let me recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.  
23 Thank you.

24

25

1

2

STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM

3

MISSISSIPPI

4

Senator Wicker: Well, we will try this. What do you

5

say?

6

Chairman Reed: Yes. I say, good.

7

Senator Wicker: Admiral Aquilino and General

8

LaCamera, thank you both for your service to our country.

9

It is hard to feel good about the Indo-Pacific. The

10

balance of power is tipping away from the United States in

11

this region.

12

As we confront this uncomfortable dynamic, this

13

committee needs honest feedback and the best military

14

judgment. And I think we are going to get that today. The

15

Biden Administration has completely taken its focus off

16

North Korea, even as Pyongyang becomes a major enabler of

17

Russia's brutal war in Ukraine.

18

Some experts believe that North Korea is preparing for

19

war. We will be interested in your thoughts on that. On

20

the other hand, there is total consensus that China is

21

preparing for war. Beijing just announced another 7.2

22

percent increase to its defense budget, which already

23

rivals ours in size.

24

The Chinese Communist Party continues to modernize its

25

military at a breathtaking pace. China has the largest



1 navy in the world. Last year, Beijing added 30 ships,  
2 while the United States reduced our fleet by 2. But China  
3 is improving more than just its numbers.

4 Every week, we receive more sobering news of emerging  
5 Chinese capabilities, improving Chinese force training.  
6 Beijing likes to flex this newfound strength, particularly  
7 against our Filipino allies and against Taiwan.

8 Chinese ships coerce and harass Filipino vessels,  
9 conducting regular resupply missions on Second Thomas  
10 Shoal. The Chinese military conducts aggressive military  
11 exercises in the Taiwan Strait, simulating a blockade  
12 scenario of that free and democratic island.

13 Chinese jets regularly engage in unsafe and  
14 unprofessional maneuvers against U.S. and allied aircraft,  
15 a problem Admiral Aquilino has publicly highlighted last  
16 year. These activities are not surprising.

17 In public comments, Beijing has clearly stated its  
18 intentions to surpass the United States. Just last year in  
19 San Francisco, Xi Jinping directly told President Biden  
20 that he intends to take Taiwan. We need to pause for a  
21 moment and let that sink in.

22 Xi Jinping told our President, our Commander in Chief,  
23 that he intends to take Taiwan. The Chinese leader warned  
24 the American President, warned the American President face  
25 to face, in person that he intends to take Taiwan.

1           What should we do in response? Our position needs to  
2 be clear. We do not have a moment to waste. We need to do  
3 everything we can right now to deter conflict in the Indo-  
4 Pacific. At the moment, it is plain that we are not doing  
5 everything that we need to do. Last year, INDOPACOM's  
6 unfunded requirements list totaled \$3.5 billion.

7           This year's unfunded requirement list is \$11 billion,  
8 compared to \$3.5 billion last year. We are asking our  
9 military to prepare for a potential war against China  
10 without giving them all the tools necessary to accomplish  
11 that objective. That is unacceptable. We must do better.  
12 We must do better so we can avoid war.

13           So, we can be strong enough to avoid what might  
14 happen. The committee needs to come together, as it has  
15 done in the past, to authorize sufficient, robust funding  
16 levels for our military. There are clear consequences if  
17 we fail to do so. The needs are vast in the Indo-Pacific  
18 theater.

19           We need more capable munitions. We need better  
20 networked command and control systems, additional  
21 submarines, additional destroyers, more amphibs, and  
22 military construction for distributed basing. There are  
23 more needs, but those are the great starting place.

24           Without sufficient funds to implement the National  
25 Defense Strategy, which the chair referred to, the regional

1 balance of power will continue to tilt away from America.

2 I look forward to hearing these distinguished  
3 witnesses, their testimony and a candid discussion of what  
4 this committee can do this year to begin addressing these  
5 challenges. Thank you, sir.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.  
7 Admiral Aquilino, please.

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1

2 STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN COMMANDER,  
3 UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

4 Admiral Aquilino: Chairman Reed, Ranking Member  
5 Wicker, distinguished members of the committee, thank you  
6 for allowing me the opportunity to come before you today to  
7 talk about the Indo-Pacific region. And as Chairman Reed  
8 said, this will be the last time I testify as Commander of  
9 USINDOPACOM.

10 I would like to take a second and thank my family for  
11 their support during these last three incredibly demanding  
12 years and for over 40 years of time in uniform. And after  
13 that time, I can say unequivocally that the sacrifice of  
14 our service members -- make is equally shared by their  
15 families. So again, I couldn't have been successful  
16 without the support of mine.

17 I would like to thank them. The last three years have  
18 been an honor of my lifetime to serve with our Soldiers,  
19 Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, and  
20 the civilians who work tirelessly alongside our allies and  
21 partners to keep our nation safe and ensuring a free and  
22 open Indo-Pacific.

23 I would also like to thank Congress and all of you.  
24 Your support, especially in establishing the Pacific  
25 Deterrence Initiative, has been incredible. The American

1 people should know that your efforts to focus our country's  
2 resources on addressing our most pressing national security  
3 challenge is making a difference.

4 But we all have much more to do and we need to go  
5 faster. When I assumed command three years ago, we  
6 established the Seize the Initiative approach to implement  
7 the National Defense Strategy.

8 In order to deter our adversaries, we challenged the  
9 Joint Force to think, act, and operate differently. And  
10 while progress has been made, we still have high risk, and  
11 we are trending in the wrong direction. Seize the  
12 Initiative has been challenged by the delay in delivery of  
13 military construction, advanced capabilities, and resources  
14 to persistently project and maintain forces West of the  
15 International Date Line.

16 And while modernization of the force and the  
17 development of new concepts are essential to our ability to  
18 deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to  
19 address this rapidly evolving security environment. As  
20 required by the NDAA, I provided my independent assessment  
21 of INDOPACOM's resourcing requirements to inform PDI.

22 That was delivered to your offices on Monday with the  
23 delivery of the budget. And for the last three years these  
24 requirements have been transparent and consistent. And I  
25 acknowledge, however, that those increased -- those

1 requirements have increased. Now, that is due to a few  
2 things.

3 First, previously unfunded requirements don't go away  
4 and they roll over into the request. Second, inflation.  
5 Third, as we work towards military construction, the cost  
6 has increased from initial planning and design, and that is  
7 maturity.

8 And then lastly the threat has changed, and it  
9 continues to increase and deliver quality capability and  
10 increased capacity from our security challengers. So, as I  
11 have said many times, conflict is neither imminent or  
12 inevitable, but our adversaries have to become -- they have  
13 become increasingly aggressive and emboldened.

14 The PRC's unprecedented military buildup and campaign  
15 of coercive actions destabilize the region, and they  
16 challenge our values and the institutions that support a  
17 free and open Indo-Pacific. We must build upon the  
18 progress achieved in the last few years to accelerate the  
19 fielding of these key joint capabilities that I have  
20 described in the independent assessment.

21 They include the Guam defense system, things that  
22 deliver joint and decision superiority, specifically the  
23 Joint Fires Network, the INDOPACOM mission network, and  
24 they have to advance our relationships, specifically AUKUS  
25 and all of the other efforts, trilateral cooperation

1 between Japan and the Republic of Korea.

2 And as I prepare to depart again, I want to thank  
3 Congress for your focus and your support for the challenges  
4 in Indo-Pacific. I also value many of the warm  
5 interactions and counsel I have had with all of you, so I  
6 thank you for the frank conversations, the guidance, and  
7 the assistance.

8 My successor will need that same support. This  
9 challenge is not going away, nor will it get easier. And  
10 Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for, again, the  
11 opportunity to be here. I look forward to having -- your  
12 questions.

13 [The prepared statement of Admiral Aquilino follows:]

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

Chairman Reed: Thank you, Admiral Aquilino. General  
LaCamera, please.



1

2 STATEMENT OF GENERAL PAUL J. LACAMERA, USA COMMANDER,  
3 UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND, UNITED  
4 STATES FORCES KOREA

5 General LaCamera: Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member  
6 Wicker, and distinguished members of the committee, it  
7 remains my distinct honor to sit before you today as the  
8 Commander of the United States Forces Korea, Combined  
9 Forces Command, and United Nations Command.

10 I want to express my sincere appreciation for your  
11 unwavering support to our service members, our civilians,  
12 our contractors, our interagency colleagues and all our  
13 families overseas and those who wait at home. We can never  
14 take our eye off the solemn responsibility to care for  
15 those who have raised their right hand to defend our  
16 Constitution and our way of life, including their families  
17 who do not volunteer, but serve, nonetheless.

18 I am prepared to discuss those in the security  
19 environment on the Korean Peninsula. It was just over  
20 seven years ago that China supported, Russia spurned, an  
21 opportunistic communist North Korea decided to illegally  
22 invade the South, plunging Korea into a very costly armed  
23 conflict that is ongoing today.

24 22 United Nations states came to the aid of the  
25 Republic of Korea then, and 17 of them continue to support

1 armistice enforcement today through the United Nations  
2 Command. Defending forward in this strategic location  
3 allows us to better protect our people, the Korean people,  
4 our homelands, and reinforce the United States' ironclad  
5 commitment to the Republic of Korea. Situated on the Asian  
6 continent, the Korean Peninsula shares a Northern border  
7 with both China and Russia.

8 Although UN Security Council resolutions have levied  
9 strict sanctions against the DPRK, they have found refuge  
10 in their alliance with the People's Republic of China and  
11 their revitalized partnership with Russia. In the last  
12 year, the DPRK has continued developing its military  
13 capabilities, including solid fuel ballistic missile  
14 technology, which violate sanctions.

15 Some of the missile systems that North Korea has been  
16 testing threaten countries worldwide. North Korea has also  
17 been providing military material support to Russia,  
18 assisting in Russia's illegal and indefensible invasion of  
19 Ukraine.

20 These relationships have allowed the DPRK to  
21 circumvent sanctions, build their weapons program  
22 illegally, further missile technology, sustain their  
23 cybercrime derived economy, and threaten the international  
24 rules based order.

25 During the same time, the U.S. ROK Alliance continue

1 to adapt to meet the evolving challenges. In April of  
2 2023, the Presidents of the two countries signed the  
3 Washington Declaration reaffirming our commitment to mutual  
4 defense. They also announced the establishment of a  
5 Nuclear Consultative Group to strengthen extended  
6 deterrence, discuss nuclear strategic planning, and manage  
7 the DPRK threat.

8 We have taken substantial and concrete steps to follow  
9 through on these commitments. The Republic of Korea has  
10 organized its own strategic command, giving us another  
11 arrow in our quiver. There have been multiple strategic  
12 asset deployments to the Republic -- to the Korean  
13 Peninsula, including a nuclear ballistic missile submarine  
14 and the first B-52 landing in the last 40 years.

15 In August 2023, the Presidents of the U.S., ROK, and  
16 Prime Minister of Japan met at Camp David for a trilateral  
17 summit. This historically significant meeting recognized  
18 the importance of advancing the security and prosperity of  
19 our people.

20 We have made significant progress in following through  
21 on the commitments made during the summit, including steps  
22 towards sharing of real time missile warning data,  
23 increased trilateral exercises on the sea, and the  
24 introduction of trilateral air and cyber exercises.

25 Over the past three years, my thinking on operations,

1 activities, and investments has -- continues to evolve.  
2 However, what has not changed is my focus on protecting the  
3 homelands, preparing for combat, and taking care of people.  
4 Since readiness is perishable, I will never be satisfied  
5 with our level of training and preparedness.

6 As the ROK and U.S. conduct regular military training  
7 activities on the Peninsula, I am convinced that the DPRK  
8 is not only reacting to our activities, but in many ways  
9 mirroring them. We must continue to build physical,  
10 mental, and spiritual readiness through operations and  
11 activities designed to compete in the gray zone with the  
12 DPRK.

13 To defend the Republic of Korea, we must continue to  
14 invest in 28,500 service members, including by, tri, and  
15 multilateral exercises on and off the peninsula. Multi-  
16 domain training integrating live, virtual, and constructive  
17 entities, and continue to experiment with next generation  
18 capabilities in the exact environment where they will be  
19 employed.

20 To maintain the armistice agreement, our ironclad  
21 commitment to maintain our combat readiness, we need your  
22 continued support and recognition of the threat to the  
23 homeland. It has been an honor to serve in these three  
24 commands.

25 It has also been an honor to serve with Admiral

1 Aquilino these past four and a half years in multiple  
2 commands. My best to him and his family. Fair winds and  
3 following seas. Once again, thank you for all your support  
4 and I look forward to your questions.

5 [The prepared statement of General LaCamera follows:]

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1

2 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, General LaCamera.  
3 And before I begin, let me remind my colleagues that we had  
4 a closed classified session before this. No information  
5 discussed in that session may be discussed here in the open  
6 session.

7 Admiral Aquilino, CIA Director Burns recently  
8 published an article in which he said, "no one is watching  
9 U.S. support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese  
10 leadership." What message does that send to China if the  
11 United States fails to support Ukraine and allows the  
12 Russians, as a result, to succeed?

13 Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Chairman. You know, in  
14 today's integrated, world and this closely aligned global  
15 environment, it is clear to me that based on the comments  
16 by President Putin and President Xi and their desire for a  
17 no limits relationship, and in President Xi's words, a  
18 relationship that we haven't seen in 100 years, that the  
19 two authoritarian nations are aligned more closely than  
20 ever.

21 So, in the lens that we look at it, a strategic win in  
22 Ukraine for Russia is a strategic win for President Xi in  
23 China. And allowing those authoritarian nations to move  
24 forward, to change the world order in ways that favor  
25 authoritarian nations and infringe upon the freedoms and

1 our values that the United States and our likeminded  
2 nations and allies and partners share, that is a dangerous  
3 new world.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you. The supplemental that we  
5 are now currently trying to pass contains not only the  
6 necessary support for Ukraine, but also support for the  
7 Indo-Pacific region. So, we would need to pass that  
8 supplemental to help you also. Is that correct?

9 Admiral Aquilino: Chairman, thank you to the  
10 committee and the Congress for working through this  
11 supplemental, and I respectfully request that it gets  
12 passed as soon as possible. What is in that is beneficial  
13 not only for my partner, General Cavoli in EUCOM, as it  
14 applies to the capabilities that Ukraine needs.

15 To our previous point, a strategic win for President  
16 Putin is a strategic loss for the United States. It is  
17 also a strategic win for China. But I thank you  
18 specifically for the things you put in there that directly  
19 support INDOPACOM. The \$3 billion that has been identified  
20 for increased submarine industrial base maintenance and  
21 support, that is critically important.

22 Second, the FMF support for Taiwan, also critically  
23 important and directly aligned with the Taiwan Relations  
24 Act and the responsibilities that we execute in support of  
25 that law. And then lastly, those capabilities provided to

1 INDOPACOM -- and I have had multiple engagements with many  
2 of you.

3 Senator Sullivan and I had some conversations on those  
4 capabilities that are critically important, and I know  
5 those are in that supplemental. And I thank all the  
6 members, the committee, and the Congress for pushing that  
7 forward. But it is critically important, and it is  
8 important to go fast.

9 Chairman Reed: I should note that the major proponent  
10 of the submarine industrial base funds was my colleague,  
11 Senator Wicker, and we all should thank him for that.

12 General LaCamera, we have been talking about a  
13 transfer of operational control in Korea for as long as I  
14 think I have been here. Quickly, what are the obstacles?  
15 Is that something that is now being essentially postponed  
16 because of the increasing threat?

17 General LaCamera: Thanks, Chairman. No, I mean we  
18 are on the trajectory to complete it, but it is standard  
19 space, not time based, and I have gotten that directly from  
20 the President of the Republic of Korea. So, we are working  
21 on it, and we are moving forward.

22 Chairman Reed: But the cooperation between, I assume  
23 from comments that we have heard, between not only South  
24 Korea but Japan and the United States together is at a  
25 historic level of integration and cooperation. Is that



1 correct?

2 General LaCamera: Yes, chairman. And I would like to  
3 thank Admiral Aquilino for the tremendous support we get  
4 and getting at the strategic assets, and also working the  
5 cooperation between the three countries.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you. One issue, for both of  
7 you, a conflict in the Pacific, perhaps our weakest link is  
8 congested logistics. It is a long way from the United  
9 States to the areas of operation. And just Admiral  
10 Aquilino, very quickly, since my time is running out, your  
11 quick comments and then General LaCamera on congested  
12 logistics and what must we do.

13 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. Thanks. So,  
14 supporting the force over half the globe is the task in the  
15 Indo-Pacific AOR. It is one of the reasons that we have  
16 highlighted the need for significant posture initiatives in  
17 the form of support and development to our friends and  
18 allies and partners in the region.

19 That is one of the critical aspects. But I also have  
20 to thank Congress for your support for the additional  
21 fueling tankers that you provided to General Van Ovost to  
22 be able to do that. We are going to need more of those.  
23 And as we distribute our logistics capabilities, we are  
24 going to do them on land.

25 We are going to do it at sea. We move some Army

1 watercraft. So bottom line is it is critically important.  
2 That said, the United States is the only nation that can  
3 sustain this type of force across the globe. So, it is  
4 critically important. We need to do more.

5 Chairman Reed: Very -- General, comment, please.

6 General LaCamera: Yes. The question I continue to  
7 ask both TRANSCOM and INDOPACOM is when is strategic  
8 movement become operational maneuver? I think our  
9 adversaries have learned if you let us build the Iron  
10 Mountain, you are in trouble. So, there is that piece of  
11 the fight.

12 The other part of the fight is that the fact that I  
13 sit inside the A2/AD bubble, and that we are actually on  
14 the Asian continent, in South Korea. It is not a third  
15 world country. It is a first world country that can have  
16 production -- that has production capabilities, and I think  
17 we are looking at all avenues of what can we do to sustain  
18 ourselves.

19 But we have got to keep the air and the sea lines of  
20 communications open in the fight. It will be a different  
21 fight for a fight on the Korean Peninsula in the future.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much. Senator Wicker,  
23 please.

24 Senator Wicker: Admiral Aquilino, you just talked a  
25 little about the supplemental. If Putin is successful in

1 Ukraine, I think you said that is a strategic win for the  
2 Chinese Communist Party. And you just nodded your head in  
3 the affirmative.

4 Can I conclude from your testimony that failure to  
5 pass the supplemental, being a strategic win for Putin and  
6 being a strategic win for the Chinese Communist Party,  
7 makes conflict in the Indo-Pacific more likely?

8 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. Again, with the  
9 linkage of the PRC and Russia as -- that we have watched  
10 now over the past two years, again, I have -- I do believe  
11 that a strategic win for Putin is a strategic win for  
12 President Xi. It certainly makes our problem of deterrence  
13 more difficult, and it makes the potential for conflict  
14 more likely.

15 Senator Wicker: You said, I believe I am quoting you  
16 correctly a few moments ago, things are trending in the  
17 wrong direction for the United States in the Indo-Pacific.  
18 Could you enlarge on that?

19 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, sir. What I said is that  
20 things are trending in the wrong direction based on their  
21 capability, capacity, defense industrial base, their  
22 actions and intent by the People's Republic of China.

23 So, they are continuing to develop their military  
24 machine despite an economy that has significant problems.  
25 They have increased their defense budget 7.2 percent this

1 year. That is three years in a row they have increased it,  
2 and I am not sure that is a very transparent number. My  
3 assessment is they are actually spending more on defense  
4 than they articulate.

5 So, capability and capacity are increasing. Their  
6 actions are becoming much more belligerent. Their rhetoric  
7 is more clear. They have now articulated that the feature  
8 at Second Thomas Shoal is sovereign territory of the  
9 People's Republic of China.

10 It is not, as validated by the 2016 arbitral ruling  
11 that concluded China has no legal claim to that feature.  
12 And then on top of that, their enforcement is becoming  
13 concerning.

14 The fire hosing of our Philippine allies, the ramming  
15 of their ships, and preventing their ability to resupply  
16 their sailors on the Sierra Madre, as well as restricting  
17 their ability to utilize the resources inside their  
18 exclusive economic zone is all counter to international  
19 law, and it is counter to what all nations interpret as the  
20 rightful interpretation of UNCLOS.

21 Senator Wicker: Okay. Well, that leads me then to  
22 ask about the unfunded requirements. Last Fiscal Year, the  
23 Navy asked for \$3.5 billion in unfunded requirements. This  
24 year, it has skyrocketed to \$11 billion in unfunded  
25 requirements. Now, it is my understanding this is way more

1 than a simple wish list on your part.

2 Because we have required in the NDAA a couple of years  
3 ago an independent assessment. We have required it  
4 specifically of INDOPACOM. Look at the National Defense  
5 Strategy that is in place for the United States. Look at  
6 what you have and give us an independent assessment of what  
7 you need. Is that independent assessment report  
8 instructive to you in telling us what your unfunded  
9 requirements are?

10 Admiral Aquilino: Well, yes, Senator, first, it is  
11 law, so I will deliver that report until you tell me to  
12 stop. We have advocated for those capabilities now for  
13 three years. They have been about 90 plus percent  
14 consistent. So, in other words, we haven't shifted the  
15 target. We believe we have the right strategy.

16 We believe we have the right approach, and we have  
17 delivered those requirements. Additionally, for the two  
18 years prior to me, my predecessor was required to deliver a  
19 similar -- or the same report. Those requirements have  
20 been consistent, specifically with, you know, approach to  
21 the Guam defense system, the munitions capabilities that we  
22 need to sustain our deterrence effects, and then many of  
23 the other capabilities, so --

24 Senator Wicker: We have told you to give us this  
25 report, and we have specifically directed that in our NDAA

1 to INDOPACOM, and yet, this Congress has not given you what  
2 you have needed, so much of that requirement rolls over to  
3 the next Fiscal Year and is -- and contributes to the \$11  
4 billion which you have asked for this year.

5 Admiral Aquilino: That is correct, Senator.

6 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
7 Chairman.

8 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator  
9 Shaheen, please.

10 Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you, Admiral and  
11 General, for the years of service to our country and for  
12 the commitment of your families as well. And, Admiral, we  
13 will miss you probably more than you will miss us,  
14 actually.

15 But I think this is a question for you, General  
16 LaCamera, and although you both talked about the growing  
17 relationship between North Korea and Russia, that has  
18 developed since Putin invaded Ukraine, and, but can you  
19 elaborate on what that means for the regional reaction and  
20 what we are seeing in terms of that ability to empower both  
21 North Korea and Russia?

22 General LaCamera: Yes, thanks, Senator. It is all  
23 -- the relationship has always been there. I mean, the  
24 Korean War goes back to when both Mao and Kim Il-Sung went  
25 to Stalin and asked for permission to invade. And then it

1 fell off when the Soviet Union collapsed. And that  
2 relationship or that assistance, which I think contributed  
3 to the arduous march of the 90s for DPRK, now it is  
4 -- there is an opportunity for KGU to have its weapons  
5 tested and to provide that support.

6 He has always gotten support from Russia and China and  
7 the United Nations. Over the last couple of years, they  
8 have continued to veto any kind of new sanctions. And so  
9 diplomatically, he has gotten that support.

10 Informationally, he has gotten the support. Both have  
11 provided exchanges of congratulations. And then  
12 militarily, there is now that relationship and they have  
13 contributed to the ability for DPRK to avoid sanctions.

14 Senator Shaheen: And are we seeing any reaction from  
15 our allies and the other countries in the Indo-Pacific to  
16 this relationship, and any greater concern about what is  
17 going on there?

18 General LaCamera: I meet with the member nation  
19 ambassadors once a month doing an ambassador roundtable and  
20 we talk about it, and it is very concerning, that  
21 relationship.

22 Senator Shaheen: China and Russia have both gained a  
23 strategic advantage over us in terms of information  
24 operations and are fighting irregular warfare campaigns  
25 against us and our allies. Can you speak to what we need

1 to do to better leverage our ability to combat those  
2 information campaigns? I guess, Admiral, this is for you.

3 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator, thanks. You know,  
4 the execution of propaganda, misinformation and  
5 disinformation, is a real concern for me. It should be a  
6 real concern for all of the United States. The PRC's  
7 ability to influence our information environment is  
8 concerning. I will give you this example, right. So, two  
9 years ago, you heard a lot about the West is declining, the  
10 United States is in decline, and the East is rising. China  
11 is rising. All right, that is Chinese propaganda.

12 Our economy continues to grow. Theirs is in the  
13 cellar. So, the actions in the information space  
14 -- ultimately, it was being reported all over the United  
15 States. That is the expansive ability of mis and  
16 disinformation to influence the United States.

17 We ought to understand that it is occurring, and we  
18 ought to understand that our free and open media, and the  
19 truth that we project is a critical value of the United  
20 States. It is one to be protected. But we have to call  
21 out the mis and disinformation to stop that ability to  
22 influence.

23 Senator Shaheen: And do you think we need more  
24 authorities, we need more leadership on responding to that?  
25 We need a better strategy? Why have we not done better as



1 China and Russia have both really expanded their  
2 disinformation operations.

3 Admiral Aquilino: Well, when you say we I am going to  
4 talk about what we do in INDOPACOM. So, the strategic  
5 approach we have taken is to expose the bad and amplify the  
6 good. We must continue to tell the story that is right.

7 The actions that occurred at Second Thomas Shoal at  
8 the Philippines is a good example there. The media that  
9 the Philippine -- our Philippine allies put on the ships to  
10 show the PRC actions are important for the world to see.  
11 You will not see those videotapes in mainland China.

12 And their story is completely different, which is, you  
13 know, this is an agreement that the Philippines have balked  
14 on, and they are taking their action. So again, it is just  
15 a good example of what happens.

16 We have to understand how media is used in the  
17 People's Republic of China. Oh, by the way, and in Russia,  
18 because it is a similar problem, and in the DPRK. But it  
19 is not what we see in our media. We have to understand  
20 what is occurring and the differences, we have to value it,  
21 and then we have to expose it.

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I am out of time, but I  
23 did want to thank INDOPACOM for being the leading combatant  
24 command on women, peace, and security because I think it  
25 gives us a real advantage. Thank you.

1 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.  
2 Senator Ernst, please. Senator Fischer, please.

3 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank  
4 you both for being here today. Admiral, thank you for your  
5 many years of service. As you mentioned, families are  
6 important in this too, so my thanks to them as well. Thank  
7 you for providing, Admiral, the committee with your  
8 unfunded requirements list.

9 Its sheer size indicates a significant gap in what  
10 INDOPACOM is being asked to do and what this  
11 Administration's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request would  
12 equipment to do. Can you highlight some of your missions  
13 that would be more challenging to achieve without the items  
14 on that unfunded requirements list?

15 Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. You know,  
16 first, it is worth highlighting that, you know, I don't  
17 take lightly when we develop that list and identify the  
18 requirements and we also understand the magnitude. But  
19 what we all have to understand is we haven't faced a threat  
20 like this since World War II, okay.

21 The largest military, again, as Senator Wicker said,  
22 the world's largest navy, soon to be the world's largest  
23 air force. So, the magnitude, scope, and scale of this  
24 security challenge cannot be understated. All the missions  
25 would be challenged, but some examples. The defense of

1 Guam system is designed to deliver homeland defense to  
2 170,000 American citizens in Guam, as well as the need to  
3 deliver combat power if required from Guam.

4 So, there is a military force generation mission.  
5 There is a defense of our allies and partners mission as  
6 applied through the mutual defense treaties of the Republic  
7 of Korea, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

8 Those requirements and our commitment to our allies is  
9 the highest level of commitment. The ability to deliver  
10 deterrent effects and ensure I am prepared to fight and win  
11 if tasked, that is what we have identified on that list.

12 Senator Fischer: Thank you. I appreciate that it is  
13 a, I think, very complete list as well and it is very  
14 realistic. And I do appreciate your honesty in the  
15 information you provide on what you need to keep this  
16 country safe and keep the world safer.

17 So, thank you for that. In your written testimony,  
18 you note that the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps still need  
19 to procure the types and quantities of munitions required  
20 to defeat threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

21 As a Combatant Commander, how do delays in munitions  
22 production or decisions to procure lower quantities of  
23 munitions than you require by the operation plans that we  
24 have out there, how does that inhibit your ability to field  
25 an integrated Joint Force that will be effective against a

1 pure adversary?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. You know, I  
3 would say the number one lesson learned for the United  
4 States as we watched what the Russians have done in the  
5 illegitimate, illegal invasion of Ukraine, the number one  
6 lesson we learned is that munitions of the right type and  
7 magnitude in the right place, a, delivers a deterrent  
8 effect, and b, if we get in a fight will be absolutely  
9 needed.

10 So, this is a lesson learned over many, many years,  
11 but highlighted in this recent history as it applies to  
12 Ukraine. Those same lessons learned applied in the Indo-  
13 Pacific command. So, we need the right numbers and the  
14 right types for the problem set that the United States will  
15 have.

16 And those are capabilities, not only the land attack  
17 capabilities, but the anti-ship capabilities, anti-air  
18 capabilities, and in the magnitude that we need. So  
19 critically important. And, you know, I don't want to learn  
20 the lesson again.

21 Senator Fischer: Sir, in that unfunded priorities  
22 list, you included a requirement for an additional \$580.7  
23 million for INDOPACOM campaigning. When you testified  
24 before this committee last year, we discussed the value of  
25 campaigning and having persistent forward forces operating

1 with our allies and partners forward every single day.

2 So, I understand the importance of these types of  
3 exercises. Clearly the budget doesn't align with that  
4 campaigning though. So, what happens if there are  
5 continued delays and the resources needed to persistently  
6 project and maintain forces in the Indo-Pacific?

7 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. So critically  
8 important and aligned to the strategy in the theater and in  
9 the national defense strategy is the theory of campaigning,  
10 which is pushing to turn forces forward, operating,  
11 exercising and, you know, working every day with our allies  
12 and partners forward to deliver those deterrent effects.  
13 If those funds are not there, I will just be doing less.

14 Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr.  
15 Chairman.

16 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator  
17 Blumenthal, please.

18 Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. As I said  
19 in the closed session that we had, I want to express my  
20 appreciation for both of your service and the tremendous  
21 service of everybody who works under your commands.

22 I would like to ask a couple of questions about  
23 submarines, in particular AUKUS. How important is AUKUS in  
24 our defense going into the future in deterring China and  
25 also providing the capability that the United States needs

1 to defend our allies and ourself?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, again, additionally, part  
3 of our strategy is to bring together and strengthen our  
4 alliance and partnerships.

5 So, AUKUS is a critically important aspect of that.  
6 It is a once in a lifetime, once in a generation increase  
7 in capability of the Australians. It is worth me  
8 highlighting that the Australians are a mutual defense  
9 treaty ally. There are critical partner.

10 The Australians have shared blood and treasure with  
11 the United States in every fight we have been in for the  
12 last 100 years. So, strengthening their defense. Having  
13 them with the exact same capabilities that we have to be  
14 interoperable. You know, I see no break in that linkage.

15 And for the Australians to have Virginia class  
16 submarines and additional capabilities, we identify in  
17 pillar two of the AUKUS agreement, tied with our UK  
18 counterparts, that is a critically -- let's put it this  
19 way, that is a really strong team that if we need to come  
20 together, that is very valuable.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Doesn't our reducing the rate of  
22 production of submarines send the wrong signal at this  
23 point?

24 Admiral Aquilino: Well, Senator, I have certainly  
25 advocated for increased capability of our Joint Force. I

1 have advocated for increased capacity of our Joint Force in  
2 all domains. Our undersea capabilities are a significant  
3 advantage for the United States, and we ought to consider  
4 expanding.

5 Senator Blumenthal: I know you are in a tough  
6 position, and I am not asking you for your personal opinion  
7 or what the deliberations were that went into the rate  
8 -- the reduction in the rate of submarine production from  
9 two to one per year.

10 But I think it sends exactly the wrong signal to our  
11 allies, not only Australia, but others in the region when  
12 we reduce the output of such a critical weapons platform  
13 that is vital not only to our own defense, but to  
14 deterrence and defense of others in the region.

15 Would you agree that we ought to increase the rate of  
16 production, if possible?

17 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, again, I would -- the  
18 undersea capabilities that you have articulated, I  
19 absolutely need. And I need them at scale, and I need them  
20 at speed. This is a whole of nation problem.

21 Number one, we should resource the requirements as it  
22 is needed to deliver those capabilities. But we also need  
23 to deliver those capabilities on the timelines that we  
24 desire and that we pay for.

25 So again, I think there is lessons for all of the

1 nation here as it applies to this specific capability and  
2 others. So again, I need the assets operationally, there  
3 is no doubt.

4 Senator Blumenthal: How would you compare, question  
5 for both of you, our capability in the artificial  
6 intelligence sphere as compared to the PRC?

7 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I am tracking this very  
8 closely. I think the United States clearly has an  
9 advantage. We need to maintain that advantage. And, you  
10 know, when we talk about AI, I always articulate, let's  
11 speak more precisely instead of saying AI, right.

12 So, whether it is target recognition, whether it is  
13 autonomous command and control, we have to be specific.  
14 That said, we do have an advantage. I work a lot with, Mr.  
15 Doug Beck from the Defense Innovative -- you know,  
16 Innovation Unit.

17 He supports my efforts to deliver capabilities that we  
18 need, and he is a really good asset to help push this  
19 forward. But we do have an advantage and we need to  
20 maintain it.

21 Senator Blumenthal: General.

22 General LaCamera: Senator, I would agree with that.  
23 And we are continuing to work with INDOPACOM, also with the  
24 commercial industry, and academia to make sure that we do  
25 maintain that.



1 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you both.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

4 Senator Rounds, please.

5 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,  
6 let me just begin by thanking both of you for your service  
7 to our country.

8 Admiral Aquilino, I understand this is the last time  
9 you are going to be before our committee, and we thank you  
10 very much for your years of service to this country. I  
11 have most certainly appreciated your candidness in our  
12 closed session regarding the challenges that you face and  
13 the need to continue to invest.

14 Everything that we can do to deter the forces in that  
15 region, means that our young men and women are not in  
16 harm's way as much as they would be otherwise. So, thank  
17 you for that. Let me just begin, Admiral Aquilino, the way  
18 that you have discussed the Joint Fires Network makes it  
19 sound like an actual joint solution to the problem -- to  
20 the problem set that the Department has identified and  
21 which the JADC2 is supposed to solve.

22 If so, I am glad that you are leaning forward on this  
23 and have submitted it as an unfunded priority. My question  
24 to you relates to my concern that each service is  
25 apparently deciding its own approach to the joint all-

1 domain command and control program.

2 We are talking air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace.  
3 How and when do you see the Department bringing all of  
4 these separate lines of effort together?

5 Admiral Aquilino: Thank you, Senator. So first, the  
6 services are doing some good work to figure out how to  
7 close and maintain the ability, through a kill web  
8 mechanism, to close their kill chains.

9 From the combatant command perspective, we don't do  
10 anything in stovepipes. We fight as a Joint Force. So,  
11 the approach we have taken with the Joint Fires Network is  
12 to pull together a best of breed approach of Project  
13 Convergence from the Army, Overmatch from the Navy and  
14 Marine Corps, and then ABMS from the Air Force, along with  
15 the DARPA aspect of Assault Break II, to pull all those  
16 together and deliver a real near time, best of breed  
17 solution to be able to command and control the Joint Force  
18 and ultimately close the kill chain.

19 And I think what this is -- the way we have  
20 articulated it and linked it with the building, Senator is,  
21 you know, we are going to kind of provide some insights  
22 into the further development of JADC2 as it goes forward.

23 So, we are completely linked. We participate in  
24 utilize it in the guide series of experiments that Deputy  
25 Secretary Hicks has been running. We think it will be

1 informative, but ultimately I am going to produce a  
2 prototype, if you will, that will be demonstrated in our  
3 next big exercise this year to see where we are, what we  
4 are doing, is it right, is it at scale?

5 We have also pulled in what CENTCOM has been doing,  
6 and we have pulled in what General Cavoli has been doing in  
7 EUCOM in support of Ukraine. So, our lens is this is a  
8 best of breed and a pretty good indicator on what we think  
9 the future should look like.

10 Senator Rounds: When we talk about all of the  
11 domains, we are assuming that our adversaries in the region  
12 will do their best to limit our capabilities in multiple  
13 domains, whether it is cyber or whether it is space. In  
14 our particular case, we have adversaries who prepare to  
15 fight and in an armed conflict there will be no limitations  
16 with regard to any domain.

17 We will be at war, and the war will be in all domains,  
18 including cyberspace and space itself. Accurate to say?  
19 And the reason why I ask that is because we talk about a  
20 kill web now rather than a kill chain, recognizing multiple  
21 ways.

22 Can you expand a little bit on that? And I am going  
23 to ask you to be a little bit brief because I have one  
24 question that I really want to get to, to General LaCamera  
25 on as well.

1           Admiral Aquilino: Yes, sir. The kill web is  
2 critical, right, because we do expect the adversary to try  
3 to break our kill chains. We need multiple paths, multiple  
4 dimensions. We need to be resilient. We need to deliver  
5 and close those kill chains. So. Absolutely required.

6           Senator Rounds: Thank you, Admiral. And I appreciate  
7 your directness on that. General LaCamera, from where I  
8 said a quiet day on the Korean peninsula is truly a great  
9 day.

10           Our relationship with the Republic of Korea and with  
11 the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission,  
12 is a large credit to why we have had a lasting peace since  
13 1950. We have been there, but we have been there, and we  
14 have been able to maintain peace.

15           While these relationships have been established for  
16 decades, are there any policy barriers that hinder your  
17 command's ability to fully integrate partner nation family  
18 personnel into your community programs such as schools.

19           General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. It is not a  
20 policy. It is really I need the NDAA changed to read a  
21 space -- from space available to space required for our  
22 schools for our UNC member nations.

23           Senator Rounds: It is a simple change, but it is one  
24 that would be very important in terms of maintaining that  
25 relationship.

1           General LaCamera: We haven't had to turn anybody  
2 away, but we can't guarantee it for them. And obviously  
3 the families are important and there is angst in those  
4 families until we can tell them that, yes, we have a school  
5 slot for them.

6           Senator Rounds: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.  
7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8           Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Senator Rounds. On  
9 behalf of Chairman Reed, I recognize Senator Kaine.

10          Senator Kaine: I would like to ask some questions  
11 about alliances. First, I will stress the questions that  
12 Senator Blumenthal asked about the capacity that AUKUS  
13 helps deliver us in the region.

14          And I won't go into it because I thought, Admiral  
15 Aquilino, your answer was very robust there. I have worked  
16 with many of the colleagues on this committee and on the  
17 Foreign Relations committee to get the AUKUS framework in  
18 law, and I am really happy with the first set of  
19 authorities we put in the NDAA, but we do need to get the  
20 supplemental passed, as you indicated.

21          Let me ask a question about another alliance that I  
22 think the committee understands, but sometimes the public  
23 doesn't. And General LaCamera, I would like to ask you  
24 about Japan and South Korea. When the President, President  
25 Biden, had the Camp David summit with the political

1 leadership of the two countries, it was a headline in the  
2 United States, but most people saw it and thought, well,  
3 Japan is an ally and Korea is an ally.

4 So, in the U.S., I don't think it was seen as a big  
5 deal. But it is a big deal because Japan and South Korea  
6 have had a lot of challenges based on tough, tough history.  
7 And the -- in closing -- the increasing closeness of that  
8 relationship, both at the political level and at the  
9 military level, is a big deal.

10 I would like you to talk a little bit about how this  
11 relationship getting closer and the U.S. role in helping  
12 achieve a rapprochement is giving us a strong set of  
13 alliances and an increasing deterrence capacity in the  
14 Indo-Pacific.

15 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. I will open with,  
16 we have got to have the humility to know that we can't  
17 solve the historical differences between the two nations,  
18 but we have to do our best to continue to work together  
19 with them.

20 And we have to have the emotional intelligence to see  
21 it from both sides as we go forward. The true existential  
22 threat to the Republic of Korea and Japan is not World War  
23 II imperial Japan, it is the Democratic People's Republic  
24 of Korea with nuclear weapons pointed at both countries,  
25 and quite frankly, our country.

1           And so, I think, you know, that and our ability to  
2 train and it is, you know, what do we reveal and what do we  
3 conceal? You know, how do we reassure, the South Korean  
4 people? How do we reassure the people of Japan of the  
5 importance of that relationship?

6           The Korea theater of operations is pretty tight. The  
7 Admiral has been talking about some of these weapons  
8 systems that are out there. We are all inside an A2/AD  
9 /bubble, both countries, and we have got to continue to  
10 work together for the security of all three nations.

11          Admiral Aquilino: Senator, can I -- comment. So, it  
12 is absolutely worth highlighting the leadership of  
13 President Yoon and Prime Minister Kishida to move to where  
14 we are today with the trilateral relationships.

15          Without their leadership -- and I sat with both of  
16 them, and I thank them for it, but the security environment  
17 dictates we are stronger together. We can defend each  
18 other's nations. As a matter of fact, as we sit here  
19 today, we have a U.S. ballistic missile defense ship, a  
20 Japanese ballistic missile defense ship, and a Korea, South  
21 Korean ballistic missile defense ship operating in the area  
22 with the expectation of a potential launch by North Korea  
23 to defend all three of our nations.

24          That is where we move this ball. And again, Genera  
25 LaCamera's work has been critical, but the President and

1 Prime Minister's leadership cannot be understated.

2 Senator Kaine: I am glad you emphasize that. Let me  
3 move to another topic. 2024 is the 30th anniversary of the  
4 effective date of the UN convention on the law of the sea.  
5 It was written in the 1980s.

6 Sufficient nations ratified by 1994 for it to go into  
7 effect. The U.S. follows the convention but has never  
8 ratified it. The fact that we haven't ratified it means  
9 that we lose opportunities, for example, to claim mineral  
10 rights at deep seabed. Those opportunities have shrunk  
11 while other nations have grown, even at our expense.

12 And the fact that we haven't ratified also means that  
13 we are unable to take enforcement actions or press against  
14 illegal activities by nations like China that would violate  
15 the convention.

16 There has been a pretty steady drumbeat of support for  
17 the UN convention from defense secretaries, DHS  
18 secretaries, Secretaries of State, military leadership  
19 under Administrations of both parties over the last 30  
20 years, but it has particularly picked up in the last ten  
21 years, indicating that it would be wise, it would be in the  
22 U.S.'s interest if we join the more than 150 nations that  
23 acceded to that convention.

24 Is that, Admiral Aquilino, as you finish, you know, 40  
25 plus years of service, including service in the INDOPACOM



1 in this most recent important chapter of your professional  
2 career, do you share the view that the U.S. joining the  
3 convention would be a smart thing for us to do?

4 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. So, for three years,  
5 INDOPACOM and all of my hearings and meetings with  
6 Congress, I have advocated for the ratification of UNCLOS.  
7 For the three years before that, as the Pacific Fleet  
8 Commander, I have advocated for it, and in the years before  
9 that as well. So, it absolutely puts us on the right foot  
10 as it applies to the security environment, there is no  
11 doubt.

12 Senator Kaine: Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

13 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator  
14 Ernst, please.

15 Senator Ernst: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. And  
16 thanks, gentlemen, very much for being here today. And,  
17 Admiral Aquilino, we wish you the best in your next  
18 chapter, and thank you so much for your service. Admiral  
19 Aquilino, as the Combatant Commander for INDOPACOM, you do  
20 have a lot on your plate. You have heard from my  
21 colleagues.

22 We understand the threat that China poses as our  
23 pacing threat. In July, I have received back some RFIs  
24 from SOCOM, and they stated that global Combatant  
25 Commanders will require more SOF forces in great power

1 competition.

2 That same RFI stated that the U.S. Army's force  
3 structure cuts to SOF enablers will increase risk to  
4 operational commanders. Specifically, cuts to the SOF  
5 formation decrease our ability to meet Combatant  
6 Commanders' requirements.

7 Admiral, do you agree with SOCOM's assessment that you  
8 will need more SOF forces in great power competition?

9 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. It is good to see  
10 you again. So, General Fenton has been a great partner for  
11 a number of years.

12 So, as we look at laying down the correct posture and  
13 Indo-Pacific Command in order to deter conflict, there is  
14 an absolute SOF component of that, and it has increased as  
15 we have laid out, what do we believe we need in place.  
16 General Fenton has supported that.

17 So, our posture has increased. Again, I can't speak  
18 to the other combatant commands. But I have also put my  
19 money where my mouth is because I have a -- my senior  
20 enlist advisor is sitting behind me is a Navy Seal, so I  
21 needed some SOF too in the headquarters.

22 Senator Ernst: Absolutely. Thank you. So, you would  
23 agree, Admiral, that those relationships that those SOF  
24 personnel develop in your region are extremely important.  
25 Is that correct?

1           Admiral Aquilino: Yes, ma'am. Their ability to  
2 operate persistently with our partners for training, for  
3 increasing of combat capability, and then ultimately,  
4 should there be conflict, to have them in the right place  
5 is critically important to me.

6           Senator Ernst: Very good. And throughout the  
7 morning, I have heard my colleagues talk about  
8 relationships and how important they are. And whether that  
9 is nation to nation, member to member, mil to mil, all of  
10 that is very important.

11           So, I have worked with a number of members in a  
12 bipartisan way here on some of the COFA nations and the  
13 Convene Act. And can you speak to the relationship that  
14 those COFA nations have and how that help stabilize the  
15 region?

16           Admiral Aquilino: Yes, ma'am. Before I do that, I do  
17 want to thank you for passing the COFA agreement with the  
18 funding required. That was critically important to our  
19 national security.

20           We defend those islands like they are our homeland.  
21 Those COFA states contribute more military members per  
22 capita than anywhere else. We value their service and  
23 their importance. But bottom line is the right force in  
24 the right place at the right time to deliver the right  
25 effect. That is what we look at.

1           And in many cases, those are SOF forces. Especially  
2 with smaller nations, they can go in. Or if they don't  
3 have militaries, there is an opportunity for our SOF to  
4 work with police forces and other island capabilities that  
5 provide benefit.

6           Senator Ernst: Thank you very much. And General  
7 LaCamera, kind of staying on the theme of these  
8 relationships, I am going to throw you a little bit of a  
9 softball. This was not a scripted question but because I  
10 know that you have a personal relationship with the person  
11 I am going to reference, and he is a hero to many.

12           The last remaining Medal of Honor recipient from the  
13 Korean War is Colonel Ralph Puckett. And the Korean  
14 President, President Moon, South Korean President,  
15 President Moon was here in May of 2021 during that ceremony  
16 at the White House where Colonel Puckett was given his  
17 Medal of Honor.

18           Can you speak just briefly in the minute I have left  
19 about the significance of the President being here from  
20 South Korea during that award ceremony? Tell us a little  
21 bit about Colonel Puckett and his service to South Korea  
22 and the United States so that we can honor him today.

23           General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. Yes, Colonel  
24 Puckett, if there is one thing he taught me many years ago  
25 as a Lieutenant all the way up as my Honorary Colonel of

1 the regiment, the ranger regiment is that combat is simple  
2 blocking and tackling.

3 So, picture yourself, brand new, Second Lieutenant,  
4 sail over to South Korea. Land in the Pusan Perimeter and  
5 are told to stand up a ranger company as a Second  
6 Lieutenant. He stands it up, he fights.

7 He is wounded. He tells his folks to leave him there.  
8 He still, from his wounds, I think he still had many  
9 surgeries, and they still leak. And he is a national  
10 treasure. Hard as woodpecker's lips.

11 [Laughter.]

12 General LaCamera: We would always find him down there  
13 in a snowstorm correcting the machine gunners on what to do  
14 going forward.

15 So, the fact that the President of the United States  
16 and I believe was President Moon was there to present him  
17 the Medal of Honor -- or he was there when he got the U.S.  
18 Medal of Honor, and then last year, during the State visit,  
19 he received the Korean version of that.

20 And his service is legendary all the way through. I  
21 think if you were to talk maybe even to Chairman Reed who  
22 probably remembers Colonel Puckett at the Academy, Ranger  
23 Puckett. He is probably starting to sweat right now.

24 So, he has mentored and tormented many of us to this  
25 location, and he is a national treasure, so thank you.

1           Senator Ernst: Thank you, General LaCamera. I think  
2 he is pretty outstanding. And I had you tell his story  
3 because I want folks to recognize that so many of these  
4 relationships through so many eras of conflict, that the  
5 United States has always been a leader. And the men and  
6 women that serve in uniform have been recognized by so many  
7 nations around the globe. And we do face eras of  
8 isolationism as well.

9           And it is incredibly important that we maintain  
10 leadership around the globe. Our sons and daughters are  
11 going forward. They are sacrificing so much for our  
12 nation. But we are being recognized by those nations as  
13 well.

14           Those relationships matter. They will always matter.  
15 So, thank you for taking time to honor Colonel Puckett  
16 today. Thank you very much. Thank you.

17           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator  
18 King, please.

19           Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, how  
20 does Kim hang on? GDP per capita in North Korea is \$2,000,  
21 and in South Korea it is \$35,000. And if you go back to  
22 the time of the Korean War, the GDP per capita in North  
23 Korea is essentially flat and South Korea is a hockey  
24 stick. Do the people in North Korea not know the extent to  
25 which they are being compromised by their government?

1           General LaCamera: Simple answer is, Senator, they  
2 have no idea what is on the outside world. He maintains  
3 power because he controls information in and controls  
4 information out.

5           Senator King: And they literally don't -- they don't  
6 have access to the internet or radio broadcasts from other  
7 countries? I mean, it is hard to believe that -- the  
8 border, I mean, the border of North Korea is about 30 miles  
9 from Seoul, as you know, and it is hard to believe that  
10 they just don't -- they don't know the extent to which, as  
11 I said, they are being compromised. I am being polite by  
12 using the word compromised.

13           General LaCamera: Senator, I have read several books  
14 on the defectors and met a couple of them, and even knowing  
15 what they know right now to go back, they would still go  
16 back. I mean, it is tremendous. He is treated as a deity.  
17 The brainwashing that has occurred is pretty powerful.

18           Senator King: It is astonishing. Admiral Aquilino, I  
19 want to give you a hypothetical. You were talking a few  
20 minutes about -- a few minutes ago about disinformation of  
21 the Chinese Communist Party.

22           What if the Chinese Communist Party came to this  
23 country and said, we would like to create an app that 150  
24 million Americans will use, we will have access to all of  
25 their data, and it will give us a platform for information

1 and disinformation and propaganda.

2 Do you think that would be a good idea for us to  
3 welcome that hypothetical idea?

4 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. I am incredibly,  
5 cautious of anything that comes out of the People's  
6 Republic of China, specifically in the information space.  
7 It is a forum for them to take advantage of our freedom of  
8 speech and information, to push and sell their thoughts,  
9 ideas, and ability to influence the American public.

10 Senator King: And this is their policy, is it not?  
11 This isn't just something that is random. They have a  
12 concrete, deliberate policy of trying to influence us and  
13 other countries through information and disinformation.

14 Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely it is a part of their  
15 strategy -- are using the information space to achieve  
16 their strategic objectives, and the information space is  
17 incredibly strong. The irony of it is their system is so  
18 closed without freedom of speech that they are taking  
19 advantage of our system of freedom of speech to further  
20 their strategic objectives.

21 Senator King: It is geopolitical jujitsu. They are  
22 using our strength against us. And to go back to my  
23 hypothetical, do you think would be a good idea to allow  
24 that app to be on 150 million Americans' phones?

25 Admiral Aquilino: I can tell you that in INDOPACOM, I



1 would not allow any of those apps on any of our systems.

2 Senator King: I think that speaks volumes. Thank you  
3 very much, Admiral. And thank you both for your service.  
4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator King. Senator  
6 Cotton, please.

7 Senator Cotton: Gentlemen, thank you both for being  
8 here. And Admiral in particular, thank you for your final  
9 appearance.

10 I know that is really bittersweet that you won't get  
11 to testify before Congress anymore, but I will have you  
12 back as a civilian expert one day in the future. We have  
13 heard a few questions this morning about lessons that Xi  
14 Jinping might be taking from the war in Ukraine. I don't  
15 think we have heard yet about what is happening in the  
16 Middle East.

17 And in particular General -- or Admiral Aquilino, I  
18 would like to know what lessons you think the Chinese may  
19 have learned from watching our largely defensive response  
20 to the Iranian backed Houthi attacks on freedom of  
21 navigation and commerce in the Red Sea?

22 Admiral Aquilino: I think what they have -- what they  
23 are leveraging and what they learned, Senator, is that the  
24 United States is a global power designed to protect the  
25 international rules based order in a way that benefit all

1 of the globe, right.

2 So, the free flow of commerce through the Bab-el-  
3 Mandeb, the Red Sea, is an important issue for all nations.  
4 And the United States, as the enforcer and supporter of  
5 that, they have watched us deliver that effect.

6 They have taken no action to do that, despite the fact  
7 that having -- they have three ships there and they have  
8 not contributed to the benefit of the global flow of  
9 commerce or what it means to all nations.

10 That ought to be pretty telling to all of us. And  
11 they are perfectly comfortable with us doing it. At the  
12 same time trying to articulate the United States as an  
13 aggressor around the globe, right. It is the example of  
14 real, or what is real, versus what they are portraying in  
15 the information space that we talked about.

16 Senator Cotton: Do you think they are fearful or  
17 emboldened by the response we have had against the Houthi  
18 aggression there?

19 Admiral Aquilino: I think they are happy that we have  
20 had to take action, and they view it as any distraction for  
21 the United States is a benefit for the People's Republic of  
22 China. So that is how I think they are looking at it.

23 Senator Cotton: Okay, let's turn to Taiwan. Do you  
24 think the existing Presidential drawdown authority for  
25 Taiwan is adequate?

1           Admiral Aquilino: I think it is a good start. I  
2 think we have identified a lot of the capabilities that are  
3 needed to meet the responsibilities under the Taiwan  
4 Relations Act.

5           I think that -- I know for a fact that the Secretary  
6 and the Deputy, we have a process in place to review those  
7 and ensure that we are getting to the right capabilities at  
8 the right magnitude.

9           And hopefully, again my advocacy is for at the right  
10 speed, and I thank the Congress for including that in the  
11 supplemental. It is critically important.

12          Senator Cotton: We have provided \$1 billion in  
13 drawdown authority. So far, the Administration has only  
14 used \$345 million of that. Do you think they should use  
15 the full \$1 billion?

16          Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely. I think there is a  
17 plan for that. I think there is an ability to produce some  
18 of those things that might be part of the slowdown,  
19 Senator. And this is about, like I said before, right, all  
20 parts of our Government and our industry have to get  
21 together and move faster.

22          Senator Cotton: The 2023 NDAA provided authority to  
23 establish a regional contingency stockpile of American  
24 weapons in Taiwan. Would that be helpful?

25          Admiral Aquilino: I think that would certainly be

1 helpful towards our responsibility under the Taiwan  
2 Relations Act.

3 Senator Cotton: Okay. Let's get to the bottom line  
4 about Taiwan and why it matters. Some people might say,  
5 well, Taiwan is just a tiny island, it is so far away, and  
6 Communist China claims it as part of its own territory.

7 Why would it really matter? Like, why should the  
8 United States be willing to risk our sons and daughters?  
9 Why should we make the massive investment in deterrent  
10 capability in your region to stop China from invading and  
11 annexing Taiwan? What is the big deal? Could you explain  
12 why it matters, Admiral?

13 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, sir. There is a variety of  
14 reasons why it matters. First, as it applies to the rules  
15 and the rule of law that we follow and adhere to, that has  
16 made the world a better place, that has allowed for the  
17 prosperity of all nations in the post-World War II  
18 environment, that would be under attack, first of all.

19 And that, you know, that ties all the way to the  
20 illegal invasion of Ukraine, right. That is an assault on  
21 the rules based order. So, critically important. Second,  
22 the democracy, the thriving democracy that exists there,  
23 the values, freedom of navigation, all of the things that  
24 we value, and the United States' interests are tied to  
25 that.

1           Third, the ability of the United States in the current  
2 way semiconductors are laid out is critically important for  
3 all industry and all the things that we have inside the  
4 United States, when you look at 90 plus percent of high end  
5 chips emit from Taiwan. So, those are just three quick  
6 reasons on why it is important.

7           Senator Cotton: Douglas MacArthur, in a famous  
8 memorandum at the outset of the Korean War, referred to  
9 Taiwan as an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine  
10 tender. Could you explain a little bit to why General  
11 MacArthur thought Taiwan was such critical terrain from a  
12 military standpoint?

13          Admiral Aquilino: Well, certainly it is strategic in  
14 its location, fairly close to Japan, close to the  
15 Philippines, and in a place where two thirds of the global  
16 economy transits in the vicinity of -- as it applies to the  
17 global need for transport of goods and services.

18          So, again, it is a strategic location that could have  
19 advantages if you were to plant excess of military  
20 capabilities on it to restrict or potentially restrict the  
21 flow of goods and services.

22          Senator Cotton: Thank you.

23          Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Cotton.  
24 Senator Hirono, please.

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

1 both for being here. And Admiral Aquilino, thank you very  
2 much to you and your family for your decades of service.  
3 My very best to you in your future endeavors.

4 And also, thank you for the courtesies extended to me  
5 and my staff during your leadership in INDOPACOM. You  
6 noted several times about the linkage between the PRC and  
7 Russia. And just as that alliance is very important to  
8 those two nations, our allies are very important. And in  
9 the INDOPACOM area, we have Japan, South Korea,  
10 Philippines, India, the United Nations.

11 Our allies are very important to us, and that is why  
12 it is important for us to stand with our allies. You have  
13 been asked a number of questions about the need for us to  
14 support Ukraine, and that is because our allies are  
15 important to us and that -- every day that goes by that we  
16 are not providing the needed support for Ukraine  
17 strengthens Putin's hand and therefore, also, Xi Jinping's.  
18 Would you agree with that?

19 Admiral Aquilino: I do, Senator. Again, a strategic  
20 win for President Putin in Ukraine is a strategic win for  
21 President Xi in China. And the allies are so important.  
22 We are stronger when we are together. There is no doubt.  
23 The linkage of our values, our beliefs are critically  
24 important.

25 Senator Hirono: And that is why are not funding

1 Ukraine is very much of interest to Xi Jinping, not to  
2 mention Putin, of course. You also mentioned that the  
3 PRC's military buildup, which has been going on for quite a  
4 while.

5 And I think our asymmetric advantage, if you want to  
6 describe it that way, in terms of our assets, our planes,  
7 our ships, etcetera, has been our technological  
8 capabilities and our assets.

9 So do you think we are doing a good job in maintaining  
10 our technological advantage in terms of we may have fewer  
11 ships, we may have fewer planes, but our technological  
12 advantage is there. Do you think we are doing a good job  
13 to maintain our technological advantage?

14 Admiral Aquilino: I do believe, Senator first let me  
15 just say, we have the world's greatest fighting force that  
16 has ever been seen. That advantage has helped us keep the  
17 peace in many places for decades.

18 We do have a technological advantage that is second to  
19 none. And the key is maintaining it, because the People's  
20 Republic of China intends on closing that advantage and  
21 ultimately moving in front of us.

22 Senator Hirono: I think you know that over the years  
23 I have been very a focus on the missile defense of Hawaii,  
24 and I would just ask you very quickly, there is a provision  
25 directing the DoD to develop a comprehensive plan for

1 missile defense of Hawaii. Do you think that Hawaii is  
2 currently protected from ballistic cruise and hypersonic  
3 threats?

4 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, as you know, it is my  
5 responsibility to defend Hawaii. I take that  
6 responsibility very, you know, clearly and of critical  
7 importance. Hawaii is defended from ballistic missiles.  
8 Hawaii will be defended from cruise missiles should there  
9 be a threat that shows itself in the vicinity. And no one  
10 is defended from hypersonic missiles as we sit here today.

11 Senator Hirono: Not yet. Working on it, I know. I  
12 also note in your written testimony that you address the  
13 establishment of the Joint Task force, regarding Red Hill.

14 And I want to commend you for the leadership that you  
15 have provided and working with the community, and you  
16 acknowledge the importance of rebuilding trust in the local  
17 community with regard to Red Hill. But it goes for our  
18 military installations, not just in Hawaii, but everywhere  
19 and the need to build community support. And so, I commend  
20 you for your acknowledging that.

21 You were also asked about our recent support for the  
22 COFAs. Now, that agreement took many years to reside. And  
23 so, is there anything more we can do to support, in  
24 addition to the funds that are -- will be provided to  
25 Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau in this agreement,



1 are there more things we can do to support these island  
2 nations, which serve as a bulwark against China in the  
3 Indo-Pacific AOR?

4 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. Thanks. You know,  
5 we have worked with all of those island nations to do a  
6 couple of things. Number one, make sure that they can  
7 understand their maritime domain awareness and have  
8 situational awareness when threats might be in their  
9 vicinity. So that is one aspect.

10 Second, we have provided some understanding on, you  
11 know, what might it mean for increased storm severity and  
12 other environmental issues that would impact, and we have  
13 helped on the construction side to ensure that anything  
14 that the Department of Defense builds is resilient against  
15 any of those threats.

16 Third, we provide assistance like in Palau, we have a  
17 deployment of Seabees that go there and support the future  
18 cooperation that we do militarily, as well as from other  
19 community service events. So that is what right looks like  
20 to me, and we got to continue to do that.

21 Senator Hirono: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Hirono.  
23 Senator Sullivan.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And,  
25 Admiral, I want to thank you and your wife, Laura, for your

1 exceptional service over the years. I want to extend my  
2 wife and I, our appreciation to you and your family, and  
3 your daughters. And you have done a really, really  
4 exceptional job.

5 So, you are going to be miss. I hope you don't go  
6 very far away. And General, thank you for your continued  
7 great service as well. I want to dig into the supplemental  
8 a little bit more. I know you have gotten a lot of  
9 questions on it, but I ended up supporting that bill. It  
10 wasn't perfect.

11 There is a lot of things I didn't like about it, but I  
12 did it primarily because if you look at it, it is actually  
13 primarily focused about rebuilding our brittle industrial  
14 capacity to produce weapons and weapon systems for our own  
15 military, for our own defense, and enhance our industrial  
16 base, which unfortunately has atrophied. It includes the  
17 capacity to produce everything from subs. \$3 billion for  
18 subs, but with AUKUS, it is actually \$6 billion -- \$6  
19 billion.

20 It is \$5 billion for 155 millimeter Howitzers ammo,  
21 and it is everything from anti-ship systems, Harpoons,  
22 Tomahawks, HARMSs, switchblades, it has all in this. 60  
23 percent of this bill goes to building our industrial base.

24 So, with that, would our military and Taiwan's, and  
25 our industrial ability to deter a war in the Taiwan Strait

1 be enhanced by passing this defense industrial bill?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, absolutely. And I  
3 appreciate the support of you and the Congress to identify  
4 those needs, again, both whether they are for Ukraine or  
5 directed towards the Indo-Pacific, as you point out. They  
6 absolutely, that bill absolutely supports the increased  
7 industrial base requirements for ships, submarines,  
8 weapons, and other things. Critically important.

9 Senator Sullivan: And General, on the Korean  
10 Peninsula as well? I mean, \$5 billion for 155 millimeter  
11 Howitzer rounds produced in America. That is not  
12 insignificant.

13 General LaCamera: Yes, sir.

14 Senator Sullivan: And then -- so without it, you  
15 would think we would have less deterrence in the Taiwan  
16 Strait and the Korean Peninsula?

17 Admiral Aquilino: The funding in that bill is  
18 absolutely critical.

19 Senator Sullivan: General.

20 General LaCamera: Yes, Senator.

21 Senator Sullivan: You know, one criticism of the  
22 defense supplemental is it does not prioritize the correct  
23 demand signal for the threats we face, including in the  
24 INDOPACOM theater. I find a little curious, since I worked  
25 directly with you and your team, Admiral, to shape the bill

1 to give you the weapons systems that you think you need.

2 I would say you are probably the most expert person  
3 probably in the world on what you need to deter a war in  
4 the Taiwan Strait. So, you think that criticism is  
5 accurate, that it doesn't hit the correct demand signal  
6 that you need since you shape the bill? I know that for a  
7 fact since we worked on it.

8 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, from my review, again, as  
9 it applies to the items I have required or asked for in the  
10 independent assessment for three years, 1,254 last year,  
11 and a 1,302 this year, that bill absolutely gets after my  
12 requirements.

13 Senator Sullivan: And another, one of the views of  
14 some of the critics is that we shouldn't focus on assisting  
15 Ukraine because that takes away from defending and  
16 deterring a war in the Taiwan Strait. So, Putin can roll  
17 over Ukraine, but will be strong in the Taiwan Strait.  
18 Does deterrence work that way in your experience?

19 Admiral Aquilino: No, sir. As I have testified, the  
20 global threats are inextricably linked.

21 Senator Sullivan: So, deterrence isn't divisible.  
22 You can't be strong in the Taiwan Strait but let an  
23 authoritarian role over someone we are trying to support in  
24 other part of the world. Do you think that works?

25 Admiral Aquilino: No, sir.

1           Senator Sullivan: General, do you think that works  
2 that way? Deterrence? It is divisible? We will be strong  
3 here, but weak over there, but everything is going to be  
4 good.

5           General LaCamera: No, Senator. The world is getting  
6 smaller, not larger.

7           Senator Sullivan: Let me ask one final question, and  
8 it goes to this Administration's focus on these issues.  
9 Admiral, you have, I think, done a great job in this  
10 billet, so thank you again. But you have been talking  
11 about overmatched. You have been talking about trending in  
12 the wrong direction. You just said we haven't faced a  
13 threat like this, that is China, since World War II. To  
14 me, this is the 1930s all over again.

15           Authoritarian dictators are on the march. They are  
16 very aggressive. We have seen this movie before. The big  
17 differences in the late 30s and early 40s, before Pearl  
18 Harbor, President Roosevelt undertook a massive rebuilding  
19 of our military, tripled the size of the U.S. Navy. A lot  
20 of people don't know that.

21           By December 1941, we had actually tripled the size of  
22 the U.S. Navy. So, we were on the way. Unfortunately,  
23 this Administration and this President are putting forward  
24 budgets that shrink the Navy year after year.

25           President Biden recently in the State the Union said,

1 hey, this is a really dangerous world. I am like President  
2 Roosevelt. No, he is not. No, he is not. He is going in  
3 the exact wrong direction. He is shrinking the Navy,  
4 shrinking the Army, shrinking the Marine Corps.

5 This budget pushes the building of a new carrier by  
6 two years. As Senator Blumenthal mentioned, it goes to one  
7 sub a year, which nobody thinks is a good idea.

8 So what kind of message do you think, as we are  
9 talking about deterrence, to Xi Jinping or Putin, a Biden  
10 Administration budget, third year in a row, that shrinks  
11 the military, shrinks the Navy, is sending to our  
12 adversaries and I know it is difficult question for you,  
13 but did you support of a budget that pushes the carrier  
14 industrial base building out and brings us down to one sub  
15 a year, which again, nobody on this committee thinks is a  
16 good idea?

17 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, as I have laid out to the  
18 committee that, you know, my view of the threat and it has  
19 increased both capability and capacity with no signs of  
20 slowing down. I certainly have advocated for a couple of  
21 things. Number one, no reduction in combat power from the  
22 Indo Pacific theater.

23 Senator Sullivan: Are you game being overmatched  
24 right now?

25 Admiral Aquilino: Right now, again, I am confident in

1 our forces that in crisis or conflict now, the United  
2 States would prevail, but the trend is going in the wrong  
3 direction. So, I have advocated for increased capability,  
4 the modernization we need and the capacity we need to  
5 maintain overmatch.

6 Senator Sullivan: One final question. And you  
7 mentioned 7 percent increase, I agree with you, of the  
8 Chinese budget. It is probably much more. We had a  
9 hearing with the DNI and the DIA Lieutenant General. It  
10 was classified, but I am going to say what they said  
11 because they have not gotten back to me.

12 They actually said they thought it was over \$700  
13 billion. I have asked them to come and help make that  
14 public and explain it. Really important for the people of  
15 this country to know \$700 billion from the Chinese  
16 probably, or maybe more.

17 They have never gotten back to me, so if the DNI or  
18 the DIA Director, they are listening, they should get back  
19 to me on this, make this public. Do you have an estimate  
20 of what they are producing, either of you, annually? And I  
21 know they say 7 percent. It is probably double that. What  
22 do you think?

23 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. I don't know if I  
24 have an estimate. Again, I don't know if it is even worth  
25 comparing, right. The issue is what is coming off the

1 assembly line, and it is significant, you know. You know,  
2 10 warships, high end warships alone this year. Cruisers,  
3 destroyers. You know, full rate production for J-20s.  
4 Increased missile system, satellite systems. To me, that  
5 is the metric. Thank you.

6 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Reed: Senator Warren, please.

8 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, you two  
9 are no strangers to the threat that cryptocurrency poses to  
10 our national security. As both of you have previously  
11 testified, North Korea is using crypto to steal money,  
12 evade sanctions, and to fund its nuclear weapons program.  
13 In 2022 alone, North Korea stole at least, at least \$1.7  
14 billion worth of crypto.

15 That is about 6 percent of North Korea's entire  
16 economy and as much as a quarter of their annual defense  
17 budget. You know, that is a lot of weapons that North  
18 Korea is able to build and fire off, paid for by crypto  
19 crime. In fact, let's put this in terms of missiles.

20 Admiral Aquilino, help me out here, do you know how  
21 many intercontinental ballistic missiles North Korea can  
22 test with \$1.7 billion?

23 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I don't have that specific  
24 calculation, but it is more than we would like.

25 Senator Warren: It is more than we would like. I



1 like that, but let's do a little math just because it is  
2 fun to look at these numbers and eye opening. So, it cost  
3 North Korea about \$30 million to test an ICBM.

4 These are long range missiles that North Korea  
5 desperately wants because it could give them the ability to  
6 target the U.S. mainland. At \$30 million a test, \$1.7  
7 billion is enough to pay for more than 56 ICBM tests. So,  
8 does that surprise you, Admiral?

9 Admiral Aquilino: It does not.

10 Senator Warren: So North Korea is stealing about 56  
11 ICBMs worth of crypto in a single year. And the threat is  
12 not letting up. Just last week, in a span of two days,  
13 North Korea laundered more than \$23 million worth of crypto  
14 that it stole.

15 Now, North Korea isn't the only one using crypto to  
16 threaten the U.S. and its interests. Dangerous actors all  
17 over the world are using crypto to steal and to finance  
18 their illegal activities. One example, pig butchering.

19 Pig butchering is a crypto scam where scammers, often  
20 based in China or Southeast Asia, use fake identities to  
21 lure people into weeks and even months long online  
22 relationships, fattening them up like hogs for slaughter,  
23 before tricking them into sending crypto.

24 General LaCamera, I think you have some experience  
25 with this crypto scam. Would you be willing to talk about

1 it for just a minute?

2 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. Not necessarily  
3 with crypto scamming me personally, but I do have some  
4 experience with being swatted and the number of social  
5 media impersonations that are out there. But I have seen  
6 that my face has been used for scamming.

7 Senator Warren: Yes, to try to lure people in and  
8 think they are dealing with you on this, you know. You  
9 have lots of company on this. Last year, more than 40,000  
10 people in the United States lost more than \$3.5 billion in  
11 pig butchering crypto scams that we know of.

12 Now, pig butchering is just one scam. There are many  
13 more. A recent study found that these criminal gangs have  
14 stolen and laundered more than \$75 billion in crypto in  
15 just the last four years.

16 So General LaCamera, would making it more difficult  
17 for criminals and rogue states to use crypto to steal and  
18 to launder funds strengthen our national security?

19 General LaCamera: That would be a qualified yes, but  
20 yes.

21 Senator Warren: Yes. Okay. I will take yes.  
22 Admiral Aquilino, do you agree with that?

23 Admiral Aquilino: I do, Senator. I have over 200  
24 fake websites put out on me every month, of which many are  
25 soliciting dollars from people who can be fooled.

1           Senator Warren: Yes, yes. You know, crypto is the  
2 way the stuff is financed and it us helping rogue states.  
3 It is helping terrorists. It is helping criminal  
4 organizations fund their operations on a scale like we have  
5 never seen before.

6           I have got a bipartisan bill, Republicans and  
7 Democrats, with 20 Senators that would put a stop to it. I  
8 think it is time to pass this bill. One last note, I am  
9 almost out of time but General Aquilino, your command  
10 failed to provide this committee with the information  
11 required by law to justify your wish lists.

12           I remain deeply concerned that unfunded priorities  
13 lists are distracting us from making the most of our  
14 resources and focusing on grabbing more money for defense  
15 contractors. So, we need to get that cleaned up. Thank  
16 you, Mr. Chairman. On time.

17           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator  
18 Scott, please.

19           Senator Scott: Thank you. Chairman. Admiral,  
20 General, thank you for your service. Admiral Aquilino,  
21 thank you for -- good luck with your retirement.

22           And I am sure you will be moving to Florida soon.  
23 Hope you enjoy it. Price is a little high right now, so I  
24 would be patient on buying a house. Last August, had the  
25 opportunity to visit to INDOPACOM, hear firsthand how

1 threats posed by Communist China are impacting the U.S.,  
2 especially the Philippines. I had the opportunity to go  
3 look at what the Chinese are doing out in the Shoals, so.

4 On that visit it was clear that America cannot take  
5 its eyes off of the regional increased aggression shown by  
6 Communist China. It reinforced my confidence that we got  
7 the best military in the world, but we got a pretty -- we  
8 got we got a pretty formal opponent, and they are out to  
9 destroy our way of life.

10 I am increasingly interested in the congested  
11 logistics fight, and not just in Pacific, but globally. We  
12 are going to have to -- if we end up in a conflict, we are  
13 going to have to resource critical capabilities and we are  
14 going to need -- in the first few hours and few days of a  
15 conflict, they are going to be decisive, probably in a  
16 great power war.

17 Our goal is, I think all of us want to make sure  
18 INDOPACOM is ready to get everything they need for the  
19 fight. The last time we fought a great power war in the  
20 Western Pacific, we were surprised and not ready. Navy  
21 reserve logistic squadrons were not even established until  
22 five days after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

23 But finally, transport squadrons grew to 540 aircraft  
24 and 26,000 personnel devoted to the Navy's airborne  
25 logistics mission and defeating the Japanese. In the case

1 of the Navy, are you counting on Navy transport squadrons  
2 to move logistics into and throughout the Western Pacific,  
3 which is thousands of miles?

4 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I am actually counting on  
5 all logistics capabilities to support this problem across  
6 half the globe. I want to thank Congress for the  
7 authorization for the 10 additional tankers, the console  
8 tankers. We intend to use those as well.

9 So maritime sealift, the MSC forces that the Navy  
10 provides a critically important. I have also advocated  
11 with General Van Ovost for not only the tankers, but for  
12 strategic airlift at a capacity that will be acceptable.  
13 As well as airborne refueling capability. All three of  
14 those have been identified as critical needs for INDOPACOM.

15 Senator Scott: So, the Air Force has recapitalized  
16 about 50 percent of their C-130s. The Marine Corps has  
17 done 100 percent. The Navy hasn't had the opportunity to  
18 recapitalize any of its 32 year old fleet. Does that  
19 concern you?

20 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, the need for intra-theater  
21 lift -- again, when you talk about half the globe, the  
22 modernization of those airplanes is important, and I  
23 certainly advocate for all the services to be able to  
24 provide those capabilities when needed.

25 Senator Scott: And do you think overall that we are

1 heading in the right direction?

2 Admiral Aquilino: I think as we work towards  
3 modernization, we have the right view. We have to work at  
4 speed, and we have to all get on board.

5 Senator Scott: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

6 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Scott.  
7 Senator Peters, please.

8 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And  
9 gentlemen, thank you both for your service. Admiral  
10 Aquilino, I want to echo the comments made by many of my  
11 colleagues here. Thank you for your 40 plus years of  
12 service to the nation.

13 And we wish you well in your next endeavors wherever  
14 they lead you but appreciate your service. This question  
15 is really is for both of you, and it deals with the  
16 continuing need for global stability with all of the  
17 challenges that we have, particularly in INDOPACOM. But  
18 the Army's new multi-domain task force, I believe, is  
19 probably the centerpiece of the Army's efforts to respond  
20 to these varied global challenges, as I said, particularly  
21 in the Indo-Pacific.

22 And when forward positioned, these task forces will  
23 enable the U.S. military to freely operate within a very  
24 contested environment. So, I would like both of you to  
25 respond, if you can elaborate a little bit, on the critical

1 role that these multi-domain task forces are going to have  
2 in the Indo-Pacific region and how do they facilitate your  
3 ability to safely maneuver Joint Forces within your  
4 commands?

5 Chairman Reed: Yes, thanks, Senator. So, first, I  
6 will thank General George, the Chief of Staff of the Army,  
7 General McConville for it, before him on, developing and  
8 having the vision for an MDTF, critically important in my  
9 theater. And as we implement it, the key for that task  
10 force is to deliver all the capabilities that have been  
11 designed to go with it.

12 So, the anti-air capabilities, the anti-ship, and  
13 anti-land attack capabilities that go with it. Those are  
14 some of the things we have to go faster and deliver to  
15 those MDTFs to realize the entire warfighting capability of  
16 that force. But I am absolutely supportive of what the  
17 Army has done to contribute to my theater.

18 Senator Peters: Great. Thank you. General.

19 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. Well, I don't own  
20 one of the MDTFs. We do think of it -- and, you know, that  
21 is the noun. I do, do the verb, multi-domain operations.  
22 And since we already sit inside the A2/AD bubble, it is a  
23 little bit of a different problem set for me to solve.

24 But the next fight is going to be combined, joint,  
25 interagency, and it is going to be multi-domain. And, you

1 know, I will probably be asking the Admiral for one of  
2 them, if hostilities begin again.

3 Senator Peters: Very good. Thank you, General.  
4 Admiral, the Air Force plans to invest \$5.8 billion over  
5 the next five years with the goal of fielding 1,000  
6 collaborative, combat aircraft by 2030.

7 Now, these CCAs will clearly play a significant role  
8 in any future combat, particularly in a contested  
9 environment. And successfully operating in these  
10 impermissible areas will require joint training across  
11 active duty, reserve, as well as guard components in a wide  
12 range of environments, which will, mimic potential conflict  
13 zones.

14 So, my question, for you, sir, is how do you envision  
15 these collaborative combat aircraft being utilized and  
16 integrated into the Indo-Pacific? And then specifically  
17 drilling down a little bit, how could active duty, reserve,  
18 and guard components best prepare for this CCA integration  
19 and training, given the near-term threat that we have in  
20 your command now?

21 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So, when I think  
22 about CCAs, that is one aspect of the all-domain, unmanned,  
23 collaborative, cooperative, and ultimately integrated all  
24 domain capabilities to be able to prevent conflict in my  
25 theater.



1           So along with the CCAs, right, there is unmanned  
2 undersea, on the sea. Those are above the sea. And that  
3 is absolutely aligned with the approach that we believe  
4 will be valuable to both deter and then fight and would, if  
5 need be.

6           So, I am certainly supportive of the CCA piece.  
7 Again, on a common theme, faster, faster, faster. I am not  
8 sure 2030 is soon enough. So, we have to do that. As it  
9 applies to the training, I am confident that the Air Force  
10 will design an approach such that all forces, active,  
11 reserve, guard, can be trained and ready to employ.

12           From my seat, I don't separate those. We have a total  
13 force concept. And in my perfect world, it doesn't matter  
14 if it is an active duty, reservist, or a guardsman. When  
15 they show up, they are ready to fight, and they are ready  
16 to execute their mission set. So that is what I rely on  
17 Air Force to deliver.

18           Senator Peters: Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr.  
19 Chairman.

20           Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator  
21 Budd, please.

22           Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. Admiral, again,  
23 and General, good to see you both. Go to an Air Force  
24 asset, do you consider the F-15 Strike Eagle to be a  
25 capable aircraft? And is there a use case for F-15s in the

1 Indo-Pacific operating in concert with Gen-5 fighters?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely, Senator.

3 Senator Budd: So, in its Fiscal Year 2025 budget, Air  
4 Force plans to divest 26 F-15 Strike Eagles, and at the  
5 same time buying less than expected F-35, F-15EXs and other  
6 fighters. So, are you concerned about the increasing  
7 fighter gap, or the fighter capacity gap with China?

8 Admiral Aquilino: I am absolutely concerned.

9 Senator Budd: Different topic, Admiral. The 2023  
10 NDAA required the DOD to establish a standing Joint Force  
11 headquarters at INDOPACOM. And that requirement included a  
12 deadline for the JTF to be set up by October of 2024.  
13 Could you give us a status on the efforts to establish that  
14 JTF and any obstacles you might be facing, and any  
15 assistance that we could provide?

16 Admiral Aquilino: At this point, Senator, I think we  
17 are on path. My view of the command and control in the  
18 theater has evolved over three years, and we can talk about  
19 some of that in the classified level.

20 That I can tell you is, I advocated and stood up JTF  
21 Micronesia as a way to, number one, align our capabilities  
22 in Guam. Number two, that was in the near term. In the  
23 mid-term it was designed to be a forward station  
24 warfighting JTF headquarters. And what I have learned is  
25 that I don't think that happens soon enough.

1           So, I have proposed and am briefing out throughout my  
2 leadership an approach to put in place a permanent joint  
3 task force headquarter construct. And at this point, I  
4 haven't identified any needs, but I will always inform  
5 Congress as it applies and goes forward, and you will see  
6 that in any follow on report requirements that you direct  
7 me to deliver.

8           Senator Budd: Thank you for that. Now, my colleagues  
9 have already asked about funding for munitions. And I  
10 believe that you have requested \$3.3 billion for military  
11 construction in the Indo-Pacific Area of Responsibility.  
12 So, what kind of projects will this request money go  
13 towards and where will it be located?

14          Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I will give you all the  
15 details, but right now we are looking at 212 projects  
16 across the entire theater in almost every nation.

17          Those fundings are required, and they support our  
18 partners and allies' ability to build out their  
19 infrastructure such that we can operate with them in places  
20 that are needed. But it applies to runways, seaports, fuel  
21 capability, munitions storage. Those are the key aspects  
22 of it.

23          Senator Budd: You mentioned in runaways, but is it  
24 fair to say that these investments, particularly in things  
25 like airfields for dispersed operations, will be key to

1 deterring China?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Absolutely.

3 Senator Budd: So why weren't these items included as  
4 part of the Air Force, Army, and Navy's respective budget  
5 request?

6 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator, that is a better  
7 question for the service components.

8 Senator Budd: Admiral, the Administration says that  
9 it's prioritizing China in its pace -- as its pacing  
10 challenge, but you have just sent us a list of unfunded  
11 requirements totaling more than \$11 billion. It is nearly  
12 three times more unfunded requirements than you had last  
13 year. It seems like something doesn't add up.

14 So, how can the Administration say that it is  
15 prioritizing China if it won't provide you and INDOPACOM  
16 with the resources you need to deter Beijing? And that is  
17 Admiral, a bit of a rhetorical question. So, the Biden  
18 Administration, they just sent over an \$895 billion defense  
19 budget request.

20 Your unfunded requirements is just an \$11 billion  
21 total. And just 1 percent of that, that is 1 percent  
22 nearly of the total amount requested by the Biden  
23 Administration. Yet the Administration seemed that they  
24 couldn't find the money. I am even told that there is \$11  
25 billion in unused Pentagon funds that just expired.

1           So, I think we all understand that this is a very  
2 dangerous time with China on a war footing and conflict  
3 increasingly likely in the Indo-Pacific. The only way that  
4 we are going to avoid war or win if it comes, is if we put  
5 our money where our mouth is.

6           That means that if we say China is the priority, then  
7 we have got to act like it. So, thank you for your  
8 testimony and thank you for your many years of service.

9           Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.  
10 Senator Duckworth, please.

11           Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good  
12 morning, Admiral Aquilino, General LaCamera. Thank you for  
13 being here today. And, of course, thank you for your many  
14 decades of service. I am concerned about the needed  
15 investments in our medical ecosystem and infrastructure in  
16 the Indo-Pacific region.

17           As INDOPACOM prepares the Joint Force for conflict  
18 with a near adversary, our ability to provide lifesaving  
19 care for servicemembers must remain a priority. The  
20 conditions in the Indo-Pacific with remote islands will  
21 strain our ability to medivac wounded service members to  
22 row three and four medical facilities.

23           The golden hour for providing critical medical care  
24 won't exist, and to improve the outcomes for service  
25 members who will likely receive critical medical care near

1 the frontlines, we must pre-position lifesaving supplies  
2 like blood and class eight medical supplies as far forward  
3 as possible.

4 Admiral Aquilino, how is INDOPACOM working across the  
5 Joint Force to ensure critical medical supplies such as  
6 blood and class eight medical supplies are pre-positioned  
7 across the region?

8 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. You know, we have  
9 incorporated this aspect in the medical care of our forces  
10 in our last set of exercises. We rehearsed some of it. We  
11 moved some medical capability forward as a part of  
12 exercises.

13 So, again, we take it very seriously. We need to make  
14 sure that we can do it and execute at the time of need,  
15 which is why we practice and rehearse. Additionally, we do  
16 have allies and partners in the vicinity, and we have to  
17 make sure that the medical care that is available there, a,  
18 we have access to it at the scope and scale needed, and we  
19 coordinate with our allies and partners to do that. So  
20 that is how we are taking it on.

21 Senator Duckworth: Thank you. You actually addressed  
22 my next question somewhat. And in fact, we have allies and  
23 partners like the ROK, like Japan, like Singapore that have  
24 medical facilities that meet JACO standards, which is the  
25 Joint Accreditation Agency for the United States hospital

1 system.

2 Admiral, allies and partners, as you said, will be  
3 critical. Given the amount of -- now given the amount of  
4 blood that would be needed during a potential conflict, how  
5 are you coordinating, how is INDOPACOM coordinating with  
6 other interagency partners to gain access to blood supplies  
7 in foreign countries across the region?

8 Admiral Aquilino: I think those discussions are  
9 ongoing with my -- from my doctor across the region and our  
10 allies and partners. As a part -- we highlighted it as a  
11 part of those exercises and assets. We have not certainly  
12 pre-positioned at this point in time, but we have to have  
13 the places to do it when needed, and we are doing those  
14 assessments.

15 Senator Duckworth: Well, the blood cannot really be  
16 pre-positioned, but having established agreements to access  
17 those blood supplies -- but it also means that those blood  
18 supplies have to be certified to be given to U.S. service  
19 members, which some of them may not if they don't have  
20 -- if they have not complied with our requirements.

21 So, I think all of that is critically important. It  
22 is good to hear that you are addressing the issue. As you  
23 all know, I have been a vocal advocate for a combat  
24 credible logistics network, shifting a little bit. The  
25 ability for the United States to project to Joint Force in

1 the Western Pacific would depend on our intra-theater lift  
2 capabilities.

3 INDOPACOM will have to grapple with moving troops,  
4 supplies, and equipment across a complicated island chain  
5 network. And you and I have had conversations on this,  
6 requiring significant investments in watercrafts, floating  
7 piers, and roads.

8 Admiral, where do you see how current gaps in intra-  
9 theater lift in the Indo-Pacific region, and what role do  
10 you foresee the Army Corps of Engineers having in tackling  
11 this issue?

12 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. Again, the  
13 approach -- the Army component has actually moved some  
14 watercraft. Some have gone to Japan now.

15 So, to probably put those forces in the right place,  
16 posture wise, is critically important. The intra-theater  
17 lift piece, I have concern on the overall capacity aspect  
18 of it, whether it be C-130s, you know, C-17s, or C-5s, as  
19 it applies to the lift -- the airlift piece.

20 And then on the sealift piece, those forces have to be  
21 ready to be shot at, right. So, the contested aspect of  
22 it, they have to be able to operate in ways where they  
23 can't be targeted, and we have to train and rehearse those  
24 aspects. So, those are the things that concern me.

25 Senator Duckworth: That is also true for the medivac



1 piece, right. We are going to have to fight in. We can't  
2 just go in and pick up our wounded the way we have in other  
3 theaters. I think we are going to have to fight our way in  
4 to pick up our wounded and fight our way back out as well.

5 One final question. In peacetime, leveraging our  
6 civil works program, and the Army Corps of Engineers, and  
7 the Coast Guard are important for building cooperation.  
8 What new areas can we collaborate with our allies and  
9 partners using examples like the successful Sister Rivers  
10 Exchange Program as a model?

11 For example, the Mekong River and the Mississippi  
12 River initiatives are a good example.

13 Admiral Aquilino: I think it is. Our construction  
14 forces, and not just the Army Corps, but the, you know, the  
15 Air Force red teams, the Navy Seabees.

16 Again, those provide some significant training for  
17 those allies and partners to build their capacity to help  
18 themselves more often. So, we have seen some benefits  
19 there, and we will have to continue to do that.

20 Senator Duckworth: Thank you,, Admiral. I yield  
21 back, Chairman.

22 Chairman Reed: Thank you very much, Senator  
23 Duckworth. Senator Tuberville, please.

24 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good  
25 morning, both of you. Admiral, thanks for your service.

1 You came here about the same time I did three years ago.  
2 Time flies when you are having fun, right.

3 It goes by quick. This is for both of you. After  
4 President Trump's summit with Kim Jong Un, we announced  
5 that we were suspending large exercises like Foal Eagle.  
6 Given North Korea's escalation, is it time to go back to  
7 that, or are we going to continue to do the small ones?  
8 General.

9 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. I would say we  
10 are doing large exercises. Just finished Freedom Shield.  
11 Added live, virtual, and constructive training to it. And  
12 then given the training -- we talked about the strategic  
13 assets that visit the peninsula. Those are all training  
14 events for me. And incorporating and making sure that we  
15 know how to properly employ them if we need to.

16 Senator Tuberville: Admiral.

17 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, as it applies to the DPRK,  
18 again, we support General LaCamera to ensure that he has  
19 got all the assets needed to do a full scale, full blown  
20 exercise set. Across the rest of the theater, we have  
21 increased the scope and scale of all of our exercises with  
22 our allies and partners.

23 For example, Keen Edge was perceived -- was a  
24 bilateral U.S., Japan exercise in the past. We just  
25 executed that full blown event as a trilateral event with

1 the Australians, and we have done that across all of the  
2 critical exercise, Balikatan with the Philippines, Cobra  
3 Gold with Thailand, Talisman Saber with Australia. So,  
4 scope and scale is increased everywhere.

5 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Admiral, on your way  
6 out the door, we need a tanker in the Indo-Pacific. KC-46,  
7 I always ask about this. Are you confident in the 46, the  
8 availability and the durability?

9 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. I am confidence the  
10 right tanker to fill our holes, but I am concerned about  
11 the magnitude and our ability to deliver enough tankers in  
12 this theater in time of crisis.

13 Senator Tuberville: Yes, thank you. I think we all  
14 agree on that. You know, China conducts these circling  
15 around Taiwan quite often. Is there going to be a giveaway  
16 to one of these days when one of them is not an exercise,  
17 it is an actual attack? I mean, will we be able to  
18 distinguish that, and how will we be able to do that?

19 Admiral Aquilino: Well, we watch the behavior and  
20 actions of the PRC each and every day. We do have some  
21 concerns on what it would look like and how it would look  
22 like. But again, we watch it every day. I would like to  
23 -- if you want a different conversation, we have to do in a  
24 classified level.

25 Senator Tuberville: All right. Are you concerned

1 about nickel for submarines? I know that in our State, we  
2 make submarines, and it is very hard to find, and it is  
3 going to be a problem as we go along. Are you familiar  
4 with that?

5 Admiral Aquilino: So critical minerals across the  
6 United States is an issue that I am watching. It is not in  
7 my job jar. What is required for me is for that  
8 warfighting capability to be ready, available, sustainable,  
9 and be able to execute when needed. If there is critical  
10 minerals or supply chain issues, that certainly concerns  
11 me.

12 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. And I know this is  
13 not either one of your purview. You might not want to  
14 answer this. I just like to ask you, most of you, because  
15 you have a huge job in our military. And we are looking to  
16 pass more supplemental money, and obviously for Ukraine,  
17 for Taiwan, for Israel. Admiral, can Ukraine beat Russia?

18 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. Absolutely. I think  
19 they are demonstrating that in each and every day.

20 Senator Tuberville: What does a win look like at the  
21 end of the day?

22 Admiral Aquilino: I think that the Ukrainian  
23 territory is restored.

24 Senator Tuberville: Including Crimea?

25 Admiral Aquilino: Again, I will leave that to General

1 Cavoli and to the policy side. But, you know, a place  
2 where the Ukrainians can operate in their sovereign  
3 territory, with the freedoms and values that they want to  
4 project, that is what right looks like.

5 Senator Tuberville: General.

6 General LaCamera: Yes, I think they can win. I will  
7 leave it at that.

8 Senator Tuberville: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
9 Chairman.

10 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Tuberville.  
11 Senator Kelly, please.

12 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral,  
13 earlier today downstairs, we talked a little bit about  
14 militarization in the South China Sea. They now have the  
15 world's -- the Chinese have the world's largest Coast  
16 Guard.

17 They use -- it as part of a strategy to assert  
18 dominance. You talked about how they are now claiming it  
19 as territorial waters. They use coercion and intimidation  
20 tactics to bully countries including the Philippines and a  
21 country we have a mutual defense treaty with.

22 And the Chinese are regularly intimidating Philippine  
23 vessels at the Second Thomas Shoal and continue dangerous  
24 and escalatory actions that threaten peaceful shipping in  
25 one of the world's busiest waterways.

1           Late last year, China was upset when the USS Gabrielle  
2 Giffords, named after my wife, continued routine operations  
3 in the area after conducting joint patrols with the  
4 Philippine Navy, lawful patrols.

5           So as you finish your time as the INDOPACOM Commander  
6 and prepare to hand the reins to Admiral Paparo, can you  
7 talk about what you have learned about China's actions in  
8 the South China Sea and what would happen -- we discussed  
9 this a little bit downstairs, some concerns about if there  
10 was actually, you know, some engagement, like escalatory,  
11 between China and the Philippines, and if maybe somebody  
12 had gotten hurt.

13           Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. So again, we  
14 continue to articulate that Article 5 of the Mutual Defense  
15 Treaty applies if the Philippine -- as our allies, the  
16 Philippines, were to be attacked, and then that would  
17 change a bit of the scope of what is happening there at  
18 Second Thomas Shoal.

19           So, I articulate that the bullying behavior is broad,  
20 and it is across the region, from India to the -- Malaysia,  
21 to Vietnam, all across the region. And I think that it  
22 would be beneficial for China to be able to interweave into  
23 the international order that all countries have defined. I  
24 believe there is a peaceful way out of this.

25           There is a place for China in this world. They are

1 just going to have to understand that the nations of the  
2 globe require a set of international standards and  
3 behaviors that are acceptable, and what they are executing  
4 now is not.

5 Senator Kelly: And how do you feel our relationship  
6 is with the Philippine government with regards to Second  
7 Thomas Shoal and anything we could work on there. I am  
8 going to be in the region next week and that is something  
9 -- if there was something that you specifically would raise  
10 with President Marcos or the Philippine Navy, what would  
11 that be?

12 Admiral Aquilino: I have sat with President Marcos  
13 twice in the last three and a half months. Number one, I  
14 thanked him for his leadership, for articulating what is  
15 acceptable and what is not. Incredibly impressed by  
16 Minister of Defense Todoro's leadership as well, as well as  
17 my counterpart, General Broner.

18 So, they are fighting for their sovereignty. They are  
19 fighting for the international rules based order. And we  
20 continue to support them both, in legal domains, in the  
21 information space, and in the military space as we execute  
22 joint patrols and other cooperation activities in the form  
23 of maritime domain awareness.

24 So, again, my message to the Philippines is always,  
25 you are our ally, we are with you, and we are here to help

1 maintain the peace, as well as their sovereignty.

2 Senator Kelly: And just for my own, you know,  
3 personal, information, what is going on around Scarborough  
4 Shoals? I spent a lot of time down there when I was, in  
5 Westpac. Is there similar Chinese activity in that area?

6 Admiral Aquilino: There is absolutely similar  
7 coercive, and actions being taken to prevent Philippines  
8 from being able to fish there and operate in that vicinity.

9 Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you, Admiral. Thank  
10 you, Mr. Chairman.

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

13 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And both  
14 of you, thank you for your service. I mean it sincerely.  
15 I think the candor by which you answer these questions and  
16 your availability or accessibility to the members of this  
17 committee, and I know others is very much appreciated.

18 And for me, as a newer member and certainly focusing a  
19 lot of my time on this committee on the Indo-Pacific  
20 issues, your expertise, your service is -- the people from  
21 Missouri appreciate it, too.

22 So, just wanted to say that. Following up, I feel  
23 like I -- Senator Kelly stole the question that I wanted --

24 [Laughter.]

25 Senator Schmitt: We have recently written a letter



1 actually to Secretary Austin about this ongoing harassment  
2 that happens with the fishing in the South China Sea and  
3 particularly the Filipino vessels.

4 And it just feels like this thing is -- that there is  
5 a trajectory to all of this. Currently these are, you  
6 know, not technically PRC Navy vessels, Coast Guard -- I  
7 mean, they are all sort of one in the same in many ways,  
8 right.

9 But where do you see -- I mean, if you were to predict  
10 where this is going and what we need to do to deter -- this  
11 is sort of a follow up to the previous question is, you  
12 know, in a concrete way, what are a couple of things that  
13 we could do tomorrow to help discourage this, because it  
14 does feel like we are headed down a road here and we have  
15 got a obviously mutual defense agreement with the  
16 Philippines, that this thing could escalate quicker than  
17 people probably realize.

18 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, thanks, Senator. So  
19 militarily, again, we execute joint patrols. We operate  
20 with our Philippine partners in the vicinity, in order to  
21 ensure that we can demonstrate resolve. But I have also  
22 advocated for a broad set of the global nations to identify  
23 and speak out against this belligerent bad behavior that is  
24 not in accordance with the international community's  
25 interpretation of UNCLOS.

1           And to validate the 2016 tribunal against China's  
2 illegal claim that that is Chinese sovereign territory, it  
3 is not. So, articulating that and not just from the  
4 Philippines, not just from the Philippines and the United  
5 States. I am talking about the EU nations.

6           I am talking about the UK. I am talking about the  
7 Middle Eastern nations. And I am talking about the Pacific  
8 nations, right. This is one step today. This is not an  
9 Indo-Pacific problem. This is going to be a global  
10 problem.

11          Senator Schmitt: Right. And there also, the CCP is  
12 now making claims, additional claims in Vietnam, right.  
13 And they are sort of marking additional territory.

14          Who else do you see -- sort of I mean, you clearly by  
15 China showing their fangs here, there are some folks who  
16 maybe didn't want to pick a team, are certainly coming our  
17 way.

18          Which, who else? We got the Philippines, you know,  
19 Vietnam. Who are some other -- Australia, of course, in  
20 the South China Sea there. And who else do you think has  
21 sort of seen this aggression for what it is?

22          Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. First, a comment on  
23 your first point. Number one, the United States doesn't  
24 ask any nations to choose. We support the rights of all  
25 nations to have sovereign territory as defined by law.

1           We support their freedoms, their voice in the  
2 international community, where everyone gets an equal  
3 voice, to be able to articulate their needs and security  
4 needs. So that is what we stand for. Again, we are not  
5 asking them to pick sides.

6           Senator Schmitt: Yes, you are not. I know, I know.

7           Admiral Aquilino: That said, all of them, right. I  
8 have asked for this discussion globally, and I have worked  
9 with General Cavoli to help identify this, and we are  
10 seeing it from UK and the EU nations.

11           More of them are going to deploy to the Pacific. The  
12 ASEAN nations are critically important. The centrality of  
13 ASEAN is important to the region. And it is not that they  
14 are not seeing it. It is a concern about speaking out and  
15 being at risk for follow on PRC economic coercion and other  
16 behaviors that will negatively impact their nation.

17           So, the concern is not do they see it. It is, will  
18 they be able to talk about it.

19           Senator Schmitt: Well, it is certainly my hope that  
20 whether it is a Belt and Road Initiative or BRICs, that  
21 other countries are seeing this and the levers that China  
22 has and once they have got their hooks into you, they are  
23 real.

24           General, I want to ask you, I know that traditionally  
25 there has been, you know, sort of a -- the Korean Peninsula

1 was its own sort of thing. The South China thing was its  
2 own sort of thing. I think that we have, realized that  
3 this is all obviously very interconnected. What -- how do  
4 you see this moving forward?

5 Because clearly, what we do, our friends and our  
6 allies, and the support that we have in the Korean  
7 Peninsula, and those strategic alliances that we do have  
8 matter, I think, for deterrence with China. How do you see  
9 that as a development? And I think you have been a great  
10 leader on this point.

11 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. I think that what  
12 starts locally goes regional and globally pretty quickly.  
13 And we are seeing it. You know, there have been -- there  
14 were impacts with COVID.

15 There were impacts with Ukraine, you know, globally  
16 that we feel on the peninsula. And you know, our focus is  
17 on protecting the Korean people, my United Nations -- as  
18 the United Nations Commander, it is to maintain the  
19 armistice.

20 But it is to react. You know, the inherent right of  
21 self-defense never goes away. So, we will protect  
22 ourselves. Response requires consultation with our Korean  
23 allies. And then any kind of retaliation or further  
24 escalation, I think we have always got to be prepared for  
25 if somebody tries to take advantage of an incident or

1 crisis someplace else in the Indo-Pacific.

2 Senator Schmitt: Thank you both, again. Thank you,  
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator  
5 Rosen, please.

6 Senator Rosen: Well, thank you. Thank you, Chairman  
7 Reed, for holding this hearing. I would like to thank you,  
8 Admiral Aquilino, for your service.

9 And of course, I wish you so well in your forthcoming  
10 retirement. And you and your family will maybe get to  
11 travel for fun now that you are going to retire. And that  
12 will be a little bit different.

13 And, of course, General, we thank you for being here  
14 today and for your service as well. I want to talk a  
15 little bit about autonomous capabilities, because during  
16 one of my visits to Central Command, I visited Task Force  
17 59, and I was deeply impressed at just amazing things that  
18 are doing. Their ability to utilize autonomous  
19 capabilities to quickly apply lessons learned, it is not  
20 only innovative, it is also really effective.

21 So, Admiral Aquilino, can you elaborate how Indo-  
22 Pacific Command is integrating these autonomous  
23 capabilities and leveraging that commercial off the shelf  
24 technology to enhance our strategic posture? And how do  
25 these initiatives like Task Force 59 really help us in

1 managing costs and compete with China?

2 Admiral Aquilino: Thanks, Senator. So, we have been  
3 experimenting and rehearsing and practicing with unmanned  
4 capabilities in the Pacific Fleet and in INDOPACOM now for  
5 going on six years. We didn't generate a separate task  
6 force to do it. It is run out of the Pacific Fleet  
7 headquarters.

8 So, those efforts are critical to our approach for  
9 both deterrence and then for our ability to fight and win.  
10 As a matter of fact, Admiral Perot is a Pacific Fleet  
11 Commander. As we sit here as executing an integrated  
12 battle problem that's got about 20 different unmanned  
13 capabilities being integrated into our exercise.

14 So, pulling those together, being able to deliver  
15 them, being able to command and control them through the  
16 required autonomous and command and control links that we  
17 need, that is where the focus is. So not just what does  
18 that thing do. It is, how do you take a thousand of them  
19 and be able to employ them in a way that is effective.

20 Senator Rosen: That is fantastic. Thank you. I am  
21 going to keep with you, Admiral, and talk about, assisting  
22 our partners because it has been widely reported that  
23 during Taiwan's recent democratic election, they  
24 experienced a wide range of cyber-attacks throughout their  
25 networks. It is why I led the Taiwan Cyber Security

1 Resiliency Act.

2 And this legislation is included -- was included in  
3 last year's NDAA, and it helps Taiwan prepare to counter  
4 exactly this kind of attack that they faced. And so, it  
5 is, again, just another step in assisting our partners and  
6 allies to defend against their potential vulnerabilities.  
7 So do you think -- you know, Taiwan supply chain.

8 We have seen so many supply chain issues in the last  
9 few years for various reasons. Do you believe Taiwan  
10 supply chain is another potential area that could be  
11 targeted by bad actors. And how would taking actions to  
12 firm up Taiwan's defense supply chains, including through  
13 enhancing our cooperation between our defense industrial  
14 bases, maybe help deter China from future aggressive  
15 actions?

16 Admiral Aquilino: Yes, Senator. I wouldn't limit the  
17 issue. It doesn't just apply in one place. It applies all  
18 across the region against all our allies, partners, and  
19 friends. The ability to protect both our civilian critical  
20 infrastructure as well as our military critical  
21 infrastructure is important.

22 Our security challengers intend and are rehearsing and  
23 practicing and attempting to go after all of it. So, my  
24 partnership with the Commander of USCYBERCOM -- General  
25 Hawk has been to my headquarters. He understands our

1 priorities.

2 He has got forces cooperating with all our allies and  
3 partners and friends to be able to tighten up their  
4 networks such that they can't be intruded against or used  
5 against us.

6 Senator Rosen: Thank you. I am going to continue on  
7 this chain a little bit, but going over to you, General, I  
8 want to talk about defending ourselves against  
9 unpredictable adversaries, because the September 11th  
10 Commission report famously identified, and I am going to  
11 quote, a failure of imagination as a critical shortfall of  
12 our defense at that time.

13 And I think our ability to create and innovate, we  
14 think about Task Force 59, using things commercially  
15 available, what we develop, what we invest in. And so  
16 North Korea has really proven to be resourceful and  
17 unpredictable adversary.

18 So how are U.S. forces -- how is U.S. Forces Korea,  
19 excuse me, actively working to foster a culture of  
20 creativity, of imagination, innovation, critical thinking,  
21 and anticipation of what North Korea might be doing in its  
22 strategic planning and defense operations so we can better  
23 understand what we think the new and emerging threats are  
24 there.

25 General LaCamera: Thanks, Senator. I don't think



1 DPRK is unpredictable. He's laid out his goals of what he  
2 is going to do, and we are not surprised by that.

3 So, he is on a trajectory to accomplish those. We  
4 just finished Freedom Shield, our exercise, and I can  
5 assure you that taking lessons learned from different  
6 places on -- around the globe and throwing different  
7 curveballs at the staffs and the Component Commanders on  
8 how to think and act differently, as the Admiral has  
9 challenged us to do.

10 I have quoted that we cannot have a lack of  
11 imagination. We can't think that the attack is going to  
12 come from one direction. We have got to think about it in  
13 different directions. And so, our big challenge is  
14 turnover and making sure that we are constantly going back  
15 and revisiting.

16 And I have also challenged him. It is either adapt or  
17 perish, and so we have got to continue to focus on what the  
18 threat is going forward.

19 Senator Rosen: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I know my  
20 time is up, but I have a question for Admiral Aquilino  
21 about his retirement. It is kind of a fun one. Could we  
22 give him the last word for that?

23 Chairman Reed: Absolutely.

24 Senator Rosen: Admiral Aquilino, you know, your  
25 commitment, service to our nation, deeply appreciated. We

1 are so grateful for your sacrifice. So, what is your  
2 advice for the next command as you leave? What insights do  
3 you have and what would you tell us that we should be  
4 paying attention to?

5 Admiral Aquilino: Senator, I think, first of all, I  
6 have been working with Admiral Paparo now for 3 years here  
7 and for the last 30. He understands the theater. I would  
8 give him a one word set of guidance, and that is deliver.

9 Senator Rosen: I think that is a good word. Thank  
10 you. It is great to end on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Chairman Reed: Thank you, Senator Rosen. And  
12 gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. I want to make  
13 one point before I conclude, and that is, several of my  
14 colleagues have criticized President Biden for sending up a  
15 budget of \$886.35 billion.

16 Which, by simple arithmetic, increases the unfunded  
17 priority list. What they fail to recognize or ignore, that  
18 the President was legally required to send that number up.  
19 There was a limit established from the Fiscal  
20 Responsibility Act of 2023, and the reason we passed that  
21 act was because there was serious threat of a default on  
22 our national debt.

23 And I can assure you, if we default on our national  
24 debt, the issues and the problems and the questions you  
25 would be getting today would be much more, indeed

1 exponentially more difficult because it would have set off  
2 an international economic collapse.

3         So, it is Congress that has established a limit, and  
4 it is Congress that must deal with that limit. And I think  
5 that has to be made. Finally, let me add to the  
6 commendation and congratulations to you, Admiral Aquilino,  
7 and your family for distinguished service, for -- and I  
8 think direct might be the word we would use as your  
9 nickname if it wasn't long, and it would be direct, and we  
10 appreciate that very, very much, sir.

11         General LaCamera, I have had the privilege of working  
12 with you since you were a Battalion Commander in the 10th  
13 Mountain Division. Thank you for your service and your  
14 courage. Please, thank the families that are so important,  
15 and the men and women who serve in uniform in the United  
16 States in your Commands.

17         And with that, I would adjourn the hearing.

18         [Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

19

20

21

22

23

24

25