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The Evolving Security Environment In the Asia-Pacific Region

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[TEXT]

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to once again present an overview of the evolving security environment in the Asia-Pacific region. The process of global transformation is working in varying patterns and paces region by region.

In East Asia and the Pacific, the security situation has changed significantly since May when I last presented our views to this committee. Among recent developments reshaping the region's security environment are: — The veritable revolution in the Soviet Union resulting in the abandonment of communism, great uncertainties about the state of that union, and an increasingly active role in Asia of the Russian Republic; — The President's September 27 announcement that tactical nuclear weapons would be removed from all surface ships and attack submarines; — The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines, which last June forced the closure of Clark Air Base, and the failure of the Philippine Senate to ratify the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security, rendering uncertain the future of our military presence at Subic Bay Naval Station; and — The signing in Paris on October 23 of a comprehensive agreement to resolve the Cambodia conflict that will, after implementation and along with resolution of our POW/MIA concerns, make possible normalization of US relations with the states of Indochina.

These disparate developments underscore the broad sweep of change now underway as we advance into a new phase of history. New patterns of diplomacy and international cooperation are also emerging in Asia amidst the region's unique historical, political, and economic circumstances. There is new activity between Moscow and Tokyo designed to resolve Japan's Northern Territories issue with the Soviet Union; the two Koreas have joined the United Nations and have held four rounds of prime ministerial-level talks; and the Cambodian peace accord will make possible over the coming months broadening international involvement in Vietnam as well as in Cambodia. At the same time, East Asia and the Pacific remains a diverse political environment with a deep sense of history and its own security challenges—some enduring from times past.

Most prominently, the decades-long military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula remains, but with the added danger of nuclear proliferation. In his speech before the UN General Assembly last month, President Bush observed that the collapse of communism has resulted in a revival of historical forces long frozen by the Cold War confrontation. Ancient interstate disputes, ethnic rivalries, nationalist aspirations, and old prejudices have rapidly re-surfaced. In East Asia and the Pacific, these challenges to stability appear less pronounced than in some other regions, but there are areas of concern.

Among them are a number of unresolved territorial disputes such as the Spratly Islands and historical suspicions among various Asian states. In Burma, the tyranny of a brutal military dictatorship endures, despite the clear expression of popular will for civilian democratic government in the elections of 1990. Aside from continuing uncertainty about the future of the Soviet Union, the residual Asian communist states—China, North Korea, and Vietnam—face internal pressures for change that can have a significant impact on regional stability. In addition, we face transnational problems such as nuclear and missile proliferation, illegal narcotics trafficking, degradation of the environment, and outflows of refugees.

These challenges to collective security are now on our regional agenda as important elements of a comprehensive approach to security. Addressing issues such as curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related issues—as we have seen from the Gulf war—are basic requirements of the post-Cold War international system now taking form. Our broad policy challenge is to manage this mixture of old and new problems while forging post-Cold War institutions that will shape the world of the 21st century. In our view, sustained American engagement in the Pacific is fundamental to US national interests and to the international system we hope to see become a reality.

In formulating US policy toward the region and its emerging security environment, we are guided by the many successes of our past policies. Forward defense based on a network of bilateral defense relations and economic engagement premised on an open global trading system have maintained decades of stability in the region and secured its remarkable economic dynamism. We have large and growing interests in East Asia and the Pacific, now one of the regional engines of global growth.

Together, the economies of the region have a GNP roughly equal to that of the United States and are increasingly integrated into the global trading system. US trans-Pacific two-way trade now exceeds \$300 billion annually—about one-third larger than our transatlantic trade. US firms have more than \$61 billion invested in the region. We export more to Malaysia than to the Soviet Union, more to Indonesia than to Central and Eastern Europe, and more to Singapore than to Spain or Italy. Clearly, our future prosperity is inextricably linked to that of the Asia-Pacific region. In an age of instantaneous global flows of information and capital, these burgeoning economic linkages and the continuing democratization of the region are among the factors creating a deepening sense of Asia-Pacific community. Through initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process we are trying to foster greater cohesion among all the Pacific rim economies.

#### Influence of Current Changes on Security Strategies

Against this background, let me review our broad security strategy for East Asia and the Pacific and explore how it is likely to be influenced by the recent changes in the region I have mentioned. The enhanced capabilities of our allies and friends, changing security circumstances, and budget constraints led the Bush Administration—at the request of Congress—to review over a year ago our defense strategy for East Asia and the Pacific.

We presented a comprehensive assessment of our policies and strategies to the Congress in April 1990 in a Presidential report entitled, "A Strategic Framework for Asia: Looking to the 21st Century"—also known as the EASI study. This framework outlined a three-phased approach for adjustments in our forward deployed presence in Asia designed to safeguard US interests, preserve our deterrent capability, and enable us to maintain our security commitments to our friends and allies.

My colleague from the Department of Defense will discuss this policy reassessment in more detail, but I would like to review our basic approach. What has given structure to security activities in the Asia-Pacific region for 4 decades is a loose constellation of bilateral alliances with the United States at its core. Central to this informal, yet highly effective, security structure has been the US-Japan alliance, the keystone of our engagement in the region.

This association, combined with the US bilateral alliances with Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia has been and remains the structure of Asian security. This system has been effective precisely because it has respected the political and cultural diversity and the geo-political realities of the region as well as the national interests of our partners. Unlike Europe, there has not been a single threat commonly perceived throughout the region. Instead, there is a multiplicity of security concerns that vary from country to country and subregion to subregion.

As the overlay of US-Soviet competition has been removed from Asia, the region's diverse interests and concerns stand out in sharper relief. What had been a secondary aspect of our Cold War security presence is now evolving into the primary rationale for our defense engagement in the region: to provide geo-political balance, to be an honest broker, and to reassure against uncertainty. As Phase II of our EASI strategic framework is being formulated, the political and security environment I have sketched here implies that the US role as a balancer will remain essential to regional stability for the foreseeable future—a view widely held in the region.

This perspective reinforces the continuing importance of our bilateral security relationships. In the post-Cold War world, however, the enhanced capabilities of our allies and friends and new security challenges require a greater sharing of responsibility; continuing adjustments in our force structure, defense activities, and relations; and consideration of new mechanisms for sustaining regional stability. The process of more equal responsibility-sharing is now well underway as evidenced by developments such as Japan's increased host nation support (by 1995, Japan will pay 73% of non-salary costs of US forces stationed there), South Korea's increasing cost-sharing, and our recent agreement with Singapore for increased base access.

#### Implications of Recent Developments

First, developments in the Philippines are altering the character of our historic relationship. Following the refusal of the Philippine Senate to ratify the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security, we have had discussions with the Aquino Government in light of the Senate's action.

At this point, President [Corazon] Aquino has indicated a desire to discuss a 3-year withdrawal agreement. I want to emphasize that regardless of the fate of Subic Bay, our overriding concern is to sustain friendly and productive relations with a democratic and economically resurgent Philippines.

A withdrawal from permanent basing in the Philippines would make it less convenient, and perhaps more costly, to maintain our force projection capabilities in the region. But the combination of technological advances, a changed strategic environment, and alternative basing arrangements allow us more flexibility in foreign basing than was the case in the past.

Indeed, there are a number of advantages to a more diversified, flexible security presence in the region.

The Gulf war demonstrated that we have the strategic capability to rapidly deploy forces to distant areas in response to aggression. Given the vast distances in the Asia-Pacific region, this ability is not a substitute for a forward presence in the western Pacific. But it does serve as an effective augmentation to the reduced military presence we will maintain outside the continental United States.

I want to emphasize our firm commitment to sustaining close defense and political relationships with the Philippines, the other nations of ASEAN [Association of South East Asian Nations], and Australia in Southeast Asia, as with Japan and South Korea in Northeast Asia. While we have no intention of building new military bases abroad, we have the option of working out new access arrangements with other nations in the region. In Australia, for example, we have joint facilities as part of our long-standing alliance relationship.

Earlier this year, we concluded an access agreement with Singapore, a clear expression of our desire to maintain a defense presence in the region and a reflection of the widespread desire of our friends to have us do so in concert with them.

Second, the President's September 27 nuclear initiative is relevant to the security environment in East Asia and the Pacific in several respects. As a matter of national policy, US Navy ships will not carry nuclear weapons in normal circumstances, although we would retain the option to redeploy them in a future crisis.

One such policy implication is the prospect of reactivating ANZUS [Australia, New Zealand, United States security treaty], an alliance in limbo since 1985 as a result of New Zealand's legal prohibition of visits to its ports of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed naval vessels. The President's initiative has sparked increased debate in New Zealand on its anti-nuclear legislation, and, as President Bush indicated to Prime Minister Bolger during their recent chat in New York, we retain warm feelings for the people and Government of New Zealand and have an identity of view on many non-defense issues. Following the President's historic announcement, Prime Minister Bolger called for the formation of a commission to study the safety and environmental aspects of nuclear-powered ships. We view this as a welcome first step.

The United States has made clear to the New Zealand Government the requirements for resuming a full alliance partnership. We maintain alliances on the basis of shared responsibilities as well as common benefits. We hope New Zealand will take the steps that would make possible a reactivation of ANZUS, although this is fundamentally a matter for the people and Government of New Zealand to decide. In regard to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ), we are studying the ramifications of the President's initiative and other ongoing arms reduction negotiations. Our position has long been that our defense activities in the region are consistent with the SPNFZ treaty and its protocols. All the same, the President's announcement has not altered our reluctance to accede to the SPNFZ protocols. Various aspects of the protocols of the Treaty of Raratonga remain problematic. In some respects, the treaty's provisions are more restrictive than those of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and do not meet our criteria for acceptable nuclear free zones.

#### North Korea's Nuclear Program and Policies

While not directly related to the President's initiative, let me say a word about North Korea's nuclear program and policies. Pyongyang is pursuing a largely indigenous, nuclear program that has raised widespread concern and suspicions throughout the region, particularly about its development of an unsafeguarded reprocessing capability—an essential requirement for making nuclear weapons.

The DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] in 1985. This freely assumed obligation requires Pyongyang to place all its nuclear facilities under full-scope safeguards within 18 months of accession. Six years later, however, it has not ratified or implemented an IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguards agreement. North Korea's persistent refusal to meet its international obligations is creating a serious threat to security in the region. The DPRK has in the past conditioned compliance with its NPT obligations on the removal of alleged US nuclear weapons in South Korea.

The President's initiative makes that demand more specious than ever. The United States has not and will not offer any quid pro quo to North Korea for fulfillment of its international obligations. This would undermine the NPT regime as well as the stabilizing role on the peninsula the United States has maintained with its ally, South Korea, for almost 4 decades. We would, however, view full compliance by the North Koreans with the IAEA safeguard regime as an indispensable step toward the larger objective of agreement by both Seoul and Pyongyang to keep the Korean Peninsula free from the production or acquisition of any weapons-grade nuclear material—the essential requirement for ensuring that there is no nuclear arms race on the peninsula.

#### Role of the Soviet Union

Finally, let me comment on the implications of recent changes in the Soviet Union for Asian security. Even before the failed coup of August 19, the Soviet military threat in the region had significantly declined. Moscow is reducing troop strength in the Northern Territories, continuing to withdraw from Cam Ranh Bay, and decreasing the Soviet Pacific Ocean activities of its naval forces.

Nevertheless, there remain in the Far East substantial Soviet military assets which have not been reduced, and modernization of Soviet forces there continues. We anticipate, however, further reductions in the Soviet military presence in the region in light of the ongoing transformation of the Soviet Union. We note that the Russian Republic is playing a growing role in Asian-Pacific affairs. Continued reduction of Soviet military forces in the Far East, implementation of market-oriented reforms, and resolution of the dispute over Japan's Northern Territories can pave the way for the Russian Republic and the union government to become active members of the emerging Pacific community.

#### Conclusion

In sum, while today's transition away from the Cold War era holds its uncertainties, we know something of the global trends that are shaping tomorrow's world: the movement toward democratic government, market-oriented economics, and a global culture knitted together by the communication technologies of the information age. These trends give us ample cause for optimism about the future. Yet it is also clear that the US forward-deployed security presence continues to be a necessary stabilizing force in East Asia and the Pacific. Despite modest progress in talks between North and South Korea, the Korean Peninsula remains our most immediate security concern. The prospect of an American departure from the Philippines introduces a new element of uncertainty into the Southeast Asia subregion. We are confident, however, that our robust security partners in Asia—and their demonstrated willingness to share greater responsibilities in matters of defense—will enable us to maintain a security presence adequate for deterrence compatible with US interests and budget realities.

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