

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Event

**“Strategic Landpower Dialogue: A Conversation with
General Charles Flynn”**

DATE

Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. ET

FEATURING

General Charles Flynn

Commanding General, U.S. Army Pacific

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General Robert Brown:

Well, good morning, everybody. It's been kind of a quiet, boring week, so – (laughter) – we're really, really glad you're here. For those of us joining us online and certainly those in person, welcome to the second installment of the Strategic Landpower Dialogue. I'm General Bob Brown, the president and CEO of the Association of the United States Army. And let me start again by thanking CSIS for this partnership with AUSA.

And we couldn't do it without the support of General Dynamics in making this series happen. And we've got GD Land Systems and corporate with us this morning. Thanks for joining us. And again, thanks for the great support to make this possible.

You know, Dr. Hamre opened up the first Strategic Landpower Dialogue event a few weeks ago pointing out the long-overdue need to have a forum like this to discuss strategic landpower, and we couldn't have picked a better kickoff event than having Secretary Wormuth and now-confirmed Chief of Staff Randy George. They did a great job in our first dialogue really getting after the demands and the changing character and the direction the Army is going.

But there's absolutely no better way to follow up than getting General Charlie Flynn, commanding general of the U.S. Army Pacific and a really incredible warfighter and Pacific expert – Indo-Pacific expert here to discuss the role of landpower in the nation's priority theater. You know, I saw when I was U.S. Army Pacific commander that the Indo-Pacific is a region where we most fall victim to the myth that there was a short, simple, and clean way of winning wars that does not require landpower. And we should start with a historical perspective: Since 1941, the United States has fought three major wars in the Indo-Pacific and all of them have predominantly been ground wars. We'd be naïve to assume that the region and the nature of war has changed so much that this couldn't happen again.

Deterring or winning a war as a joint force in the region requires combining the unique capabilities of each service in every domain to pose multiple dilemmas to an adversary. That's our best hope at deterrence. And if deterrence fails, it'll lead to victory. There will always be a requirement for the Army to defend or impose will where people live, on the land.

So, fortunately, as I mentioned earlier, the Army could not have a better leader at this time in the service's most decisive region. General Charlie Flynn assumed command of U.S. Army Pacific in June of 2021. He's a native of Rhode Island who was commissioned into the infantry in 1985. You know, he's commanded numerous times in Iraq and Afghanistan – amazing combat leader, commanded at all levels from platoon to now the largest Army service component command. But I had the honor to serve with him. He was commanding the 25th when I was U.S. Army Pacific commander, an

unbelievable division commander, just a(n) inspirational leader that understood the region. And it was just absolutely amazing what he did with the division. And then I was lucky enough he would become deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Pacific and carry me through the rest and do unbelievable work in the Indo-Pacific. He had relationships and an understanding of the region that is second to none, unbelievable, and he's really beloved by our allies and partners in the region. He went to an easy job after that as G-3/5/7 for the Army. And as I mentioned, we're so glad he got out of there and to get to the Pacific.

So I could go on for hours about Charlie and the region, but I think you'd rather hear from someone in the region daily. And so let me turn it over to Dr. Tom Karako, who will be our moderator in a discussion with General Flynn. Tom, over to you.

Tom Karako: Thank you, General Brown. And again, thanks to the whole AUSA team, again, for this partnership.

So the Army is a big organization and the Pacific's a big place. We've got a lot to talk about. As General Flynn – General Brown said, you know, we couldn't do better than to have you out here, sir. I think this is your first time to CSIS.

General Charles Flynn:

It is.

Dr. Karako: I hope it won't be your last. We'll have to do this again soon.

But again, land is – for all the talk about multidomain operations, land is one of the domains and it's the domain on which human beings spend most of their time. So, to that end, we will start off with the same question that we kicked off the series with with Secretary Wormuth and General George, and that is: What is your view of the role of landpower for the joint force, both today and then forward to 2040?

Gen. Flynn: Well, first of all, thanks, Bob. Thanks to CSIS and you for allowing this platform to talk about this enormously important region, but also the value of land and landpower.

So I guess I'll start by saying, before I get into the role of it, land is the prize, because if you control land then you can control people. And we are seeing that today in Europe, and you're seeing it right now in the Middle East. It's been going on in the Middle East, candidly, for a long time, but you know, this most recent event.

And so – and what do armies do? Fundamentally, armies do three things. We seize, hold, and we defend terrain. And the armies in this region are working

to seize, hold, and defend terrain, and they want to do that with their partner, the U.S. Army. Why? Because what's happening in the region is the aggressive, irresponsible, and insidious behavior of the PRC, and that force is out conducting operations where they are violating the territorial integrity and the national sovereignty of these countries and these nations. And the armies – the landpower network in the Indo-Pacific plays a central role in being able to seize, hold, and defend their territory. And at the end of the day, a nation's obligation is to protect its people, preserve its territorial integrity by defending its borders, and then ultimately defending its homeland, which is a really important mission for us as well in the Indo-Pacific since our homeland extends out to the second island chain, because America's day starts in Guam.

So I guess the point that I'd make is that when land is the prize; and that you have a military instrument that is intending and rehearsing and exercising and demonstrating that it intends to build land, militarize land, and then seize land for its own benefit; that is actually what's happening out in that region right now. And the landpower network, the armies in the region, are – play a central role, and the governments are turning to those armies to help them find ways to continue to preserve their territorial integrity. And that partnership with the U.S. Army plays a vital role in being able to protect and maintain a safe and stable and secure Indo-Pacific.

Dr. Karako: In your new vision document, which I will make reference to a number of times today, I mean, you kick it off by talking about, you know, territory, homeland, and really that political integrity. And so it's almost like a different way of talking about war as an extension of politics, is this is why we're doing this, is the protection of sovereignty.

Gen. Flynn: Yes. Well, I mean, I'll go into, you know, I guess the – what's happening out there is – and again, I've just come back from Australia, Malaysia. I was in Korea and Japan and India all in the last five months. But I would just express it to you this way: The nations in the region, because of the way that the Chinese are behaving – and I'll go all the way back to, you know, prior to Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan – these kinds of actions were – I referred to them at the time as incremental and insidious. I'm adding irresponsible right now because of, really, what happened when the speaker went to Taiwan, and then of course Speaker McCarthy went out and had a meeting in California. And so what's happened is that that behavior is being seen as overly aggressive by the region, and they're responding by participating more in our multinational exercises, and so their participation in these exercises creating opportunities for the region to come together in exercises like Garuda Shield, which was simply an army-to-army exercise; now it's 14 countries. Talisman Sabre down in Australia was an army-to-army exercise; now 15 nations. That is the way that they're speaking, by their actions. And

their actions are trending towards being a valued partner with the United States Army.

Dr. Karako: Let's talk about that. I mean, you mentioned the Pelosi visit and the tremendous Chinese reaction to that. It's also illuminating in the sense that people, I think, saw the Chinese for their true colors. Have you seen the threat perception change? I mean, I know you've spent almost 10 years in the Pacific. You might talk about how that's changed really the threat perception in –

Gen. Flynn: Well, I guess, you know, if you – if you go back – I'll go back to, like, the '15 timeframe, and I think it's an important period. So, in 2015, that is when their transformation and reorganization blended together. And then, at the same time, they also put in a training methodology and put – candidly, put training centers in. Little-known here, too, is they also built their space force in 2015. So the point I'd make is between '14 and '18, when myself and General Brown and Jim Pasquarette were out there in the region, what I saw them doing training-wise and exercises and rehearsals was not anywhere near what I see them doing today in the '21 to '23 timeframe. So if you just rewind the clock between '14 and '21 and the advances that they've made since their modernization caught up with their reorganization caught up with their training centers, and then you – and I'd project out over the next decade that's a dangerous trajectory for them to be on absent us slowing them down.

And what I mean by slowing them down is being able to create capabilities and posture and message and will and the allies-and-partner network coming together as a counterweight to what – to the way the Chinese are behaving. And that's what I think is important about, you know, looking back over the last decade and then looking out over the next decade, because, you know, I'm not going to sit here and give you a time on it; what I'm saying is that what they've done over the last 10 years and what they are signaling and intending to do over the next 10 years is – should be concerning for all of us. And it's definitely concerning for the region, which is why they're showing up into more multinational exercises.

Dr. Karako: Well, let's pull – let's pull that thread. Just staying with the threat, before we get to the NDS and what we do about that threat, you know, in your vision statement you talk about, you know, I think it's the psychological warfare, public opinion, lawfare, and also all of the military stuff. So maybe walk us through that and the – some examples of how you see the – especially the Chinese threat, the pacing threat, and then we'll get to some other things.

Gen. Flynn: Well, I mean, I think that, you know, their actions in South Asia, from the conduct of their investments in BRI; the way that they come into countries, particularly post-exercises, when, you know, the – I'll try to describe, you

know, an air intercept and an at-sea intercept are easy because it's a video, but an on-ground intercept is – you know, they conduct reconnaissance in these countries before we conduct an exercise. During the exercise, they sort of go to low-level listening. And then post-exercise, what they do is they come in with coercive power, mostly money, and they're trying to find individuals who are receptive to that kind of work. And that tends to undermine what we are doing out there.

I guess the point I'd make in all of this is that, you know, we are trying to support the three pillars of the National Defense Strategy: integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building an enduring advantage. And we have three ways, as is pointed out in the vision statement, to support those three pillars of the National Defense Strategy. And I think that our theory of victory there is best articulated in those three ways that we support the National Defense Strategy.

Dr. Karako:

Yeah. And you mentioned the economic, the Belt and Road, all that lawfare and psychological stuff. That's all with people on land in terms of shaping. And if there's one thing people know about Sun Tzu, it's the admonition to win without fighting, so – when it comes down to the political aspect there.

So let's – you know, I think a lot of people are familiar with brigades and battalions. Before we kind of get into this, to your initiatives and things like that, talk to us about the type of organization that you command.

Gen. Flynn:

Well, it's a theater army, and it actually has four roles. One role is as an Army service component commander, which is the traditional man, train, equip, organize under the Title X authorities of the secretary of the Army.

There's three other roles that we perform and train for, and those are on behalf of the joint force. So there's – you know, again, the Army service component command is sort of a(n) administrative line of authority to the Army; and then our operational lines of authority to the combatant commander as a TJFLCC, the theater joint force land component commander; a CJFLCC, the combined joint force land component commander; or a CJTF. So those three operational hats are the – is the other roles that I play for the combatant commander. And of course, we get certified in training through exercises like Pac Sentry, which we just completed this past year, as our CJTF certification. So that, in essence, is what a theater army represents.

Now, we have a field army in Korea, Eighth Field Army, as part of the theater army. We have a(n) Army service component command in Japan. We have two division commanders, one in Alaska and Hawaii. And of course, we have a corps commander at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. And then there's, you know, more than 10 flag officer enabling commands out in Hawaii that are the theater enabling commands that give really the scale and depth that are

provided to the joint force commander in my – in my joint combatant command role for the INDOPACOM commander.

Dr. Karako: So you mentioned the three pillars of the NDS. Can you walk us through the – I guess your three big efforts to implement that – JPMRC, Operation Pathways, and joint interior lines?

Gen. Flynn: So I'll start, you know, with those three pillars; so campaigning, integrated deterrence, and building an enduring advantage.

So the three ways that we're supporting those pillars is JPMRC, a Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center, the first combat training center that the Army has built in the Pacific and the first one they've created in close to 50 years. That has a Hawaii campus and an Alaskan campus, and then it has a deployable arm to it that we bring into the region. We've done it the last two years in Indonesia – the last three years, twice in Indonesia – '21 and '22 – and we just had it this year in Australia in '23. The Hawaii campus and the Alaska campus are – basically, they revolve around the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii and then, of course, the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska. I think what's unique about those environments is that they replicate the region – so an eight-island archipelago where we have training areas across – major training areas across three of the islands; and then, of course, up in Alaska you have high altitude, extreme cold weather, and mountainous in Yukon and Donnelly Training Area. So the ability to bring forces to those locations, train at the division and below level with enabling commands, with joint assets – because we're surrounded by joint assets in both Hawaii and Alaska – gives us an advantage by remaining in the region and generating readiness.

And then we deploy that readiness in the region in the second way we support the National Defense Strategy, which is Operation Pathways. Now, campaigning, I'll just go on the definition of campaigning. Campaigning, in the definition of it, it is the logical and sequential arrangement of operations, activities, and investments that benefit U.S. security objectives and the security objectives of our allies and partners. So when we have more than 40 joint and army-to-army exercises on Operation Pathways, that is the logical and sequential arrangement in time and space of operations activities investments. We do over 40 of them a year. Some are joint. Some are army to army.

And what Operation Pathways represents is a series of rehearsals and training venues to conduct our operational approach to campaigning in the region. It's adversary-focused and it really does three things. It creates interoperability between our allies and partners, and builds confidence of our allies and partners in our relationship. A second thing it provides us, the ability to increase joint readiness of the joint force forward while we're operating in the region. And then the third thing it does is it denies key

terrain – human and physical terrain – from the PRC and the adversary, which they are in the region seeking ways to counter that by seizing terrain.

The third thing that we're – third way we're doing is joint interior lines. So, as a result and the end state, really, of Operation Pathways is to create joint interior lines, and there's four fundamental parts of joint interior lines. It's command and control, protection, sustainment, and collection. And so those elements, as we're forward using my headquarters as the TJFLCC, using the theater enabling commands, using I Corps, using the multiple divisions that are out operating – of course, we already have 2nd Infantry Division in Korea and a field army. And what we're trying to do out there is arrange in locations by bringing capabilities, posture, messaging what we're doing to both friend and foe, and then demonstrating U.S. will by having soldiers, men and women on the ground operating amongst the people. And what the joint interior lines do for the joint force is they provide staying power and they provide operational reach for our ability to conduct operations in the region.

All of that has a deterrent element to it by being forward and presenting a combat-credible force that is – that is operating as a joint force in support of the joint force, in support of a multinational and combined joint force, and then on key terrain throughout the region to be able to seize, hold, and defend that terrain, and then support territorial defense operations of the region.

Dr. Karako:

Well, let me walk through each of those as a follow-up, and I'll just start with the joint interior lines since you – since you left off with it. I mean, just to kind of state the obvious, joint interior lines is hard for land forces in a region that has so much water. Could you talk about the challenges of pulling that off, and, yes, how you work with the rest of the joint force? And why it's important and why you signal it in the way that you do in your top three efforts – why do you signal it as opposed to exterior lines?

Yeah. Well, let me tell you why we need interior lines. The Chinese have three things that we do not have. They are operating on interior lines. They're a hundred miles from Taiwan, they have mass, and they have magazine depth. And we are trying to counter those three things.

The second thing that they have or the second thing that they've created is they've created an A2/AD arsenal that is primarily designed to defeat air and maritime power. And secondarily, it's designed to deny, degrade, and disrupt space and cyber. It is not, however, designed to find, fix, and finish distributed, mobile, lethal, nonlethal, reloadable, fixed, and semifixed land forces. So, by creating interior lines and then distributing, dispersing, connecting the joint force and the multinational partners forward, we are presenting an asymmetrical dilemma to our adversary.

In addition to that, while we're forward we're not just presenting a dilemma to our adversary; we are, again, creating opportunities for interoperability with our allies and partners, and we're providing them confidence that we are going to be there because we have treaty allies out there and we have obligations to help them defend as a result of our treaties.

So I, actually, Tom, don't think it's that hard. I think it's that we have to get busy and we have to be active doing it. And we are starting to do it right now in places like Japan and the Philippines and Australia and Singapore and Thailand. I could – I could argue that we today already have interior lines in the northern corridor of the region, say Korea and Japan. Where we have to create opportunities is in the central corridor, in the southwestern corridor, and in the western corridor. And so that is basically the rest of the theater. You know if you – if you go from Hokkaido all the way down the first island chain to the Philippines down to the continent of Australia and you come back up through Southeast Asia and the archipelago bridge that connects Asia to the Australian continent, this is where we're trying to improve our forward positioning.

Dr. Karako: But you said we have to get busy. So I guess my follow up – my main follow is, to what extent are the joint interior lines still a vision as opposed to in being? And I'm thinking here especially – and you said it – the infrastructure, the Army pre-positioned stocks. That was really important in February 2022 to rapidly mobilize in Europe. To what extent is that manifest and realized today? Or is it still needing to be done and resourced?

Gen. Flynn: Well, so I would tell you that we are on – we're making a lot of progress. For example, after Talisman Sabre in Australia, we just left equipment – stay-behind equipment in Australia, and we're working with the Australian government on the – on the placement of that later.

In the Philippines, as many of you know, there were five enhanced defense cooperation agreement sites; there are now nine as a result of the great work of the U.S. government and the Department of State, Department of Defense. We also have a lease in Subic Bay. There's 300 million square feet in that lease in Subic Bay and Hanjin Port, and we are doing maintenance of equipment in that port today. And that is a great location to be able to then support the nine EDCA sites there.

Of course, many of you know that we have pre-positioned stocks in Japan and Korea already, our APS-4. We have APS-3 of seven vessels afloat. And what we're trying to do in places like Japan, throughout the southwest islands, in the Philippines, into Australia, Singapore, and Thailand is to be able to distribute what was once large stocks and Army pre-positioned stocks. And this is the – this is the work that is ongoing with Army Materiel Command and INDOPACOM and DLA, SDDC, and the entire logistics

enterprise, which is to disperse those pre-positioned stocks. And I refer to them as activity sets, because what we're trying to do with these activity sets is activate them more often during training, rehearsals, deployments, and exercises so that we're exercising the issuance and recovery of that material.

The other aspect about these activity sets is that I refer to the material that we put there as they're consumables and they're dual-purpose. In other words, they're consumables that we can use while we're out training and exercising, but they're also dual-purpose because a Band-Aid is a Band-Aid is a Band-Aid, but also as an airfield repair kit. You're going to need it during a humanitarian assistance disaster relief operation, which happens quite often out there, but you're also going to need repair kits in the event of a crisis or conflict in order to repair damaged airfields.

So I'm actually – I'm excited about the gains that are being made with our posture. There is still miles to march before we rest. However, I will say that some of those gains that have been made here, at least in the past two years, are very positive and they are trending in a(n) increasingly positive direction.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Let me ask about the M in JPMRC, the multinational part. You know, you already mentioned the Philippines and the Australians in particular, but the – you know, the Security Force Assistance Brigades. Talk to us – what are those? And how are those being manifest, your efforts there?

Gen. Flynn: Well, the Security Force Assistance Brigade is a – is a great add to the region. I could actually use two of them out there just because of the expansive nature and the role that they play.

So, generally speaking, the SFAB is in 12 to 14 countries. And the way we're using the Security Force Assistance Brigade is, in my dialogue with the army chiefs in the region, I basically ask them what are their needs. How do they need assistance with training, education, leader development, any number of things? And so in the dialogue that I have with the army chiefs, we come up with a path for that particular advisor team to work with their army. Some countries we have, you know, one advisor team of about 18 people. A team is generally about 18. In other countries, we have a number of them – two or three, depending on the scale, timing, and the needs of that particular force. And so this is one of the important elements, I think, that's added to our capability in the region.

If I can, I'm going to stay on this point for just a minute. I think that one of the more important parts of the Army's modernization – or now what General George is referring to as continuous transformation, and it's lost a little bit in the noise of the development of weapons systems and platforms – is the organizational changes that are happening in the Army.

So let me point to four of them that are – have been central in the Indo-Pacific and particularly for U.S. Army Pacific as the TJFLCC. The first is the Security Force Assistance Brigade, as I just talked about. The second are the Multi-Domain Task Forces, which were with me this week on a panel at AUSA. The third is a theater fires element that is in my headquarters to conduct joint fires. And then the third – the fourth, rather, is a theater information advantage directorate.

And so one of the missed stories, I think, in the Army's transformation is this organizational adaptation that is going on and this organizational transformation that's adding value to the theater army and adding value to the joint and combined force at the operational and theater strategic levels of war. These organizations – and I'll use the Multi-Domain Task Force as a really good example, and the Security Force Assistance Brigade as well.

The Multi-Domain Task Force came out of a concept. And in '18-'19, we were having difficulty understanding its role and at what echelon it should operate at. We had an O&O through the great work of General Bob Brown, who actually brought that from the Combined Arms Center with Dave Perkins out to the Pacific, and the O&O is basically the organizational table to do it. But then a decision was made to put that at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Actually, it went to Joint Base Lewis-McChord when the current chief, Randy George, was the I Corps commander. And then we stood the Multi-Domain Task Force up. The organization itself, we put a brigadier general in charge of it. And I will just say, you know, in broad terms, around the '19 timeframe that was getting built and organized.

Well, it's 2023 today, and what I think is really important here is that organization is three years in front of the delivery of the new weapons systems that are – that are on the way, so midrange capability with SM-6 and Tomahawk, IBCS, LTAMDS, PrSM, hypersonics, you know, you can go down the list. And while those things are important, the most important part, I believe, of the continuous transformation that's going on in the Army right now is these organizational adaptations and these organizational transformations that are going on that are able to then deploy and employ those weapons systems when they arrive.

So if you think about it in reverse, had we just issued new weapons platforms to a formation and then formation was a legacy formation, it would not understand how to employ those weapons systems. So the improvements in human, technical, and procedural interoperability are being done now and have been done for three years, so that when these new weapons systems arrive that the organization – the Multi-Domain Task Force, the theater fires element, the information advantage directorate, the Security Force Assistance Brigade – they are all doing intel, they are all doing

intelligence and warnings support to joint targeting, they are doing strategic reconnaissance, they are doing lethal and nonlethal targeting, and they are seeing, sensing, and making sense, and understanding what's actually happening out in the environment. And I think that that is a really, really important part of what the Army is doing right now, and it's not getting enough mention. So I'm happy to talk about that.

Dr. Karako: You're preempting all my questions here, but we'll run through a lot of those. You know, the LRHW battery, already out there even though the missile isn't there, for instance.

So let me stay with the organizational thing there. It also brings to mind a lot of what the Marines have been doing with their new concepts and things like that. How much – you mentioned General Brown and the MDTFs and all this sort of thing. How much new experimentation and new organization is yet to be done? And are those – to what extent do you think those new organizations and such things are being sufficiently resourced?

Gen. Flynn: Well, I think they're being sufficiently resourced. I'm pretty pleased with what – you know, those four that I just mentioned I'm – again, I could use another SFAB out there, but you know, I mean, I don't think you're going to find any commander that's not going to want more, right? But the fact of the matter is, I think the size and the skillsets of each four of those are adequate for what we're doing out there right now. So I'm pretty pleased with the way they're organized.

Dr. Karako: Let me ask you about the MDTFs, then. You know, you rattled off the Tomahawk and the SM-6 and such things. I think it's usually associated – I associate it with, you know, basically, long-range fires and air defense. But to what extent is it a fires formation or is it a maneuvers formation?

Gen. Flynn: It's a maneuver formation that provides fires. I'm going to actually come back to JPMRC on your previous question about experimentation and exercises. So this training center that we're building – that is built out in the – in the Pacific – and this year it was validated by the Joint Staff and OSD as part of the joint national training capability, so it's recognized by three pillars in it – the experimentation that can go on at a training center across the islands of Hawaii and then into the region, particularly out into the second island chain, is a really important part of what we're doing. Same thing up in Alaska. Again, we're surrounded by joint assets. The multinational partners are coming to these locations. And to be able to bring technology, organizational adjustments into those training venues, and then be able to extend it into the region, is a really important part of what we're doing.

So let me give you an example. Just recently, we just finished Talisman Sabre in Australia. In Talisman Sabre in Australia, we linked live virtual and constructive simulation from really the West Coast to Hawaii to Japan down into Australia into their combat training center that they're building in Townsville, Australia. And then the theater – 8th Theater Sustainment Command brought some experiments as part of their joint petroleum over the shore that they deployed and the joint logistics over the shore, and then even the organization of a joint theater sustainment command was something that had not been done in an awful long time. Mobility Guardian was something that Air Mobility Command was doing in the Pacific as part of INDOPACOM's, you know, broader contributions to Talisman Sabre. So the combination of bringing Air Mobility Command together with CJTF 660 – which was I Corps in Australia, a – 8th Theater Sustainment Command, again, 15 nations, and 30,000 joint and multinational partners operating down there, I mean, I've described this before as it was a rehearsal of our plans on a different piece of terrain.

And I think that's the benefit of what JPMRC represents in the region for the joint force. While it's an Army training center, we're out there doing ACE operations working with PACAF. The 3rd MLR – the Marine Littoral Regiment – that the Marines have stood up is based in Hawaii. The 3rd MDTF is based in Hawaii. So we have synergy by location by having the joint force together to be able to do these really important training, exercising, and if we're smart about it – and we're being very smart about it right now – is we're inserting experiments into each of these training exercises to be able to learn, grow, and develop from how we're operating out there.

Dr. Karako: Just want to remind folks we do have the submission of questions online. Please do. I see several good ones coming in from reporters which I'll get to in just a minute.

But let's stay with the – with the MDTFs there, for instance. I know it's been, as you said, several years. You know, again, curious how they're coming along. And the reason I was starting to ask you about maneuver versus fires is, you know, precisely because they're blending different things. And I wonder if you could speak, as well, to some of the non-kinetic things that the MDTFs are developing and playing with.

Gen. Flynn: Well, I mean, I think the – I think the theater information, you know, directorate that we have in our headquarters, as I mentioned, that and the combination of the information, intelligence, electronic warfare space and cyber teams inside the Multi-Domain Effects Battalion, the work that they're doing together to understand what's happening with misinformation, disinformation, cyber penetration, what is actually happening in the space domain and the effects that it's having on the ground, those kinds of things

are – is the – is the great work that's going on now between, again, two new organizations.

When I think about if we had not had the theater information advantage directorate at the theater army working for the theater joint land component commander, and being able to tie that with our corps headquarters down to Multi-Domain Task Forces who are forward all the time – again, they're forward seeing, sensing, and making sense to understand what's actually happening in the environment. And when I say in the environment, I mean in the environment inside the theater and in all the domains.

So I'll give you an example. In the Philippines right now, the 1st Multi-Domain Task Force pulled together about seven or eight open-source applications to build a common operational picture. Those applications report air and maritime tracks. So, working with NOLCOM and WESCOM, which is their northern command on the island of Luzon and then WESCOM down in the vicinity of Palawan and operating just south of Manila, those organizations now have a common operational picture to be able to see into the air and into the maritime littorals. That allows them to be able to report on the things that are happening within their territorial – their territorial confines to be able to understand how to react when things are happening just off their coast, and then what they can do to employ, report, or counter some of those incursions. So, again, I think that's a really great effort on the part of the Multi-Domain Task Force – theater information advantage, the theater fires element that we have at our – in our command.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. Well, let me go back to the kinetic piece of the – of the MDTFs for a second. And somebody submitted this question, which is: You're going to get the MRC, the midrange capability out there, Tomahawk and SM-6. You're going to be able to sink ships. But especially in the early stages, how are you thinking about that targeting challenge, make sure that they can complete the kill chain there for that pretty significant range?

Gen. Flynn: Well, this is the important part of the Multi-Domain Effects Battalion, and the important part about the Multi-Domain Effects Battalion and cells of that battalion being out in the first island chain, forward, to be able to, again, collect and understand what is happening. And so we're working on that through the Joint Fires Network. Each one of these exercises that we're doing, we're improving our procedures, we're working through all of the technical components of it.

My only concern about it is that sometimes in these exercises we can walk away from them and, you know, sort of pat ourselves on the back when we get a couple of airplanes or a couple of ships or a couple of nodes on the ground connected to be able to do kill chain. But you know, a couple of planes and a couple of ships and a couple of nodes on the ground is not the

scale that we need to be able to do this at. So there's a lot of work ahead of us.

I'm encouraged by what we are doing out in INDOPACOM with the Joint Fires Network as part of what you know, is referred to back here as the JADC2 work. But the fact of the matter is, we still have a lot of work ahead of us to do that. But I will say, you know, continuing to find out where we have gaps and other challenges by being able to do that, and then bring our multinational force together – combined force – and using, you know, what echelon do you use a mission partner environment at versus, you know, does that actually – is that a warfighting network for tactical and below formations, I mean, I think we're working through some of that. We're, obviously, learning quite a bit from Europe and the Middle East on that, and we're – not all of that is transferrable to the Pacific, but a good deal of it is. And we're taking best practices from that and applying them out in the region in the exercises that we are doing.

Dr. Karako: Related to your emphasis on organization as transformation, last year the Army put out a new FM 3-0 – Field Manual 3-0 – on operations. How do you see the Army – your Army implementing that over the past year?

Gen. Flynn: Well, I mean, I think that – so what I'm most encouraged about is that the doctrine at least gives us a guide when we have these new organizations like the SFAB, Multi-Domain Task Force, theater fires element, the information advantage directorate. I think the next step in this is that we need to take the concepts of agile combat employment, distributed maritime operations, expeditionary advanced basing within the Navy and the Marine Corps and the Air Force – and I would tell you I think the Indo-Pacific theater is the best laboratory to work on those all coming together. I'm glad the Army put some doctrine out in 3-0 on multidomain operations, but I've also talked to Army senior leaders about we also need to be working on the next concept of the warfighting concept at the operational level of war.

And again, I'm going to come back to these new organizational constructs. That is actually going to change how we fight. And so I think the work that's going on with these new organizational constructs – by the way, you know, Europe has a Multi-Domain Task Force that is involved in the fight in Europe. They have a Theater Fires Command. So I think the work that's going on between the Army theater armies to advance the doctrine and create our next concept, or you know, what multidomain 2.0 looks like at the operational level of war, I think that is really important work as we head forward. Because we're going to get new weapons systems; we're going to get new capabilities; but what are those new organizations that we need to adopt now to get ahead of when those systems come?

Dr. Karako: Let me weave in a question from the audience here because I think it'll set up some of the other topics we want to talk about. And this is from Tony Capaccio from Bloomberg News, and he's talking about China as the pacing threat. And he says: What's your assessment of China's current and projected-by-2027 capability to conduct combined ops against Taiwan?

Gen. Flynn: Well, you know, again, year aside, what I would say is that – I made this comment earlier – what I have seen them doing in the last decade, when I, you know, put a marker down on 2023 and I think out to 2033 – over the next decade – the advances that they've made in the last 10 years, I will assume that they can continue to make advances in the next 10 years. And to me, that is a – that is a trajectory that is very, very serious and dangerous. And so this is why I think it's so important what we're doing out there right now with at least the three waves that U.S. Army Pacific is contributing to INDOPACOM's Theater Campaign Plan and to the National Defense Strategy, so.

Dr. Karako: We talked earlier about the win-without-fighting thing, but you have to prepare for the more kinetic side of the house than the insidious economic and the other pressure things. So, you know, how do you think about the Chinese invasion of Taiwan – as a follow-on to Tony's question – relative to the win-without-fighting thing?

Gen. Flynn: Well, I guess what – I guess what I would say is that this is back to interior lines. Like, we have to have in that theater – there's a lot that has changed in that theater, but the geography has not. You have to have command and control, sustainment, protection, and collection forward first. Everybody wants to have a discussion about fires and maneuver. You have to have those four warfighting capabilities at the joint force forward first, because if you put fires and maneuver out there first and you can't sustain it, you can't adequately command and control it, you can't adequately protect it, and you can't adequately collect in order to inform it, then you are wasting your capability.

So, you know, I don't – I worry less about what they're doing and I worry more about what we're doing. And we have to get in a position right now to counter what I just explained as their trajectory through training and exercising and rehearsal. That is a dangerous path that they are on in the next 10 years. And so we right now as a joint force and as a – as a military – and I'm talking about the military instrument that I'm responsible for – that's what we worry about. That's what I worry about, is being able to counter that is by getting forward. And the three ways that we're trying to do it is train, generate readiness, apply that readiness in the region through campaigning and Operation Pathways, and create interior lines to take time and space away from the insidious and irresponsible behavior of the Chinese.

Dr. Karako: You know, I was – to that point, I was recently in Guam, I think maybe a month or so ago, and what I heard about was, you know, hey, we don't have enough repair depots, back to your point about infrastructure. Like, we can't be calling back to Hawaii for spare parts on a bad day; you know, the repair depots and all that sort of stuff. And I guess let me just continue with Guam, then, which is that the deputy secretary recently designated the Army as the lead service for the – for the defense of Guam. The Army's working on a strategy. I'm not going to ask you about the details, because it's still in flux. But I would say, how do you think about the utility of active air and missile defense within all the other capabilities you talked about?

Gen. Flynn: Well, when I was – when I'm talking about one of those four elements in the interior lines of protection, there's sort of three arms of that protection. It's engineering for mobility, counter mobility, survivability. It's medical to protect our force and protect our allies and partners. And then it is integrated air and missile defense. And the integrated air and missile defenses is counter UAS, it's short-range air defense. And some of the capabilities that the Army is creating with mobile, and DE-SHORAD. It's mid-tier with Patriot, and upper tier with THAAD. So Guam is a position that we've long had a THAAD at. We're working with the joint force, INDOPACOM, and the Department of Defense to converge some capabilities there to create a 360 defense.

But, you know, maybe more importantly and less understood, is we are – we've done multiple Patriot live fires in places like Palau, in the Philippines, in Australia. And so demonstrating those kinds of capabilities – and most of those are coming out of the Patriot battalion that's in Japan, that's down in Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, and being able to deploy those Patriot assets into those other countries and demonstrate the mobility of those Patriot capabilities.

Dr. Karako: You know, staying with that, and I think we heard about this from the MDTF discussion the other day we were on together, is Patriot, THAAD, they've all got ground-based sensors. But it is helpful to have elevated sensors as well. I think the MDTFs are looking at some of this. Your thought on elevated sensing for the AMD mission and others?

Gen. Flynn: Yeah, I mean, we need – I mean, I'm a huge fan of the work that's going on for high altitude balloons. We've had those out in the region before. We've deployed them from the continental United States out into the region. Eighteen months ago, during Balikatan in the Philippines, we used high altitude balloons – again, with the permission of the Philippine government. And we launched some from the states and some from the Philippines. And we were doing some of the mesh network and some sensing from those capabilities. So it was – it was very positive. Again, that's a great example of

an experiment that's going on as part of the exercises that we're doing in the region.

Dr. Karako: Yes, I think General Karbler has been pointing out that that was a requirement validated by the JROC in the early 2000s. But unfortunately, after the JLENS thing, we just seemed to be losing the ball on that front.

Let's see. Another question from the audience here I want to – I want to get to. And that is how was the Army preparing for the nuclear domain in the Indo-Pacific? And is conventional nuclear integration part of your commands planning process? That's from Michael Losacco from SPA?

Gen. Flynn: Yeah, I mean, we – you know, obviously for a long time on the Korean Peninsula we have forces there, and forces that would deploy early to operate in a contaminated environment. I think one of the elements of deterrence – nuclear deterrence, that's not often talked about, is our ability to – is our ability to operate in a contaminated environment. There is a lot of work for us to do in this area because we have largely not been exposed to that in the last twenty years. And I think it's part of – I mean, I know it's not part of the triad, when they talk about the nuclear triad, but a form of deterrence is to have land forces that can live, train, and operate in contaminated environments, and then treat and fight in contaminated environments. And once upon a time in our Army, we were pretty good at that. But we've got some skill degradation that has gone on, and we need – we need some work on it.

Dr. Karako: Let me go back to allies, land power network. You highlighted there, the Patriot and the HIMARS as well in the Philippines, Talisman Sabre, some other exercises. Can you walk us through – walk us through the region in terms of different countries – South Korea, Australia, Vietnam, other folks – that you're working with and some of the initiatives there?

Gen. Flynn: Well, I mean, I'll just, you know, sort of remind the audience that this region is really defined by the armies. And I know when you look at a map, you see a lot of blue and you see – and, you know, it's often referred to by many as an air and maritime theater. But it's actually a joint theater, it has joint problems and challenges, and it's going to be solved by the joint force – joint and multinational force.

I believe that what is happening out there with the size of these armies, you know, 65 percent of the Japanese military is its army, 70 percent of the Philippine military is its army, 80 percent of the Indian military is its army. I could go on. The point being that they turn to their armies to provide security for their people. And I'll use the Philippine Army as a really good example. They have 12 divisions. They have 11 Light divisions, and they have an armored division. And they have largely been focused on an insurgency in

Mindanao in the south. And so they're trying to take their army – and the marine corps and special operations forces are part of the Philippine Army.

And what they're trying to do is be innovative, creative, and thoughtful about how to reorganize, reorient, retrain, so that they can conduct what they refer to as territorial defense operations. So, you know, they have recently announced that they're buying BrahMos missiles from India. I think there's other elements of capabilities that they're looking at. And they've talked with us about a combat training center that is that one of the EDCA sites called Fort Magsaysay. And so the conversations that we're having, with, you know, that one partner are reflective of a number of other conversations and dialogue we're having at senior levels about the kind of training and the kind of exercising with the type of capabilities that allow them to, again, see and make sense of what's happening in their air and maritime littorals, and be able to defend their territorial integrity.

Dr. Karako: One of our think tank – sister think tanks in Australia, ASPI, just last week put out a report called, "U.S. Land Power in the Indo Pacific: Opportunities for the for the Australian Army." And you've highlighted land-based fires, basically to sink ships for sea control, sea denial, and that kind of stuff. Do you see that percolating to some of the other armies that you're working with?

Gen. Flynn: Yeah, it's – let me – let me say it a little differently. You know, it can do that. But maybe more importantly, what we really need to do is control key terrain, right? These choke points are really important. So if we can hold at risk through the employment of capabilities in key terrain, then we can, in many ways, create an advantage for the air and maritime force. So if you are able to put capabilities in key terrain at choke points, which there are a number of straits out there that are choke points. I'll just use the Luzon Straits as an example.

If you're able to put capabilities in key terrain, then you actually can make the joint force maritime component command appear larger than it actually is. Because they wouldn't have to commit a surface action group into the Luzon Strait, or the Sunda Strait, or the Lombok Strait, or the Malacca Straits. You know, pick a piece of terrain out there where you want to demonstrate the ability to have sea control and sea denial. Whether you can actually sink the ship, I mean, we're bringing capabilities on to do that. But I think the key part is having our multinational force in those key locations to be able to see, sense, and make sense of actually what's going on so that if you have to interdict then you have the capability there to do that.

Dr. Karako: Well, the Ukrainians have been using some ground-based fires to sink some Russian ships. I think there was just another report of that this week. What

are some of the other observations? What are you seeing in Ukraine that is informative to how you're doing your job?

Gen. Flynn:

I think they're – I think that – three things. One, training. Training started with the training group that we started in 2014 after what happened in Crimea in '13. So I think the result of the performance of the Ukrainian forces has a lot to do with the training that went in place back in '14. The second thing I'm picking up, from my insights, anyways, from what's happening with the fight in Europe, is that on the spectrum of, you know, information war being where we think we are with high tech and industrial war, say, in the World War I, World War II era, I think we all believe we're further over into the high tech information part of this war, when we're right really in the middle.

And you can see it every day. And you saw it this weekend. It's happening in Israel. But this is – war is violent. It's human. It's unpredictable. And it's long. And so what you're seeing out there is where we think we are with high tech and exquisite information, but the reality of it is, you know, low cost and committed forces who are well-trained have an enormously important role on the battlefield.

The second part of what I'm taking away from the fight in Europe is when I was a young officer I think that my close fight I needed, and I was trained by many in the audience, to be able to kill everything in 1,000 meters, and then be able to suppress everything at about 15 kilometers. And I think that today's close fight, for Captain Flynn and Captain Brown, is now about 35 to 40 kilometers. And that is because of the ability of unmanned systems to be able to sense, to be able to detect, to be able to strike, to be able to jam, and be able to conduct reconnaissance in a wide range of areas.

And I think my view on this is that has a profound – that is going to have a profound change in how we train our junior NCOs and junior officers. And so – and then the other part of that particular aspect, and I'll use this in the Indo-Pacific – is now from the land – from the land – we must be able to kill and then suppress at the close fight down at the very, very most junior tactical level of command, the company, battery, and troop level, out to 35 kilometers. That is a – that's a major difference. And they need to be able to, again, kill and suppress on the land, because we're a land force. But that land force also needs to be able to suppress, identify, strike, sense, and jam in the air littorals and in the maritime littorals out to 35 and 40 kilometers.

That is a big difference on how we train, big difference on how we educate, big difference on how we equip and conduct leader development. And that that part, to me, is – one other point. My takeaway from what's happening in Europe. Our equipment works. The U.S. systems work. And, I guess, what I would say is the arms dealer in – particularly in my part of the world, in the

Indo-Pacific – has largely been Russian. And I think there are – everyone is waking up to the fact that maybe some of their stuff that they have is not so – is not so capable.

Dr. Karako: Yea, verily. Well, let me stay with what you just highlighted and foot-stomp there in terms of the UAS threat, and therefore the need for counter-UAS. You know, the Army's moving out on the next generation short range – basically, the Stinger follow on. I suspect the demand for that in your part of the world must be tremendous.

Gen. Flynn: Yes.

Dr. Karako: But, likewise, the Army is also the lead service for counter-UAS. And we've got General Sean Gainey, who's the head of the JCO. And what's he always talk about? Yeah, there's all kinds of interesting widgets, but we need capacity and training. How does that manifest to you?

Gen. Flynn: Well, I mean, I think there's a lot – in fact, the 25th Division is getting – they've already got some commercial off-the-shelf. I mean, this is a challenge, I think, that General George has rightfully placed on all of us. They've already got some stuff, you know, on hand right now that can be used in training to actually put, you know, red UAS up against our forces in the field. And there it's having, again, profound changes on how they're training, right? What their command posts look like, being able to drop emitters on top of them so that somebody could strike your position. They're also actually using those form UAVs to be able to do exactly that against the enemy forces.

So I think this kind of work that's going on in our training centers is really important. And then being able to bring those kinds of capabilities into the region, to share those with our partners in the region, and then work through all the tactics, techniques, and procedures of being able to identify jam, collect, strike, using unmanned systems is vital. It's absolutely important. I would go so far as also saying that I know the Navy's working on a number of unmanned systems subsurface. That, again, is another sensor that can be out there to be able to collect and provide information to go back and be able to, you know, either, again, make sense or do something to counter those threats.

Dr. Karako: Yeah. So another thing I was struck by in your vision document that you just put out last month, is all the attention to history. And, you know, I think you even note in there that the Army in that part of the world has more campaign streamers in that – the Indo-Pacific, than all our wars, contingencies, and expeditions outside of the U.S. combined. Which, of course, came with a heavy cost. But especially you highlighted World War II, and sort of the experience of that. How do you think about that? What are the lessons? What

are the episodes and the events and the tragedies of that conflict that we got to be thinking about today?

Gen. Flynn:

Well, first of all, I think that many people forget there were actually three theatres of war going on out there. There was the China-Burma-India theater. There was the Southwest Pacific area. And then there was the Pacific Ocean area. And so, you know, just the size of that theater warrants an army to be able to provide the depth, scale, and operational endurance as a land component in support of the combatant command. And so, you know, the other aspect I find interesting from the history is, again, back to the very comments I made in the beginning of this, the objective for Nimitz and MacArthur and Slim, candidly, you know, in the great book, "Defeat into Victory," was to seize, hold, and defend terrain. Why? Because they needed to be able to extend reach back into the theater and regain control of key terrain, so that they could continue to advance across the Pacific.

I think the lesson today is, given the A2/AD arsenal that the Chinese have created, we do not want to cede that space. We do not want to give up any decisive terrain, because we will pay a heavy price to retake it. So that is essentially why I believe that our approach of training in the region through JPMRC, conducting campaigning through Operation Pathways, and the creation of joint interior lines provides us, in my view, you know, an operational approach and theory of victory, if you will, to be able to deter and then have a force – credible – combat credible, in position in the event that that deterrent or assurance would fail. Because we're going to have to have a force in position to be able to provide a capability and the will or the resolve to actually defend our allies – our treaty allies in the region.

So that's really my takeaway from it, is that it – while some things have changed, there is still an absolute need to control terrain. And that's what armies do. We seize, hold, and defend that terrain. And we do that with our allies and partners.

Dr. Karako:

I always like to ask folks kind of what you're reading and what you think other folks, whether it be soldiers or folks in here in D.C. or the broader public, ought to be reading to really not just understand the history – you mentioned one book along the way – but also other just perennial lessons for –

Gen. Flynn:

I mean, John McManus – Dr. McManus, his trilogy is fantastic. And I'm a huge fan – I mentioned earlier – I'm a huge fan of Slim's book on "Defeat into Victory." I think that's a wonderful book. I think it's – you know, and, again, I refer to South Asia as sort of the soft land underbelly of China. And there is a lot going on between, you know, the country of Vietnam and Pakistan in Southeast Asia. And I just – I reread it here recently because I spent a lot of

time on airplanes flying around Asia. And I think that those books right there are very insightful and helpful by way of lessons for all of us to be mindful of.

Dr. Karako: Excellent. Well, look, we've covered a lot of – a lot of territory and topics here. Anything you want to close out on? That we haven't hit on, that you want to –

Gen. Flynn: No. I appreciate this venue. It's long overdue. So I'm thankful that we have this strategic land power dialog here at CSIS. And I'm thankful for the opportunity to be able to come up here and have this platform to share some of my thoughts on what's happening.

Dr. Karako: Well, thanks for your time and thanks for your leadership. And please join me in thanking General Flynn. (Applause.)

(END.)