

**Randall Schriver**  
**Assistant Secretary of Defense, Asian & Pacific Security Affairs**  
**Testimony on American Leadership in the Asia-Pacific**  
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Good morning Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to update you on the Department of Defense's approach to the Indo-Pacific region. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Deputy Assistant Secretary Alex Wong for his remarks. We have been engaged in a robust and fruitful interagency process to develop the U.S. strategy and approach to the Indo-Pacific region, and it has truly been a sterling example of interagency focus and cooperation. Furthermore, as we work to develop and implement a strategy that demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and advances a rules-based international order, we have been aided in our efforts by bipartisan support from Congress. While we are continuing our review, I was pleased to note that the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), currently being discussed by this committee, appears to align substantially with our approach to the region.

The United States seeks to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region. A region in which nations with diverse cultures and different aspirations can prosper side-by-side in freedom, peace, and stability. By "free," we mean that nations will be free from coercion and able to protect their sovereignty. At the national level, we mean that societies are increasingly freer in terms of good governance, and fundamental human rights and liberties. By "open," we mean that all nations can enjoy freedom of the seas, and that all share a commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes. We also mean more open investment environments and improved connectivity to drive regional integration and prosperity.

As the region's population and economic weight grow, and as it faces rising security and political challenges, the U.S. commitment to the region must keep pace. Our vision for the Indo-Pacific region excludes no nation; we seek to partner with all who respect national sovereignty, fair and reciprocal trade, and the rule of law. Our aim is for all nations to live in prosperity, security, and liberty in the same rules-based order. For the Indo-Pacific region to flourish, each

and every State must be free to determine its own course within a system of values that ensures opportunity for even the smallest countries to thrive.

Toward these goals, and in alignment with the measures being discussed by this Committee, the United States is reaffirming our longstanding security commitments to our allies while broadening and strengthening our security partnerships. We are encouraging a more networked approach to security cooperation to counter common threats and ensure regional stability. We will work with allies and partners to promote regional institutions and infrastructure, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and trilateral and multilateral mechanisms of like-minded partners, to protect and advance the region's rules-based order. Finally, we will support transparent and high-standard infrastructure financing; pursue free, fair, and reciprocal trade; and foster sustainable development throughout the region. We seek to ensure that the Indo-Pacific's commitment to market-driven growth continues and that new infrastructure knits the region together, generates local wealth, and leads to sustainable growth.

The Department of Defense is intently focused on supporting the broader, whole-of-government approach to this crucial region. Indeed, as Secretary Mattis often emphasizes, the Indo-Pacific is the priority theater, a point of view that is reflected in our National Defense Strategy (NDS) and in our robust engagement with the region.

We recognize that we face a diverse array of security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. As the NDS acknowledges, the reemergence of great power competition is the central challenge to U.S. security and prosperity, and demands prioritization and hard strategic choices. The NDS also highlights a number of immediate challenges, such as those posed by rogue regimes and violent extremist organizations.

In light of these challenges, we have crafted a defense strategy that builds a more lethal, resilient, ready, and rapidly innovating U.S. military which, combined with a robust constellation of allies and partners, will ensure we remain capable of safeguarding security, prosperity, and a free, open, and rules-based order. All States in the Indo-Pacific region benefit from these collective goods, and we expect our allies and partners to contribute to the maintenance of this rules-based order. We each have a role to play and a shared responsibility for our shared future.

A central theme of the NDS, and one that is predominantly reflected in both the ARIA and DoD's approach to the Indo-Pacific region, is our focus on our alliances and partnerships. We are committed to working by, with, and through allies and partners to find ways to address common challenges, enhance shared capabilities, increase defense investment and improve interoperability, streamline information sharing, and build networks of capable and like-minded partners. We are strengthening our abilities to deter potential adversaries while also using programs like the Maritime Security Initiative to improve partners' maritime domain awareness and maritime capabilities, enabling them to better resist coercion and maintain their independence, contribute to the rules-based order, and deter and defend against threats. Our alliances and partnerships serve as a force multiplier for good, and further cooperation among us will aid in our collective efforts to maintain peace and stability throughout the region.

In Northeast Asia, the dynamic security environment continues to underscore the importance of our robust alliance and partner relationships, in particular given the immediate challenge posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Although recent diplomatic developments are encouraging, the Department of Defense continues to work closely with our allies and partners to maintain and improve our readiness to defend against potential threats, while ensuring that our diplomats engage from a position of strength to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization and the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile programs. Beyond North Korea, we are focused on modernizing our alliances with both the Republic of Korea and Japan, with each of ally taking steps to contribute to regional security and stability more broadly. We are also focused on promoting our defense relationship with Taiwan, and faithfully upholding our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act.

In Southeast Asia, we are working with allies and partners to build counterterrorism and maritime security capabilities to address region-wide challenges central to upholding the rules-based order. We are reinvigorating our longstanding alliances with Thailand and the Philippines, while bolstering our enduring partnership with Singapore. We are expanding strategic defense relationships with important regional players such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia. We are also working to promote ASEAN's centrality in the regional security architecture and empower it to contribute more effectively to regional stability. It is important that ASEAN speak clearly

and with one voice on regional issues such as the South China Sea, counterterrorism, and North Korea. We look forward to working with ASEAN members to strengthen multilateral defense cooperation, enhance maritime domain awareness, counter the threat posed by terrorism, and advance cooperation on humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, among other initiatives.

In Oceania, our alliances and partnerships are based not only on shared security interests, but also on deeply shared values and a long history of shared sacrifice. Australia remains one of the United States' strongest allies, and we are deepening our defense partnership with New Zealand. We are modernizing these key alliances and partnerships to ensure they are as relevant to the security challenges of this century as they were to the challenges of the last century and continue to underwrite a free and open Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

In South Asia, we are strengthening our partnerships, particularly with India. In 2016, the United States declared India a Major Defense Partner, which opens the door for increased cooperation on a range of defense issues, most notably defense trade and technology. We are natural partners across a range of political, economic, and security issues. With a mutual desire for global stability and support for a rules-based international order, our two countries have an increasing convergence of interests, including maritime security and domain awareness, counter-piracy, countering terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and coordinated responses to natural disasters and transnational threats. Our partnership extends beyond the Indo-Pacific region as well, and as we implement our South Asia Strategy, we welcome India's continued civilian contributions to stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

We are also stepping up our engagement with European and NATO Allies, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Canada, with whom we share enduring interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

As we strengthen our alliances and partnerships we are also taking the steps necessary to improve our military readiness and capabilities to reassure our allies and deter potential adversaries. Strong deterrence is at the foundation of our regional, and indeed, our global approach, and Secretary Mattis is clear in his emphasis on the Department's role in supporting our diplomats so they can engage and negotiate from a position of strength.

Given the long-term, consequential nature of the Indo-Pacific region to U.S. national security and emerging threats to the region's stability, the Department is sustaining its focus on the region in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. The FY 2019 budget seeks to close gaps within the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) in U.S. combat capacity, readiness, posture and presence, and other areas unique to the region's warfighting needs.

For example, the FY 2019 budget invests in key capabilities identified as critical to support joint, integrated fires in the Indo-Pacific region, both in defense of U.S. interests and to reach inside an adversary's anti-access and area-denial envelope with advanced, long-range munitions. The budget also invests in posture initiatives to close gaps in resiliency of joint operations—that is, our ability to absorb an adversary attack and sustain operations to deny their objectives—in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly through improved logistics support. The budget also continues to address shortfalls both in preferred munitions for ongoing operations, and in more advanced, long-range munitions needed within the FYDP for high-end warfight demands in the region. These investments are one part of the Department's broader efforts in rebuilding our military to be more ready, capable, and lethal, particularly for forward deterrent forces.

Finally, our approach to the region and our strategy to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region accounts for our relationship with China. China should and does have a voice in shaping the international system, as do all countries. However, in recent years, we have grown concerned by China's strategic intentions and trajectory, including some activities in the region that we view as destabilizing and counterproductive—in the South China Sea, for example. Although the United States will continue to pursue a constructive, results-oriented relationship with China, we will not accept policies or actions that threaten to undermine the international rules-based order, a system that has benefited everyone in the region, including China. We will stand up for and defend that order, and we will encourage others to do the same; and although we are committed to cooperating with China where our interests align, we will compete, vigorously, where our interests diverge.

Our vision for the Indo-Pacific region excludes no nation. We seek to partner with all nations that respect national sovereignty, fair and reciprocal trade, and the rule of law. Although we accept that States will make some decisions that are not in our interests, we recognize that for the Indo-Pacific region to flourish, each nation in the region must be free to determine its own

course within a system of values that ensures opportunity for even the smallest countries to thrive, free from the dictates of the strong. Our aim is for all nations to live in prosperity, security, and liberty, free from coercion and able to choose their own path.

The United States is a Pacific nation and has been one for centuries. We will remain committed to maintaining the security and stability in this all-important region. This is a view that has transcended political transitions and has maintained strong bipartisan support. During my tenure as Assistant Secretary, I have been encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by Congress, and I look forward to working with you on the specific measures you propose to enhance U.S. leadership in the Indo-Pacific region.

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I look forward to your questions.