

**Hearing Statement (as Prepared)**  
**Ranking Member Adam Smith**  
**House Armed Services Committee Hearing:**  
**“U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region”**  
**April 18, 2023**

I wish to welcome each of our witnesses and to thank them for appearing today.

The Indo-Pacific region is vital to our national interests, and the United States must remain committed to sustaining regional security. When facing challenges in the region, U.S. efforts should be aimed toward easing tensions, preserving peace, and upholding the international rules-based order in close coordination with allies and partners. A stable and inclusive Indo-Pacific is a fundamental driver of regional and global prosperity.

China presents the greatest challenge. The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) willingness to act unilaterally and aggressively in contravention of international norms, coupled with its extensive efforts to modernize and to consolidate its control over the People’s Liberation Army, is cause for serious concern. Coercive actions orchestrated by the CCP in the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, the Line of Actual Control on the India-PRC border, and elsewhere in the region undermine stability.

In meeting this challenge, we must remain clear-eyed and level-headed and build upon the United States’ strong policy foundation for deterring aggression and for competing on the strategic level with the CCP. Together, the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) provide the framework to “outcompete our strategic competitors” and “to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence, with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge for the Department.” It is important to emphasize that the NDS states: “Conflict with the PRC is neither inevitable nor desirable.” It also provides: “The Department’s priorities support broader whole-of-government efforts to develop terms of interaction with the PRC that are favorable to our interests and values, while managing strategic competition and enabling the pursuit of cooperation on common challenges.” The United States and China can coexist and prosper peaceably. Furthermore, the United States should consistently engage with China in constructive dialogue, especially when it may lessen the risk of escalation by miscalculation.

U.S. policy remains steadfast regarding Taiwan. The Department of Defense supports Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities in a manner consistent with the United States’ longstanding one-China policy and the Taiwan Relations Act. With respect to the cross-strait situation specifically and to competing with the CCP generally, we should continue to implement a sound, multi-tool, deterrence strategy that affords every option for effectiveness.

Unfortunately, the potential for conflict on the Korean Peninsula persists, and North Korea continues to threaten the international community. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review states that North Korea “poses a persistent threat and growing danger to the U.S. homeland and the Indo-Pacific region as it expands, diversifies, and improves its nuclear, ballistic missile, and non-nuclear capabilities, including its chemical weapon stockpile.” The United States must continue to apply a coherent, whole-of-government approach to containing this threat and to cooperate with allies and partners to deter North Korean aggression.

The United States must also continue to monitor Russian activities in the Indo-Pacific region. Russian contempt for the international rules-based order is unbounded, and Russia's significant military presence in the region warrants close attention. These and other shared regional security challenges require consistent vigilance.

Our relationships with allies and partners are crucial to addressing the region's security challenges. The Indo-Pacific includes five treaty allies and a diverse network of countries with whom the United States cooperates in productive and mutually beneficial partnerships. The United States is actively working with allies and partners to develop capabilities and to reinforce posture and presence in the region, and direct engagements have enhanced regional security in various ways. For instance, in January, the United States and India reinforced cooperation on developing defense technologies and innovation, and, in February, the United States and the Philippines jointly announced an expanded application of the U.S.-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. In addition, many cooperative efforts in the region are multilateral, as exemplified by recent developments among the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan; the members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, including India, Japan, and Australia; and the parties to the AUKUS agreement, including Australia and the United Kingdom. Allies and partners are committed to working with the United States in maintaining stability across the region, and we must remain committed to advancing these relationships.

U.S. commitments in the Indo-Pacific region are augmented by the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) and other programs, which prioritize bolstering the United States' regional presence, building and maintaining resilient infrastructure and readiness, and improving a wide variety of military capabilities. I welcome the opportunity to work with the Department to optimize the contributions of PDI and other departmental efforts in the Indo-Pacific region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to receiving the witnesses' testimony.