

## **Opening Statement (As Prepared) Ranking Member Adam Smith**

House Armed Services Committee Hearing:

*“The Pressing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party to U.S. National Defense”*

February 7, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wish to welcome our witnesses and to thank them for appearing today. The Chinese Communist Party’s willingness to take aggressive, unilateral actions in contravention of generally accepted international norms, coupled with its extensive effort to modernize and to consolidate its control over the People’s Liberation Army, is cause for serious concern. One need only refer to last week’s balloon flight for an example of reckless behavior. Clearly, the United States must maintain vigilance with respect to the Chinese Communist Party’s development and uses of military power that are contrary to U.S. national interests, and it is crucial that the United States continue to work closely with its allies and partners to deter aggression and to check unacceptable violations of internationally recognized standards by the Chinese Communist Party.

I agree with the National Defense Strategy, which unequivocally asserts: “Conflict with the PRC is neither inevitable nor desirable.” Predictive assertions to the contrary are counterproductive. The world is big enough for the United States and China to coexist and for each to prosper peaceably. Although it is our solemn, governmental duty to provide for the common defense and to empower the Department of Defense to prepare for all sorts of contingencies and threats to national security, we do not need to go in search of conflict. It is important to note that the National Defense Strategy also states: “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.” Furthermore, the United States should consistently engage China in an open and constructive dialogue, especially to mitigate tension and to lessen the risk of escalation by miscalculation. Frankly, I don’t think that even the odyssey of the surveillance balloon, as outrageous as it was, should disrupt diplomacy.

U.S. policies and actions taken in strategic competition with the Chinese Communist Party should be deliberate and based upon rigorous, objective, and verified threat analyses. When evaluating threats, we need to be clear-eyed and level-headed. The United States is fully capable of meeting the challenges posed by the Chinese Communist Party while upholding its values without resorting to the types of exaggeration, distortion, or demagoguery that give rise to, or support, racist, xenophobic, or other prejudicial attitudes. Resilience in the face of challenge is also a reflection of who we are.

I want to emphasize that we have a strong policy foundation for deterring aggression and for competing on the strategic level with the Chinese Communist Party. The National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy provide a solid framework for strengthening our defense

capabilities to help “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.” This committee has worked arduously over many legislative cycles to augment defense capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region through the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative, and other legislative measures. The United States is also working with allies and partners to enhance security relationships and to maintain stability in the region; the recent AUKUS agreement being a good example. 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 strategic competition with the Chinese Communist Party generally, we should continue to implement a cogent, multi-tool, deterrence strategy that affords every option for effectiveness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to hearing the witnesses’ views.

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