

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
SAUL/ZILKHA ROOM

THE ARMY'S STRATEGY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Washington, D.C.

Friday, January 10, 2020

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Welcome:

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Discussion:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to the Brookings Institution. Before I begin my remarks I'd just like to say on behalf of the Institution that we are thinking every moment about the challenges that Australia is facing with the wildfires that are impacting Australia in such a dramatic and negative way. And they are in our thoughts and in our prayers.

As well we also are focused on the passenger list of the aircraft that was lost in Iran two days ago. All of those souls are in our thoughts and in our prayers today.

I'm John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution and we're very honored to have you with us. Happy New Year.

We're very pleased this morning to welcome the Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy, who is our distinguished guest and our great ally in helping to study the future of the United States Army, the Defense Department, and the challenges that we face in the security environment. Secretary McCarthy was confirmed last year by the U.S. Senate. And after having served in that capacity as an acting secretary for a number of months, he has now assumed the full responsibilities on all the matters relating to our great United States Army to include the recruitment, the organization, training, and equipment, and the care of 1.4 million personnel, those of our active duty force, our Guard and Reserve, and, of course, our important civilian counterparts, as well, within the Department. His is one of the most important jobs in the United States Government, ladies and gentlemen, and pivotal to keeping our nation safe and our people safe, as well.

He has been for me a dear friend for a long period of time and it's always wonderful to welcome you, Mr. Secretary, to Brookings. He's a battle-hardened veteran of the Department of Defense and you'd be hard-pressed to find a more dedicated public servant, a better professional, and a more loyal friend of the United States Army and our Institution. I say that, of course, notwithstanding the outcome of the Army-Navy game this year for which I think he would argue about responsibility. (Laughter) But his promotion to being the Secretary of the Army is a great plus for our country and for the Army.

Now with so many real and potential challenges on the horizon, our U.S. Army has no choice but to adapt to an increasingly uncertain future, a future of complex and evolving threats in an environment of increasingly technological sophistication, rapid change, and lethality. And that is especially true of today's topic, which is the Indo-Pacific region, although I know the Secretary is focused with laser-like clarity not just on the Indo-Pacific, but the Middle East and North Africa and Europe and elsewhere because the Army is, of course, a global force. But today, we will talk about the Indo-Pacific region.

So to our program shortly the Secretary will offer us some of his own remarks and then will be joined on the stage by Brookings' Senior Fellow Mike O'Hanlon. And they'll cover a wide array of topics, but primarily be oriented on the Indo-Pacific region.

Once we've wrapped up that discussion we'll go to Q&A. And, of course, we're very much on the record this morning.

So, again, sir, we are really honored by your presence here at Brookings. And let me cede the floor to you now for your remarks. Thank you for joining us this morning. (Applause)

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Thank you, General Allen, for those overly gracious remarks, but it's great to see my old teammate, a mentor, and dear friend. Good to see you. Thank you.

Dr. Michael O'Hanlon, thank you for extending the invite and welcoming me today. Obviously, among the best in the business, so it's great to be here at Brookings.

Washington is a war of ideas and I'm especially looking forward to the discussion portion later in this session. The U.S. must maintain overmatch against our adversaries and the Army is foundational to the joint forces' success in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility. Our modernization focus, how we fight, what we fight with, and who we are is in part driven by our new challenges and potential adversaries.

We remain iron-clad to the Army priorities of readiness, modernization, and reform. Our budget and investments remain aligned to our priorities. This alignment will increase lethality and the ability to operationally be dynamic.

In this area of great power competition, China will emerge as America's strategic threat. Over 60 percent of the world's GDP flows through the Straits of Malacca and China is militarizing the global commons. In order to commoditize life for its 1.1 billion people, China is increasingly relying on its Belt and Road Initiative. Having the U.S. Army in the region with modernized weaponry nestled alongside our counterparts changes the calculus and creates dilemmas for potential adversaries. Furthermore, having the U.S. Army in the region strengthens America's position to conduct global commerce, build confidence with investors, and compete economically.

The Army has traditionally focused its efforts towards Europe, given that Russia is a land-based threat. Seven decades of partnership in Europe have set the conditions for strong militaries and strong partners that are capable of countering threats from abroad. We will continue to provide deterrence and shaping operations in concert with our allies and partners in Europe.

While many people think of the Army as primarily having a role in Europe, and we are doing many great things to bolster our capabilities in Europe, the Army is much more than tanks and Bradleys. We serve as the operational command and control, advise and assist, long-range precision fires and effects, and the logistical backbone of our current and future military operations. The U.S. Army, in essence, is engaging in warfare by other means.

As we learned during World War II, the adversary's goals and tyranny of geography will require the Army to operate on two fronts, both in Europe and Pacific. At first blush, it is easy to assume based on land mass the waterways in the Indo-Pacific would be predominantly a sister service endeavor. However, it will be the Army on the ground, partnered with militaries, influencing the people and serving as the ultimate deterrence. Pairing with our allies and partners, continuous presence and shared equipment will enable military strength to overcome economic strangleholds, promote good global commons, and offer an alternative to the adversary's narrative.

People don't live on water, air, or in space. Long before conditions escalate to war, there will be a battle of ideas. This is warfare by other means and decisions will occur in the heart of the people. We must be present to offer an alternative. Churchill once remarked, "There is only one

thing worse than fighting with our allies, and that is fighting without them.”

In this competition space, our forces will require a change in behavior and patience. We must be engaged in constant competition versus an episodic engagement strategy. We are playing, as Simon Sinek would argue, an infinite game across several areas of responsibility. To engage with a finite mindset would have the Army measuring the wrong metrics, playing a different set of rules for a different game.

The military has had a boxer’s mentality to conflict: go in, fast hands, and deliver a devastating punch in the first round; fast, lethal, and gone. Our approach to competition with potential adversaries, however, such as Russia and China, will feel more like a soccer match instead of one round in the ring. Endurance, strong partnerships, and patience will be the necessary mix.

Presence does not have to lead to conflict. If we wait until there’s a conflict, we are already too late. Right now during the compete phase, the Army is refining our approach to improve our strategic readiness. We will accomplish readiness through strengthening our partnerships and advise and assisting with our regionally aligned Security Force Assistance Brigades, known as SFABs, which will deploy in Fiscal Year ’21. Our multi-domain task forces with deployments in Fiscal Year ’21 and Fiscal Year ’22 will build partnerships. We seek to increase foreign military sales, international military education and training, and more repetitions from multinational exercises. Shared equipment, shared training, and shared understanding is the end state.

The Army is reinvigorating our presence and disposition in the Pacific. History has shown the Army has always had a role in the Pacific. Just a quick glance back to MacArthur and World War II demonstrates the propensity for an adversarial land and resource grab in the region and the subsequent challenges the tyranny of distance presents.

The Indo-Pacific is strategically important to the United States for many reasons. We are an Indo-Pacific country. The world’s foremost populous countries and three largest economies are located in the region. Six of the 10 largest armies in the world are located there. The U.S. maintains five bilateral treaties, all critical for our national security and prosperity.

Forces in the region reinforce the American narrative, an alternative to the Belt and

Road Initiative. In order to be competitive and gain an advantage, we must have continuous presence. In order to maintain overmatch and prevent conflict in the region, the U.S. Army must be postured in the region for the intensifying competition and, if required, to win conflict.

There is an ongoing fight for influence in the region for which access and presence are critical. Partners matter, but the type of partner is paramount. China uses coercive economics and many partner with them out of necessity. And in this lies a great deal of vulnerability.

The Army partnerships come with its modern and interoperable equipment, training on a continuous basis, and a commitment should deterrence fail, a present partner and the world's best fighting force. China may be the partner of coercion, but the U.S. Army is the partner of choice.

The Army is uniquely suited to provide persistent presence and show commitment. Ships sail through shared waters and planes fly overhead. These are integral parts of the fight, but nothing comes close to the effects of boots on the ground, standing shoulder to shoulder with our counterparts, huddled over plans, or walking through jungles together. This present reinforces the United States' enduring commitment to our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.

For example, in 2020, the Army is sending forces on five-month-long extended rotations to Thailand, Philippines, and even Papua New Guinea. We are not only providing persistent presence and coordination with our allies and partners, we are also expanding the scope, duration, scale, and locations of our training and exercises with partners to push into new areas.

The Army's National Guard State Partnership Program ties states to 78 different countries around the world that have routine and consistent touch points with each other. U.S. forces engage with 22 countries in Europe and 12 in the Indo-Pacific on a habitual basis. In many countries throughout the regions, armies are the largest and most influential military service, making the U.S. Army the logical partner of the services. Our army-to-army partnerships build valuable relationships for the DOD at large. These are more than simply steadfast partners. These are key decision-makers and influencers in their respective countries.

Furthermore, shared equipment builds interoperability and makes operating together easier while creating strategic depth. Our operations in the Indo-Pacific include training with Army

forces, helping Thailand stand up their new Stryker units as their Striker vehicles; 15, in fact, are arriving right now. The Philippines has asked for more help in training 72 infantry battalions as they upgrade their equipment and evolve their doctrine.

While we continue to do traditional security cooperation, we are also employing new capabilities and using the Indo-Pacific as grounds to test our new concept known as multi-domain operations, or MDO. If conflict with a great power competitor occurred, the United States would be unable to easily bomb strategic locations and safely flow in forces. Seeking to regain overmatch, and a solution for converging all domains, MDO creates an asymmetrical advantage. MDO sets the conditions in theater while opening a window for the joint force.

In FY '18, just months after the National Defense Strategy was published, reorienting our focus towards the great power competition with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran, we conducted our first experiments with the Multi-Domain Task Force: intelligence information, cyber, electronic warfare, and space units known as the I2Qs.

In FY '19, we tested MDO concepts, leveraging exercises such as Exercise Orient Shield with Japanese ground self-defense forces operating in the East China Sea. With its headquarters in Japan, the task force elements were distributed across the Senkaku Islands. Pacific Pathways tested our ability to use a hub-and-spoke model, deploying task forces to single locations for a longer period of time and executing dynamic force employment to spoke locations. We deployed a company from a hub location in the Philippines to Palau, returning after 37 years. We are invigorating historic partnerships through our partner forces.

In FY '20, we plan to conduct Defender 2020, incorporating long-range precision fires and long-range precision effects. By FY '21, the Army will position a Multi-Domain Task Force in the Indo-Pacific theater and deploy a second one in FY '22. This is inspiring our closest allies and partners to invest more in building similar capabilities. Japan, Thailand, Singapore, all are developing MDO-like concepts in concert with us. It also provides the opportunity to stretch the limits of logistics and learn how to employ new capabilities in different operational environments, exercise in new locations to experiment with distributed logistic concepts, and develop methodology

for employing long-range precision fires or hypersonics in the region.

The U.S. Army on contentious ground creates a continuous dilemma for potential adversaries and changes the calculus in their decision-making cycle. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the Army priorities and our budget and investments are aligned against the same. Forces such as regionally aligned SFABs and MDTFs generate options for commanders ranging from influence to direct contact.

Furthermore, MDO creates strong and integrated partners in the region. The U.S. must maintain overmatch against our adversaries and the Army is foundational to joint forces' success in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

General Allen, Mike, thank you for having me. As you know, I'm a big fan of all of your work and I look forward to our discussion. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: Mr. Secretary, thank you for those fantastic remarks and for joining us again at Brookings. I want to give my own little shout-out, not a full introduction. But I was just recently at a conference with our good friend Mackenzie Eaglen from AEI, who was recounting a lot of the accomplishments that you and the other members of the so-called Big Four -- General McConville, now Army Chief, and then your predecessors in these jobs, Secretary Esper and General Milley -- the so-called concept of Night Court where, to back up all the beautiful words you just heard, these folks got into the trenches and went through program by program the Army's budget for modernization and many other things, and actually modified or cancelled I believe somewhere in the range of 180 programs, saving 5- to \$10 billion a year.

So I know there are a lot of people who are worried the defense budget's going up too much and we can debate that, probably not today so much, but that's a national question. There are people who worry that we're too focused on this or that priority. What I want you to know is the Big Four rolled up their sleeves with a title that's fitting of almost a Netflix TV show, Night Court, and went through pound by pound, dollar by dollar. Ten million dollars was not too small of a program to reexamine. And as a result, the Army has \$5 billion a year or more to back up these priorities that you've been talking about: hypersonics, AI, cyber weapons, directed-energy weapons. So

congratulations on all of that, as well, and on your new position.

I wanted to begin really by asking you to explain two big concepts about the Indo-Pacific before we get into sort of more nitty-gritty, you know, country-by-country and program-by-program. And one is to just define the Indo-Pacific for C-SPAN audiences and others who may not know just how the Department of Defense uses that term.

And then second, to explain to what extent the U.S. Army has the same view as the Department of Defense writ large. Because in the DOD Indo-Pacific strategy of last year, you talk about -- you collectively talk about the Asia Pacific or the Indo-Pacific region as the most important in the entire world for American defense policy. And yet, as you said in your remarks, historically, we worry a lot about Russia, the Soviet Union, and the threat to Europe. And it looks to me as if for the Army, Europe remains a comparably important priority. And, of course, the Middle East remains the area of greatest activity.

So how do we understand the role of the Army in the Indo-Pacific? And to what extent is it really your priority theater compared to these other two? So if you could just maybe give us some broad context about those two questions, then we can move on, please.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Sure. I guess start from the broader Indo-Pacific. Secretary Mattis, when he assumed the role, was looking more comprehensively of how to look at that problem set and recognizing that, you know, you got to go all the way through Southwest Asia and have a comprehensive view of allies and partners and how it influences the region. So that's where historically the PACOM is what we call it, the Pacific Command, would basically end roughly -- just shy of going west of the South China Sea. And it's where Secretary Mattis extended that and had a much broader view to looking at all of the relationships within the area of responsibility. So he expanded it because if you kind of looked at the gray area where CENTCOM and PACOM meet, we didn't have enough focus and energy against the purity of Southwest Asia once you went east of Pakistan, per se, from a military standpoint. So that's where we extended the Indo-Pacific and have a much broader view.

With respect to -- I'm sorry, the second question?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, for the Army, is it really fair to say that this is the priority region? For DOD writ large, for the Air Force and Navy, one can understand the argument, but for the Army it looks like you've got more forces in Europe than you do in Asia and you've got more activity, more kinetic activity in the Middle East. So it looks to me like the Army has three regions.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: This is where I guess we call it the accounting within -- for combatant commanders. There are more assigned forces to INDOPACOM for the U.S. Army than any other theater. The challenge is a lot of them are in Washington State and, you know, the West Coast of the United States. So what challenges the INDOPACOM commander is the disposition of the capabilities.

So back in the spring, General McConville, my wingman, and I, we actually went out to see Admiral Davidson; spent two, three days with him, took a look at our investments, our Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise Program, our Defender Program, to look at how the disposition of the capability would better serve his needs to get the effects within the region. So we expanded the EDRE Program, put more money in there. We put more money in the Defender Series Program, and I highlighted that in my remarks before. That's basically a division-size element, CONUS-based unit that's not assigned to the theater.

So say the First Cavalry Division or somebody will send to the Pacific and you can drop them in, they could start in Thailand, bounce to the Philippines, go to Palau, and they'll do dynamic force deployment, hub-spoke model. So we put more funding in there so we could do more of these exercises, have more of a capability for him to move the forces around dynamically and work with partners within the region.

So when you look at it from that standpoint, there's a lot of capability there, but the rigid nature of the systems, the way they were counted and allocated, it's providing more flexibility for the INDOPACOM commander.

We did highlight the stress of the job. We're 182,000 people and rising in over 140 countries. We are everywhere. And what comes with that is a tenuous balance to make sure that we can support all of these combatant commanders.

You mentioned the Night Court exercise. That's what happens when middle-aged men get to brain something. Right? It's a television show from the '80s. And we did that, the Army staff has a sense of humor because the four of us sat at the end of the table and you had to go and try to get your program funded. And we riddled them with questions like the Supreme Court. And you can either get one of these, but we had to find the funding.

You mentioned the challenges with increases in defense spending and the country's in debt. We need to be better public servants with every penny that they give us and that's what we try to do. So when you have 180,000 people deployed, over 60 percent of your balance sheet is fixed: operations, maintenance, military personnel, paying people. So you have 40 percent of your budget for research, development, and acquisition. You had to make hard choices within there for your present and your future, and we did that. We made some really big bets and, you know, we're going to see how we did here in the next 18 months.

MR. O'HANLON: So fantastic. Because I think what you're driving at and, please, you know, embellish or correct me if I'm wrong, if we look at the U.S. Army foreign basing in the Indo-Pacific, it's really only large in South Korea. There's no other place where we have many thousands of forces all the time. But what you're talking about is emphasizing more Southeast Asia and then South Asia all the way over to the India-Pakistan border where Central Command takes over. And then having enough flexibility, capability, available funding to move forces around on more temporary deployments, partnerships, exercises, all the full range of activities. And you're thinking, as you said, Thailand, many of the South Pacific Island nations, Vietnam, we'll come to all these in a second, but that's really where your emphasis has been. Is that fair to say in broad terms?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: We have a much more comprehensive disposition in the region, yes.

MR. O'HANLON: I want to ask about military readiness in a broad sense. I know that with your responsibilities as Secretary of the Army, you're focused first and foremost on making sure the force is fully equipped with proper weaponry, proper training, good maintenance, the right

people, and then you apply that and combatant commanders and forward commanders exercise and use the capabilities that you've provided them. But you have to keep an eye on the way in which deployments to Afghanistan, deployments to Iraq, deployments to Europe and Korea, and all these others, might provide too much wear and tear on the force. And we've heard concerns over the years, the Army's, you know, fraying at the seams. It's being asked to do too much.

Are you concerned that the Army, in all its efforts to maintain previous commitments and now add these new sorts of things, is undergoing readiness strain that's of a serious and concerning nature or do you feel like you've got the balance in pretty good shape these days?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So great question. It's the one among those that make you wake up at night. In the last three years, we've gone from 2 brigades to 26 at their highest levels of readiness. And that's as much funding as it is extraordinary leadership of people like Mark Milley and Jim McConville and Mike Garrett down at Forces Command, of just laser focus on the training plans. And I met Abe Abrams, who's now in Korea, but the laser focus on training plans and leadership.

If you were to talk to Jim McConville or a battalion commander in the 82nd, they sound the same. They know what they have to do and they're laser-focused on those plans and getting their repetitions and getting soldiers ready to go. So very proud about that.

And, you know, the aspects of tactical readiness, you got to shoot, you got to move, and you got to communicate. It's the simple fundamentals, whether it's an individual or a squad. So one of the things that we're looking really hard at is you just really focus on the fundamentals. You know, if you're Bear Bryant, you got to block and tackle in football. We got to block and tackle in the Army. And so a lot of focus on the simple fundamentals.

But this year, like I highlighted in my remarks, it'll be a lot about strategic readiness, force projection. Can you call people on New Year's Eve and have them boots on the ground the next day in the Middle East? The U.S. Army can because we did it a week ago. Very proud of that. Very proud of First Brigade, the 82nd. But we got to do that with everybody. So we looked very hard at investments for strategic force projection and we're going to continue to make those

adjustments with readiness over time.

We've been at war for over 18 years and the strains are there. People are tired, but we're an extraordinarily resilient bunch and we're trying to make some tweaks within the training model so they can get more nights on the pillow.

So it takes a lot of effort, but it's going to be tough right now. Demand is as high as it could be.

MR. O'HANLON: I want to get back to the main focus of more southern parts of the region and more western parts of the region in a second, but one readiness question about Korea, if I could, just because I think it's so important for us to keep our eye on this. And I know you agree with me.

Last spring, when General Dunford, who was still then chairman, came to Brookings, I asked him are you concerned about readiness in Korea for Army and other forces? Because we've stopped doing the big exercises in an effort to try to facilitate a dialogue with Kim Jong-un and potentially a nuclear deal. And by the way, I've supported the suspension of (inaudible) exercises, but that's neither here nor there.

The question is, in an objective sense, from your point of view, I realize it's a better question perhaps for General Abrams, but we've got you here, so I'd like to -- as Secretary of the Army, how do you feel about the readiness of the U.S. forces in Korea and those that would go to Korea early in a conflict from the United States or elsewhere given that we've stopped for the moment doing these big exercises as we traditionally had done with the Republic of Korea armed forces?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So I'm heading to South Korea at the end of the month. I'll get a great chance to sit down with General Abrams and get a much greater perspective. But he had said he has managed the risk. The CONUS-based units, they're ready to roll. We've done a remarkable job there, as I highlighted before: 26 brigades at the highest levels of readiness. But for effects on the ground, General Abrams is making adjustments and he thinks he can manage the risk.

MR. O'HANLON: You see it as a risk, but a risk that at the moment, if it's causing any degradation in capability at all, it's at a very modest level and one that we can figure ways around?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Yes.

MR. O'HANLON: Let me get more now towards the regions you were focused on in your remarks, the broader part of this whole. I think it's more than half of the world's surface in the Indo-Pacific Command, if I'm not mistaken, if we count the entire Pacific Ocean, much of Asia, all the way over to the India-Pakistani border. Can we start with the Philippines? And I would just love to ask about your overall sense that that relationship, the most important things the Army is doing, and then where some of your plans are headed with the Philippines going forward.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: A very strong historic relationship, obviously, dating back to the '40s. so I'm actually traveling there at the end of the month and we're looking very -- we have about five different locations that we're in partnership with an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Act, building out those locations so we can do advise-and-assist work together. We had a Stryker brigade go through there back in the spring and train together. We're looking at some other additional investments in the Philippines. Our mil-to-mil relationships are very strong and something we work very hard at.

MR. O'HANLON: Would you describe that relationship? As it's been, I think, primarily, you know -- of course, it was the early '90s when we left the big military bases and they closed down and we changed the nature of the relationship with the Philippines. And then after 9-11, we started doing training for their own problem with jihadists on their own territory in Mindanao.

Is that still the main focus of the relationship or do you see this, even from an Army perspective, as focused largely on China and broader changes in the region?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: No, I think it's definitely expanded for us. We have a great relationship. Our Army Special Forces have been training with them for a very long time. They have great relationships with all the leaders in their government, but it is expanding to the conventional side. And that's part of my agenda when I head there at the end of the month.

MR. O'HANLON: Let me ask, I want to talk about Indonesia and maybe Thailand a couple others, as well, before we go to the audience pretty quickly here. But let me ask more generally about how armies in the region are thinking about China and how they, therefore, think about working with you, working with the United States. There's a lot of concern that China is sort of eating our lunch in Asia, that they have the biggest economic relationships with everybody now, biggest trade relationships; that they have the Belt and Road Initiative, as you pointed out, that sort of helps them buy friends. And that sometimes our popularity, you know one place or another under one President or another suffers from a perception that we're too unilateralist or what have you.

But what do you see when you're talking to the armies in the Philippines or Indonesia or Thailand or Vietnam for that matter? What's their view? How do they think about the U.S. versus China? Are they trying to balance one against the other? They want to have good relations with both? Are they afraid of China even if they don't always say so publicly? What's your takeaway?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So, you know, in many cases, it's very bilateral. It's hard to work trilateral and multilateral relationships. But it's an insatiable appetite to partner with the United States. You know, whether it's foreign military or advise and assist, they want us there. But more so than anything, it's to see the consistency and to stay and have the continuous presence. And so it's something that we have to make sure that can transcend across administrations, no matter who's President.

MR. O'HANLON: One thing I notice, you know, the tone of the Indo-Pacific strategy and of your remarks, and I say this with admiration, it's not very focused on war-making. I mean, obviously, you're worried about that. You're always thinking about the possibility of conflict. But there's a lot of talk that even an old Peace Corps volunteer like me could applaud in sort of diplospeak. You're trying to build relationships, you're trying to build partnerships, you're trying to find ways to collaborate on humanitarian assistance and relief missions and peacekeeping operations. Do you see the Army as sort of doing, in many ways, the more softer side of security while the Air Force and the Navy focus on the potential big fight against China as they sometimes

emphasize these days, whereas the Army is sort of more in the relationship-building business?

I mean, I know I'm oversimplifying, but that sort of comes out. If you read the Indo-Pacific strategy, most of the big modernization and lethality investments are Air Force and Navy. Most of the partnership investments are more on the Army side. How should I think of that?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Well, it's hard to partner from 500 feet under the water or 30,000 feet in a supersonic fighter airplane. I was at a dignified transfer at 3:00 in the morning on Tuesday, so we are not the Peace Corps up at Dover Air Force Base. But the Army is a people business. And we bring the advantage of being shoulder-to-shoulder with an ally, where you eat a slice of pizza, you get to know their kids and, yes, you train together, and ultimately, if you have to, you're going to fight together.

But that's the nature and extraordinary value that the Army brings to a partnership. You get to know each other, you get to help each other. Iron sharpens iron. So the value of that is -- it's hard to value, but that's why it's so unique about putting American boots on the ground anywhere in the world.

MR. O'HANLON: Let me ask, I'm going to go to the audience pretty quickly, but let me ask about if there's any country of the ones we've already mentioned, or India also needs to be part of this conversation, that you're particularly excited about some of the new dynamics that you see happening. That the new opportunities for closer collaboration, the new capabilities that are being built bilaterally or in some other way, maybe there are one or two countries that you think need to get a little more of a shout-out or need more attention because there are just dynamic things happening that hadn't been before.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Well, it's like I highlighted in the remarks, immediately when the average, you know, observer looks at the Indo-Pacific region, they just view us as in Korea. We have thousands of people in Thailand, the Philippines. We're everywhere. And it's them understanding, having the appreciation for just how much we are doing, how much more we're going to do in that part of the world. So it is a challenge and you have to get out and highlight the fact.

MR. O'HANLON: One last question and then we will go to others, who I know have

a lot to ask you about, as well. We talked -- I threw out the Peace Corps metaphor a minute ago. Let me now switch over to the more long-term dire scenario of a worsening relationship with China that, heaven forbid, could come to pass. But if we wind up in a more rivalrous state, are you thinking long-term about ways in which the U.S. Army might more permanently establish combat power through the broader region?

I'm thinking of bases that perhaps are primarily Air Force or Navy, but where the Army has a huge role in providing missile defense, long-range fires, now that we're out of the IMF treaty perhaps surface-to-surface missile batteries. You alluded to hypersonics in your remarks, as well. This could be in the Philippine archipelago, this could be in other South Asian -- or South Pacific Nation archipelagos. It could be in Vietnam someday, you know.

I'm just wondering to what extent the Army is thinking about these kinds of possibilities in the abstract. I realize you don't want to get ahead of the game and start asking countries to base forces where those countries are trying to balance their own relationship with China. But in a more abstract general sense, are you thinking about, you know, what Andy Krepinevich calls archipelago defense? Are you think about new kinds of combat formations throughout this broader region that, if necessary, we could establish and sustain?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So I highlighted the Multi-Domain Task Force concept and, you know, to do it justice you would need far more time to sit here and discuss. But -- and ultimately bring experts like, you know, General LaCamera out in U.S. Army Pacific and others. But a Multi-Domain Task Force brings long-range precision fires and effects, so a hypersonic battery; the precision strike missile, which is the ATACMS replacement; electronic warfare cyber capabilities; and the disposition of the capability.

Senkakus, Ryukyus, you could put it down somewhere in the South China Sea, and those have the effects to change any axis (phonetic) aerial denial-type of capabilities. So it basically has the inverse effects. And then what it can do is become a ground seed element, suppressing enemy air defenses, so that then can flow in ships or airplanes or other, along with being a deterrent, which is the ultimate goal. We don't need any more gunfights. We don't want any more. But if they

come, we'll be ready.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let's go to you. Please wait for a microphone and identify yourself if you could. And we'll start here in the fifth row, Adam, this gentleman here. Thank you.

MR. HARPER: Thank you. Jon Harper with *National Defense Magazine*. Thanks for being here, Mr. Secretary.

You mentioned F&S -- excuse me, FMS sales in your remarks. Can you talk about, you know, some types of specific capabilities or systems that you want to encourage U.S. allies in the Pacific to invest in and buy U.S. equipment?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Well, any and all to start with. But Thailand has purchased 60 Strykers. They've got the first 15; we're going to flow the rest here shortly. Chinook helicopter sales, the -- we're selling a lot of small arms capabilities, communications. If you look at major platforms, but communication's also very important, as well. That's where the interoperability comes and we can be able to communicate with each other and coordinate large entities to conduct exercises. So every time I meet with an ally, FMS sales is on the agenda. I do everything I can to help push American business all over the world.

MR. O'HANLON: Sydney.

MR. FREEDBERG: Sydney Freedberg, *Breaking Defense*. Just before we started here, I Googled an old article of mine entitled, "Pivot to Asia: Not So Fast," about the lingering gravity of the Middle East. That was from 2012. So people have been trying very hard across two administrations in both parties to focus all of DOD, all of the Army on the Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, you know, keeps on sucking us back in.

Obviously, you're not the guy who allocates forces; that's a Joint Staff function. But as you look at the Army modernization program, as you do the night courts and the budget plus-ups and the 31 priority programs, how can you make sure that the things you're investing in have applicability to -- across the theaters we're working in? That the capabilities and the Big Six and so forth have a role in the Mideast and in the Pacific and in the European theater rather than being, you

know, custom niche for one theater the way a lot of the Big Five were back in the '80s?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: You need a couple things. Number one, you need the will to do it, and we do have the will.

The second was to the points that Michael talked about earlier, was the balance sheet engineering called Night Court. We freed up billions of dollars. Now, the preponderance of it went towards modernizing our force, but we also freed up hundreds of millions of dollars so we could have a Defender Exercise, so we could have a more robust EDRE program. And now we're in a position to put thousands of people in the region, and we did that. And we started, I mean, we started over two years ago, so we have been doing that and it's really starting to scale here in '21.

So you have to be able to balance all of the worldwide demand. That's a very hard thing to do that the Secretary of Defense Esper is doing a great job, but he's got to be relying upon the services to make hard choices and create that trade space in their balance sheet so they can do it all. In the Army's case, we've done that and we're going to have thousands of people in INDOPACOM training this year.

MR. O'HANLON: Let me take the prerogative to just follow up on Sydney's point and just put this question to you directly. Is there any area, any activity where the recent need to put more forces in the Middle East has deprived you of the opportunity or the resources to focus more on great power competition the way the National Defense Strategy says we must or are you able, so far at least, to manage all of that simultaneously?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So it has undoubtedly forced me to take a harder look, make some adjustments, but right now we are still on track with all of our commitments to our allies and partners from both of those AORs.

MR. O'HANLON: Let's see, ma'am, over here on the side. Then we'll come back here to the second row in a second.

MS. NGUYEN: Thank you. I'm Genie Nguyen with Voice of Vietnamese Americans. Thank you, Secretary.

The Army does make a big difference on the ground. I would like to come back to

the Vietnam War and wonder how you prepare to deal with the public relations in Southeast Asia, especially now in the Philippines under Duterte? What if there are efforts to somehow create conflict between our American Army and the people there in the Philippines by causing a lot of chaotic situations, like what happened in Vietnam under President Ngo Dinh Diem?

And also, in the long term, do you think we have the will, the will of the people of America, you know, going down if we're not under the support of Congress? So the second question is what do you think about the role of Congress in supporting your role? Thank you.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: The role of Congress is critical for everything that we do in the U.S. Army because the American people send them there. They're elected; I'm appointed. So they're my board of directors and they're the pulse for where the country is. So it's incredibly important for us to work with Congress. I talk to congressional members and staff I think just about every day.

So with respect to the Vietnam conflict, as the son of a Vietnam veteran, I am intimately aware of the aspects of that conflict, of growing up at the kitchen table and hearing about it. So it is as important to have everything right here at home as it is to work with the partners. And like I mentioned in my remarks, the types of things we're doing with allies is as much training and assisting as it is investing in those countries to strengthen the partnership economically, militarily. So it's all of the things we can do to prevent conflict.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm going to again intercede and just ask one quick question because the question also touched on President Duterte. And it makes me wonder, some of the countries you are working with in this region are of, you know, mixed democratic credentials to put it politely. And that's an age-old program. It's not new to this region or to you and the Trump administration. But I wondered, are there any places particularly where you really have to keep your eye on the country's human rights record or, you know, recent proclivity for military takeover or anything else where that's been a big constraint and concern on your partnership and engagement activities?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: It makes a big challenge for us. And I'm not going to

highlight anybody specifically. We are not going to allow our values as a service or as a country be dragged down by instances like that, but we do want to stay close to the institutions that we partnered with for decades.

Countries have challenges politically. They go up and they go down. And, you know, when you look at relationships that withstand the test of time, in the best relationship that the U.S. Government has with a country like Egypt or others, it's the U.S. Army. We train together, they buy our equipment, they come back and forth. Some of them send their kids to go to school here, to college and others, so you got to hang in there with them. You can dial up the relationship and bring it down while those challenges are in place. And I've seen many instances like that serving in the last three administrations, and you just have to be conscious of it at all times. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Here in the second row, please.

MR. McCULLOUGH: Brian McCullough from Lockheed Martin. Sir, thank you very much for your time.

Attacks in Iraq this week show importance of missile defense. Vladimir Putin this week in Crimea with units that have hypersonic missiles. The Chinese last October showing the DF-17 at their great military parade. How do you see the Army taking on hypersonic defense requirements and approaches moving forward as part of your Indo-Pacific approach? Thank you.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: We have a joint partnership across the entire Department of Defense between Navy, Air Force, and also Defense Agency on the hypersonic effort, investing billions of dollars across the Future Years Defense Plan. We're actually looking at even increasing the profile over the next couple budgets, so this has been basically a national priority since Secretary Mattis was in the seat. The President has invested a lot of attention against this, as well, in particular. So the resources are there, there's tremendous energy there.

What we need to see is industry to step up and invest. And they've got to come forward and first and foremost invest the time to work with our national lab network to understand how we come forward with this technology. But they're going to have to make investments to be able to produce these at scale.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm going to do it again because people keep asking such great questions and raising topics that I think invite follow-on questions. We talk a lot about hypersonics these days. And I wondered, Mr. Secretary, if you could explain a little bit more what specific problem they are trying to solve at an offensive level.

So there's the missile defense question, but there's also the question -- I sometimes think that as important as these weapons are and as happy as I am that you're investing more in them, they're always going to be somewhat exquisite weapons. They're complex, they're expensive, and what they do is they reduce the time from launch to detonation or impact. But often -- we're pretty fast already at shooting weapons once we know what we're shooting at, once we have the target. So what specific set of problems do hypersonics allow you to solve at an offensive level that you couldn't address with other kinds of weapons? Just how important is this level of military innovation?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: I would -- what I've done repeatedly, hypersonics is like the Pershing missile of the 21st century. If you look at what the Pershing missile did in Europe, and, fortunately, we never had to fire one, there were about three battalions arrayed around Europe and it was a tremendous deterrent for conflict, and that's obviously the optimal use for that capability, but it's because of the extraordinary speed and lethality of that capability.

The dilemma is that if you don't have essentially the type of almost artificial intelligence-like capabilities because of the speed at which the munition can travel, you can't find it, sense it, or shoot it because it'll be there within a couple of minutes. And that's what has got so much attention from national leaders, like the ones mentioned, because of its extraordinary capability. And it could send a very strong message or it can confuse people, too. And you could end up in an escalatory type of situation.

So from an offensive standpoint, it creates dilemmas that would disrupt any decision cycle. From a missile defense standpoint, it is as much of the hardware as it is the sensing capability of just how fast can you cue, find it, and then cue something to kill it. So this is an extraordinary capability that a lot of countries are investing enormous national resources against,

and it's going to change warfare.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. The woman here in the red jacket in the fourth row.

MS. GIRARD: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, hello. My name is Bonnie Girard and I'm president of a consultancy. Don't let the name worry you, it's China Channel Limited. We are a risk and strategic advisory consultancy originating out of Beijing originally in 1996, and then out of the States since 2001.

My question is this. You talked a few minutes ago about partner armies, the U.S. Army getting to know each other by eating slices of pizza, getting to know each other's kids' names, being together. How -- such as people like us, some are also from the commercial world, who have spent decades in China, we got to know by working and listening and socializing side by side with active and retired PLA officers and their families. We got to know these people and we had slices of pizza and chicken wings and other things. So we got to know them in a way that for the commercial world was appropriate. How does the Army get to know the Chinese PLA in a similar intimate way?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: The pizza was free and (inaudible). It's Friday night at the McCarthy house. So, but the -- General Milley, who was the chief before and now the chairman, met with his PLA counterpart two or three times. And that is exactly the type of behaviors we've got to have, frank, candid conversations, mil-to-mil relationships in particular. Now, I don't think it's -- obviously, from the political point, anytime we should, as well. But the mil-to-mil relationships are so unique because of the continuity. It transcends administrations.

I agree with you. We've done that with certain frequency on and off for the last couple of decades at least. There needs to be more of it. I encourage it, as well.

I remember when I was working for Robert Gates, he and Admiral Mullen had a week-long event where they brought in all of the leaders from the PLA and it was extremely beneficial. We just need to be more consistent with that because you have an understanding with each other. So, no, I absolutely agree with you and we should do more.

MR. O'HANLON: We'll go to the gentleman on the same side here about seventh row back, Adam.

MR. WHITE: Secretary McCarthy, good to see. Jonathan White from Bechtel.

Regarding the stationing of forces in the Pacific, is there any effort to increase the permanent presence of forces at our legacy bases or will you primarily focus on kind of expeditionary Pacific Pathways-type presence? Thank you.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So I very much am in line with where Secretary Mattis started this and Secretary Esper is right there, as well, is dynamic force employment. And it's expeditionary in nature. We can be much more comprehensive in the touch points in the region. And it's much more economical. And, as you know, speed counts. So it'll be dynamic expeditionary in nature for the foreseeable future.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll even give a brief shout-out to Secretary Rumsfeld. He gets beaten up a lot over Iraq, but some of the origins of this thinking I think you can go back to him, and so it's been an idea that's been in the works. You're able now to make it happen a little more than some of your predecessors.

The woman here on this side in the sixth row.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm (inaudible) from Radio Free Asia. About North Korea, so do you think these current conflict between U.S. and Iran affect to -- I mean, directly or indirectly affect to North Korea? Some prospects that North Korea might take advantage of this time when U.S. is more focused on Middle East area and they might take some more provocative action towards U.S.

And the following question is, is there any new effort by U.S. Army in Korean peninsula to step up defense or offense capability against North Korea? Thank you.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: With respect to your first question, there's always risk with that. I don't see a direct correlation right now.

And on the operational side, I'm not going to comment about operational moves on the peninsula.

MR. O'HANLON: So we'll go to Tom and then after him the gentleman right next to Tom.

MR. BURKE: Good morning again, Mr. Secretary. Tom Burke, I'm an Army FEF

here at Brookings. Sir, as a recent aviation brigade commander in the INDOPACOM AOR, I can attest to the strategic through -- the tactical, rather, through strategic benefits of the Pacific Pathways mission set. As you're looking to expand this mission set, is this something that you've considered doing in cooperation, for example, with the Marine Corps just as we're looking to manage the multitudes of commitments we have in the Army? Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Well, we all participate in the Pacific Pathways exercise. And this is where the INDOPACOM commander and our Army Pacific commander bring all the collective U.S. capabilities together with our partners out in the region. So it's a large multinational effort. The Marine Corps participates, has a substantial presence during that exercise. Some of the things that the Marine Corps are looking at is the disposition within the region, as well. I don't think they've made any decisions at this point -- changes, excuse me.

MR. WOODY: Hi, Christopher Woody from *Business Insider*. Regarding logistics, the Army in Europe has been working with its partners, NATO and EU, to rebuild its ability to resupply and reinforce. How satisfied are you of the Army's ability to resupply and reinforce across INDOPACOM, and what you need to do with sister branches and with partners in the region to improve that?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So, you know, like I mentioned before, it's the tyranny of distance. Just to go, I mean, what, it's about 900 miles from just Vietnam to the Spratlys. So it's a haul to get anywhere. So the logistical points in the region, you're going to have to rely largely on your allies and the expeditionary nature. So where do you put preposition equipment, expeditionary type locations that have runways or access to harbors? We've had great relationships for decades.

And to Michael's point earlier, it's kind of reenergizing some of those muscles. And it'll require investment and it'll require some work with allies and how do we partner together to do that. We've got some work to do.

MR. O'HANLON: By the way, om the North Korea question, if you don't mind my asking or following up, you mentioned twice that we now have 26 brigades in top-tier readiness. Presumably that's part of the answer to the question, too, that even though you are needing to send

a few hundred or a few thousand forces here and there to the broader Middle East, you've still got more combat-capable brigade, you know, punch at high-levels of readiness than we've had in really decades in the United States.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: It's extraordinary considering the demands we face in the world, and it is truly a testament to the leadership of those men I mentioned before.

MR. O'HANLON: That's 26 in the active force or across the entire --

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Of all of our brigade combat teams, we've got over almost 60 brigades on that, between the active Guard and Reserves, so yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: So about half are top-tier readiness and most of the rest are maybe a notch down, but still pretty good.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: And the things that make you the most proud is even within the last 18 months, we've had -- we took an armored brigade that was not the highest level of readiness just, hey, you. They showed up and they delivered in the European theater, so -- to train in a large-scale exercise. So you can never underestimate just how good our people are. And even when they're just shy of going through the wickets, I'd bet them every day and twice on Sunday.

MR. O'HANLON: And to reach that high level of readiness, you've got to have adequate numbers of people with the right technical specialties, the right training, the right equipment, and recent training experience and exercise experience. All those things have to be met to reach the top tier, right?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: And they go through all those wickets and if they don't, you're just dialing up the risk on their performance. But more often than not, they'll deliver even then.

MR. O'HANLON: Go here in the second row and then one round in the back before we wrap up.

MR. KATZA: Hi, Dan Katza (phonetic), currently an affiliate. How do you see the Army's role in the region differing from that of the Marines? But then, also, how do you see Army supporting the role of the Marines in the region?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So in many cases we support the Marine Corps logistically with air assets and long-range precision fire. It's a sustainable nature. You know, Marine Corps can show up, hit hard, but then having the duration within that deployment, that's where the challenge is because of the logistical backbone that I highlighted.

So that's really where they do a lot of that together. They can do some other more offensive-type training together, as well.

MR. O'HANLON: So we had a couple of hands in the back before we wrap up here in about five minutes. So the gentleman standing, Adriana, right there and then we'll work up.

MR. YU: Thank you, Secretary. Deng Kwai Yu (phonetic) with China Video News Agency of Hong Kong.

You talked a lot about the competition between the U.S. and China. I'm wondering if there's any -- still any cooperation with the PLA and the U.S. Army. I know last year there was a joint (inaudible) of humanitarian rescue between the U.S. Army and PLA? Anything else?

And secondly, how do you see the role of Taiwan in the U.S. Army's Indo-Pacific strategy? Is there any effort between U.S. Army and Taiwan to step up the cooperation when the Pentagon is now supporting Taiwan? Thank you.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Like I mentioned before, we have what we call our "chief talks" between the chiefs of our services with our counterparts in the Chinese government. We don't have any joint exercises or anything of that nature.

With respect to the relationship with Taiwan, you know, they're an interoperability partner. They buy U.S. capability. We do advise-and-assist-type training with them and consistently work that relationship through the INDOPACOM commander and the U.S. State Department.

MR. O'HANLON: Two years ago, I was invited to be on a panel with General Brooks on the Armies of the Pacific Symposium. And I think the U.S. Army had spearheaded and promoted it.

I think you still did that annually, too, right, that kind of thing where there's a multilateral gathering where the Chinese are part of the conversation. You talk about humanitarian relief and

things like that.

There was a hand -- yes. Please.

MR. KIM: Thank you, sir. My name is Deng Yin Kim (phonetic) from Voice of America Korean Service.

You talked about hub-and-spoke and the flexibility of sending troops in the region. And obviously, the United States Force Korea is one of the largest components in the region. I was just wondering do you look into any situation of the United States Force Korea part of it being deployed in other urgent situations in the region? And also do you see any --

SECRETARY McCARTHY: You mean deployed off the peninsula to go other places?

MR. KIM: Part of to go, like brigades or (inaudible), you know, brigades, for example. Or -- and also, do you see any role of the United States Force Korea -- now traditionally, it was focused on deterrence. But do you see a much more expanded role for United States Force Korea on competing against emerging threats, like China?

SECRETARY McCARTHY: No, they're focused on the peninsula. We have other formations and organizations throughout the region that work other relationships.

MR. O'HANLON: And then there was one more hand over here and then we'll wrap up if we could please.

MR. BEINART: Hi, Matt Beinart, *Defense Daily*. So you've mentioned long-range precision fires and the way it could be applied in INDOPACOM. But I was wondering about across the other six priorities, you know, how is the Army thinking about future vertical lift, NextGen combat vehicle with regards to the region? Thanks.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: So obviously, range is incredibly important for our aviation fleet. We are -- I was just in Texas yesterday, and the day before I was there and looking at a potential suitor to replace the Black Hawk helicopter, for example. And if you look at the types of requirements we're putting on our systems, range is incredibly important, whether it's a grand vehicle or it's a helicopter. Because the nature of combat, it has continually progressed.

Weapon systems are becoming more capable, more lethal, they have greater range. So fights are getting more expanded everywhere in the world and that's where warfare will head in the foreseeable future.

MR. O'HANLON: Mr. Secretary, you covered so much ground. Thank you for all you've been doing for the last three years, for your new responsibilities, and for coming to visit us today at Brookings.

SECRETARY McCARTHY: Thank you for having me. (Applause)

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