

**Statement before the House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Readiness**

***U.S. FORCE POSTURE STRATEGY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC
REGION: AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT***

Written Statement by

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bordallo, and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and our Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. John Hamre, we thank you for this opportunity to present the findings of the CSIS independent assessment of U.S. force posture strategy in the Asia Pacific region. We began work on this assessment in March pursuant to the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act and submitted our final report to the Department of Defense on June 27, 2012. Our team conducted over 250 interviews and travelled extensively throughout the PACOM AOR. We want to begin by expressing our appreciation for the cooperation and support we received from the Department and particularly from the commands we visited in the region.

Our report goes into considerable detail on U.S. interests in the Asia Pacific and on force posture options to further those interests. Today we want to focus on the strategy that we believe should guide the Defense Department's "rebalance" toward the region and to highlight the topline recommendations from the report.

The United States has been a Pacific power for over a century, but Asia has never been more important to our future than it is today. Six of the ten fastest growing major export markets for the United States are in Asia, and 60 percent of U.S. goods exported abroad go to the region.ⁱ Meanwhile, the region is home to five of the eight states recognized as being in possession of nuclear weapons,ⁱⁱ three of the world's top six defense budgets,ⁱⁱⁱ and six of the world's largest militaries.

Forward deployed U.S. military forces have been indispensable to stability and prosperity and American access in the region for over six decades, and we conclude in our report that the American people continue to receive enormous dividends from our forward presence there today. However, much of our force posture in the region is based on Cold War legacy basing arrangements that need to be realigned to the current challenges and opportunities we face. The Secretary of Defense has stated that we need to work towards a posture that is "geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable." After reviewing our interests and comparing the geostrategic, operational, budgetary, and feasibility issues associated with a series of options for U.S. force posture, we agree with that general approach and with most of the

known elements in the current Department of Defense plan. However, we think certain specifics in that plan need to be refined and reevaluated. Moreover, we concluded that the over-arching strategy behind DoD force posture re-alignment must be better articulated –within the U.S. government, to the Congress, and to our allies and partners in the region.

The U.S. Strategic Framework

Let us briefly summarize what we see as the strategic framework that should guide U.S. force posture planning.

The United States faces a variety of security challenges in the Asia Pacific region today. North Korea remains the most immediate military threat to U.S. interests. The North's ability to sustain an invasion of the South may be deteriorating, but Pyongyang's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs as well as the overall uncertainty about stability under Kim Jong-un are forcing the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to contemplate additional contingencies, including potential North Korean use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in war-fighting scenarios, horizontal proliferation, provocations comparable to the attacks on the ROK Cheonan naval vessel and the island of Yeongpyeong,^{iv} and regime collapse or instability. Divergences of Washington and Beijing over the handling of these scenarios could introduce a major element of strategic competition in the U.S.-China relationship. In addition, the Asia Pacific region is prone to major natural disasters comparable to the December 2004 Asian tsunami and the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. These types of mega-disasters create not only a humanitarian imperative for action but also have the potential to heighten competition for strategic influence among major powers to the extent that the event impacts internal political legitimacy or stability of smaller states.^v Terrorism also continues to pose a threat to the stability of states within South and Southeast Asia and to the U.S. homeland, despite considerable progress against such threats as Jemaah Islamiya and the Abu Sayyaf Group over the past decade in Southeast Asia. Finally, Asia's leading economies remain highly dependent on maritime, cyberspace, and space commons, but they are also becoming technologically equipped—if they were to become adversaries—to threaten or interrupt those domains.

However, the central geostrategic uncertainty the United States and its allies and partners face in the Asia Pacific region is how China's growing power and influence will impact order and stability in the years ahead. Indeed, U.S. ability to manage all of these other challenges we listed will in one way or another be impacted by decisions made in Beijing. This is not a problem that lends itself either to containment strategies such as the ones used in the Cold War or to a bipolar condominium that acknowledges Beijing's core interests and implicitly divides the region. Instead, the United States will have to find a way to expand bilateral cooperation while dissuading Beijing from thinking that the region will naturally fall into a Sino-centric orbit or that China's military and economic growth gives it new options for coercion against its neighbors.

A key point here is that U.S. strategy is *not* to prepare for a fight with China. Indeed, the United States and China have a stake in each other's success, as the president put it early last year. The strategy must therefore be to "win the peace" by building a relationship with China that makes conflict virtually unthinkable and cooperation mutually attractive. This requires instruments of national power beyond military forces alone. Trade, diplomacy and the broader regional acceptance of American values will be critical. However, U.S. forward deployed military forces will be one indispensable pillar of that strategy. These forces will increasingly have to cope with more dispersed geographic and functional requirements. At one end of the spectrum, these requirements include a range of low intensity missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) that build partnership capacity, transparency, and confidence. At the same time, U.S. force posture must demonstrate a readiness and capacity to fight and win -- particularly in Northeast Asia -- even under more challenging circumstances associated with anti-access and area denial (A2AD) and other threats to U.S. military operations in the Western Pacific posed by PLA military modernization. While the spectrum of mission requirements increases from low to high intensity as one travels up the littoral from Southwest to Northeast Asia, these requirements are all tied to the same longer-term goal of enhancing regional security cooperation and positively shaping Chinese strategic decisions.

Specifically, U.S. force posture can enhance the shaping of the peacetime environment by:

- Assuring allies and partners of U.S. security commitments, which encourages solidarity against challenges to their interests and discourages unilateral escalation in a crisis;
- Dissuading Chinese coercion or North Korean aggression by demonstrating solidarity with and among allies and partners;
- Shoring up the security and self-capacity of vulnerable states so that they are neither targets of coercion or expansion nor havens for violent extremists; and
- Reassuring China where possible through engagement in bilateral and multilateral security cooperation and confidence-building on common challenges (e.g., counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism).

At the same time, U.S. forces that are forward deployed and persistently engaged set the stage for more effective deterrence and better contingency capabilities by:

- Shaping requirements, doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures of U.S. allies and partners for more competent coalitions across the range of possible contingencies (with Australia, Japan, and the ROK at the higher spectrum of intensity and with other allies and partners at lower intensity levels);
- Networking those allies and partners with each other to enable more effective coalitions when needed (e.g., U.S.-Japan-Australia, U.S.-Japan-ROK);
- Gaining greater familiarity with the immediate security environment and with combined and/or interoperable interaction with other allied and partner forces;

- Increasing overall maritime domain awareness for individual countries as well as shared across the Indo-Pacific littoral and ensuring the integrity of the first and second island chains with respect to adversaries in a conflict;
- Complicating the military planning of potential adversaries by identifying and developing arrangements for access, prepositioning, over-flight, and other needs, thereby dispersing possible targets and providing redundancy; and
- Identifying what planners call “off ramps” for crisis avoidance and de-escalation, if necessary, through regular direct and indirect military-to-military engagement.

Since the goal is to shape the peacetime security environment while maintaining deterrence capabilities to reassure allies and partners and dissuade potential adversaries, it will be critical to strike the right balance. We concluded that there are two ways the United States could completely wreck this balance:

- Pull back from the Western Pacific in order to focus on the survivability of U.S. forces and on near-term reductions in annual costs, which would end up increasing risk and costing far more in the end; or
- Demand iron-clad access and defense cooperation from allies and partners to prepare for contingencies with China, which could be rejected and leave us in a much weaker position to shape positive outcomes.

Striking the right balance will mean that the United States needs to be agile and sensitive to evolving security perceptions and concerns among allies and partners as it intensifies engagement, interoperability and access arrangements with them. Frankly, U.S. engagement in the region is particularly successful now because Beijing was insensitive to those concerns in its assertive push into the East and South China Seas in recent years. The United States will want to avoid the same mistake.

Recommendations

The report makes five specific recommendations were derived from assessments of several options for U.S. force posture consideration in the Asia Pacific. The options were evaluated for geostrategic validity, operational effectiveness, affordability, and how well and easily they could be implemented. Let us summarize the five recommendations.

Recommendation One

Since winning the peace is the first objective of U.S. strategy in the Asia Pacific region, the report’s leading recommendation highlights ways that DoD can enhance shaping and reassurance activities by emphasizing the need to:

- Better align engagement strategy under PACOM and across DoD, including improved integration of PACOM with its component commands, Service force providers, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and key interagency players (particularly the Department of State).

Shaping the Asia Pacific security environment depends on continued momentum in commitments made to align force posture to the evolving security dynamics in the region. That momentum, however, must include precise measures of progress. In addition, DoD and the Congress need to resolve the scope and cost uncertainties associated with some of DoD's realignment proposals that have raised important concerns in the Congress. Two recommendations emphasize these areas of concern.

Recommendation Two

- Implement the April 2012 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) agreement to disperse four Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) across the Pacific, but with the following caveats:
 - Ensure that implementation of the distributed lay down plan is incremental, prioritized, and affordable with reversible milestones reported to the Congress annually;
 - In the near-term, prioritize improvements in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) that would be mission essential (particularly training, pipeline protection, and some infrastructure improvements), even if fewer Marines move to Guam from Okinawa; and
 - Proceed with plans to relocate MCAS Futenma to Henoko while continuing to examine alternative courses of action to mitigate risks.

Recommendation Three

- Implement the U.S.-Korea Strategic Alliance 2015, but with the following caveats:
 - Track progress toward and adjust schedules for Operational Control (OPCON) transition and Combined Forces Command (CFC) dissolution via demonstrated achievement of scheduled actions and command and control arrangements (including possible mutually agreed to changes in supported-supporting relationships) and major changes in threat and conditions; and
 - Examine the option of replacing current U.S. ground combat units in Korea with rotations of trained and ready mechanized infantry, full combat artillery and aviation (including previously moved squadrons) brigades (with Eighth Army, 2nd Infantry Division, and the 210 artillery brigade headquarters permanently forward). The review should consider the impact on readiness, overall cost, and more robust capability.

Shaping the environment will also depend on the perceptions of the U.S. ability to prevail in the event of conflict. U.S. force posture must demonstrate a readiness and capacity to fight and win, even under more challenging circumstances associated with A2AD and other threats to U.S. military operations in the Western Pacific. We identified key investment areas that would strengthen all force posture options across the range of military operations.

Recommendation Four

- Add additional capabilities to PACOM:
 - Station one or more additional attack submarines in Guam to provide a critical advantage in an A2AD environment;

- Deploy a second amphibious ready group (ARG) from the Atlantic to the Pacific to fill lift and maneuver shortfalls for the Marines;
- Increase stockpiles of critical ammunition and weapons and replenish and upgrade prepositioned equipment and supplies;
- Expand the use of U.S. Marines to develop and refine expeditionary defense capabilities with key allies and partners; and
- Focus near-term investments in survivability of forward deployed forces.

Our report strongly recommends holding the line on current force posture levels, with modest increases in investment and re-alignment measures listed above. DoD and the Congress do, however, need to recognize and plan for the possibility of additional defense budget adjustments in the years ahead. The final recommendation of the report focuses on that need.

Recommendation Five

- Examine possible force posture and basing efficiencies, including squadron consolidation and adjustment of units on Korea that may be no longer aligned with parent formations.

Conclusions

Overall, our report concludes that DoD is reasonably well positioned to align and focus U.S. force posture in the Asia Pacific region. What is needed is an expanded, integrated PACOM focus on engagement, supported by the approval of incremental funding for key enabling actions that would be valuable and important regardless of future force posture moves. Those incremental approvals should be tied to clear milestones with reporting requirements, so that DoD can begin to move out now and realize the potential benefits of additional engagements, new partnerships, and stronger alliances.

In addition, the Department of Defense will also need to work more effectively with Congress to determine military construction (milcon) and force structure requirements in an iterative and transparent way that reflects the fluid political/military situation in the region. We judged that the operational and political assumptions behind fifteen year construction plans now being put before Congress are very likely to shift several times before completion. On the other hand, we determined that indecision on milcon or force posture decisions could become debilitating in terms of shaping regional confidence and building partnership capacity. Congress and the administration need to move forward together but do so in a way that allows adjustments.

Third, we see enormous strengths in the capacity of the United States in areas such as undersea warfare, amphibious forces, command and control, missile defense, and the breadth of allies and partnerships. However, we also saw areas such as lift and logistics that need enhancement if U.S. forces are to retain necessary capabilities under the Department's realignment plans.

Finally, while much of what we articulate here and in the full report was derived from interactions with many of the capable officers and officials charged with protecting American interests in Asia and the Pacific, we found that it took our independent review to tease out these themes and pull them together. The Department would do well to integrate its strategic guidance for the region and be more candid about the assumptions and goals going forward. We hope that our report can contribute to that process, and we stand ready to respond to your questions.

ⁱ As cited in the Congressional Research Service's May 30, 2012 report "Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Countries: Comparative Trade and Economic Analysis," p.2.

ⁱⁱ See the Federation of American Scientists' "Status of World Nuclear Forces 2012" (<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/ukestatus.html>) for a list of estimated and declared nuclear arsenals. Note that Israel has not declared its nuclear arsenal.

ⁱⁱⁱ 4. The International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) "Military Balance 2012" ranks the top 10 defense budgets of 2011 as follows (numbers in billions USD): 1. United States: 739.3, 2. China: 89.8, 3. United Kingdom: 62.7, 4. France: 58.8, 5. Japan: 58.4, 6. Russia: 52.7, 7. Saudi Arabia: 46.2, 8. Germany: 44.2, 9. India: 37.3, 10. Brazil: 36.6 (<http://www.iiss.org/publications/military-balance/the-military-balance-2012/press-statement/figure-comparative-defence-statistics/>).

^{iv} For a discussion of the policy implications of the March 26, 2010 sinking of the *Cheonan* see *US-Korea Relations: The Sinking of the Cheonan* in Vol. 12 No. 2 of CSIS' Comparative Connections (http://csis.org/files/publication/1002qus_korea.pdf). For further discussion of the artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island on November 23, 2010 in the context of ROK-China relations, please see Scott Snyder and See-won Byun's January 2011 article in Comparative Connections "China-Korea Relations: DPRK Provocations Test China's Regional Role" (http://csis.org/files/publication/1004qchina_korea.pdf).

^v A discussion of disaster response in the Asia Pacific region can be found in CSIS' July 16, 2010 report *Asia's Response to Climate Change and Natural Disasters: Implications for an Evolving Regional Architecture*. Available here: <http://csis.org/publication/asia%E2%80%99s-response-climate-change-and-natural-disasters>.