



Adm. Samuel J. Paparo, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
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Thanks. Mahalo to all. I'd spend some time welcoming each distinguished guest by name, but once again, that would take us to the entire affair, and we have to adjourn to the next meeting. But for each of you, thank you so much for being here. Good morning. We're gathering here in Honolulu, the Crossroads of the Pacific, where the strategic landscape shifts with increasing speed and complexity, and the challenges that we face demand clear-eyed assessment and decisive action.

The People's Republic of China has embarked on a dangerous course and are on a dangerous course. Their aggressive maneuver around Taiwan right now are not exercises, as they call them. They are rehearsals. They are rehearsals for the forced unification of Taiwan to the mainland. Beijing's military buildup, their gray zone operations, their military coercion against Taiwan grow concerning every day. The People's Liberation Army's increasingly complex, multi-domain operations demonstrate clear intent and improving capability. I'm going to pause for a second. I'm going to talk about what the implications for this are. I'm a consumer of large language models. I love them. I have paid subscriptions to the three dominant ones. So for one of them—it's my particular favorite—I won't share which one it is. But, just for the sake of curiosity, you might write into query into one: "what are the impacts on world GDP of a conflict in the Western Pacific, with or without U.S. involvement, what are the follow-on effects on unemployment in the United States and also your home country, the recovery time and the effect on depths of despair in your country." And see the sobering results. Don't do it right now, because I think my talk here is going to be so riveting. I'll cut to the chase. It's upward of 1 million depths of despair in the United States, with or without United States involvement. So, when we talk about the rules-based order or some of these other elements, in fact, mistakes are vital national interests of every state. We sometimes let that get lost in the sauce as we are, as we're having these discussions.

Also in the South China Sea, Beijing claims sovereign rights over international water with breathtaking audacity and blatant disregard for international law. They've militarized artificial islands. They've harassed commercial vessels and intimidated regional nations, including treaty allies, attempting to exercise their legitimate rights, including poor fisher folks. These actions also threaten the free flow of commerce through vital sea lanes that carry over 1/3 of global maritime trade. More troubling still, we witness an emerging axis of autocracy. The People's Republic of China, Russia, and North Korea have formed a "triangle of troublemakers," and their joint naval exercises grow more sophisticated in the Northeastern Pacific. Their technology transfers increase in scope and in scale, and their diplomatic cooperation threatens to transform the Pacific from free and open to contested and controlled. We see their coordination in everything from joint bomber patrols that penetrate the American ADIZ, to shared anti-satellite capabilities and advanced submarine technologies – from the seabed to the heavens. So, to be direct, our current posture faces serious challenges that directly threaten the security, the freedom, the well-being of the United States and of our allies and partners. And if you are in this room with an earshot of my voice, you and your family are directly threatened.



Our magazines run low. Our maintenance backlogs grow longer each month for every critical joint force element. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Space Force, Coast Guard. Critical air, missile, maritime, space platforms age faster than we can replace them currently, and we operate on increasingly thin margins for error. Our opponents see these gaps and they're moving aggressively to exploit them. Their readiness numbers tell a stark story. Maintenance delays impact operational availability across all domains and our precision guided munitions stockpiles sit well below our required levels. Key platforms operate beyond their planned service lives and the strain shows in both equipment and in personnel. But identifying the threat is only the first step. As they say in our 12-step programs, we now have to execute our correction. I see certainly unmanned systems as our force multiplier. You'll be aware of the term "Hellscape" and its association with my name. We have to build these capabilities at scale, network through resilient multi-spectrum communications that can operate in contested environments. And it's not about replacing warriors, it's about giving warriors the advantage they deserve and giving our nations the defense they deserve. Autonomous systems will provide persistent coverage, accept the levels of risk, and multiply the combat power without multiplying our manning requirements. The technology exists, the concepts are proven, but what we lack is sufficient scale and integration, and we've got to move beyond boutique programs and limited deployments, to full-scale implementation across all domains.

And this is a hard truth, technology alone is not going to win this fight. We've also got to reform defense bureaucracy with unprecedented urgency. And essentially four lines of effort, among others is going to help solve this. We've been talking about this for years and years. We've got to streamline our acquisition system. And when we talk about innovation, we're always adding some accessory on our program, we're building some little bypass that is going to bypass a sclerotic organ. We've got to do some innovation by subtraction, removing bureaucratic obstacles within our system that impedes our progress. Every unnecessary review, every duplicative process to damage our readiness, procurement at the speed of combat, not at the speed of committees. We must push authority down, accept proven risk, and trust people to deliver. The current system treats a software update with the same bureaucratic rigor as an aircraft carrier. This makes absolutely no sense. We need multiple acquisition paths optimized for different types of capability. Fast tracks for software and for unmanned systems, streamlined processes for proven commercial technologies. Traditional, paths for major platforms, but they go fast, and one size doesn't fit all. We've got to have vertically integrated supply chains through AI-aided additive manufacturing, and we're doing a bit of this with the most advanced system in the world, right here in Hawaii. We need the capability to produce parts from propellers to circuit boards on demand. This isn't future tech, it's current capability, and we have to scale it now. Every major platform in our inventory contains parts that are no longer in production. Admiral Davidson talked about this last night at the dinner for those [who] weren't there. And sometimes it's about training people to do it, but in many cases, a machine can print this in 3-D in ways it used to take a craftsman to forge it or to cast it and in some cases, the barrier is a technical warrant holder that's got to go through years of bureaucracy to see that it's air safe or it's sub safe. But the simulations exist that can certify it right now. Added manufacturing combined with AI driven predictive maintenance can transform our logistics chain. We can print parts at the point of need, reduce inventory costs, carry costs, and dramatically improve readiness. The technology exists. I've seen it. It's here in Hawaii, and we have to scale it. We need cooperative production agreements that multiply our industrial output among our friends and allies.



Our friends and allies, as discussed last night, Japan, Korea, Australia, possess tremendous manufacturing capability, intelligence, smarts. By coordinating our efforts, we can achieve the surge production that the environment demands; semiconductor expertise, rare earth processing capability, ship-building capacity. These represent just a fraction of our combined industrial potential that lead to combined threat. We have to break down barriers to cooperation, align standards and create supply chains that can weather any crisis. And fourth and most crucial, and what we always talk about is strengthening our alliances and partnerships. And as joined at the hip as we are, we can never take them for granted, and we can never make them strong enough. These are the foundations of our strength. These are our strategic centers of gravity. They're not diplomatic niceties. They represent actual combat capability, expanded maneuver, forward posture, shared commitment, and are indispensable to a free and open Indo-Pacific. Absolutely essential. Our AUKUS agreement represents a new model for strategic cooperation, enhanced defense capabilities with Japan, Japan C2. Next, our steadfast alliance with Korea, and our growing ties across the region are absolutely essential. Our adversaries mistake our commitment to peace as weakness. They mistake our patience as paralysis, and they couldn't be more wrong. Peace through strength isn't a slogan. It's an operational imperative. Every capability we build, every partnership we strengthen, every reform we implement, serves one purpose—maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. A phrase coined by the great Shinzo Abe, where all nations operate without concern, all of which directly benefit the direct interest of each of our countries.

The Indo-Pacific, as Kim said, remains the world's center of gravity. If you were to choose the world's center of gravity 100 years ago, it would have been somewhere in east-central Europe. Today, it's squarely in the Indo-Pacific. For maritime commerce or strategic competition, here more than anywhere else, the future of the international order, the international order that directly benefits our strategic interests, our vital national interests rest here.

I spent the lion's share, as all of you here, in my career in the Pacific. You know, we've watched a tenfold increase in the PRC's military. We've watched the PRC claim sovereignty over international waters. We've watched them build up their reefs. We've watched a growing cooperation with Russia and North Korea, turning coordination into strategic alliance. But we've also seen the unmatched capability of American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen. We've witnessed the strength of our alliances. We've experienced the power of our increasingly combined operations. Our advantages remain significant, particularly in critical domains that will determine future conflicts. We hold generational advantages in Space, counter-Space, and in Cyber. These can and will deliver decisive war-winning advantages. The technologies exist, the expertise is in this room. We need the will. We have the will to move faster, to accelerate deployment, to match implementation speed to the pace of innovation. Yes, we face challenges. Leaders run to problems. There's a book *Destined for War*. No, we're not destined for war. You either believe in our values or you don't. If you're in this room, you believe in our values. We're destined to Prevail. We move forward with purpose, power and provision. The reform we outlined today demand immediate action. We can't wait for perfect conditions. In combat, as in life, perfect conditions don't exist. We can't let better be the enemy of good enough. We have to act now. It's not about planning for some future conflict. Of course, we're always planning for future conflict. The competition happens now, every day across all domains, to the allies and partners in the room, thank you for your presence here in this room. Your presence demonstrates your shared commitment to security.



Together, we represent the most powerful coalition, united in our commitment to peace, prosperity. Our strength is in our unity. Our shared values, our common purpose. To our industry partners, we need desperately your innovation, your expertise, your production capability. We need it at the speed of contact and we need it at the speed of combat. The barriers between our government and the industry have to come down. We have to take risks. We need new models of cooperation with deliberative capabilities at the speed of relevance. I want to get questions now. Look forward to them.