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“Larson: US role Is to Be ‘Honest Broker’, Not Peacekeeper.” Statement by Pacific forces Commander Admiral Charles Larson in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. (920305)

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LARSON: U.S. ROLE IS TO BE ‘HONEST BROKER,’ NOT PEACEKEEPER (Text: CINCPAC Larson before Senate committee) (4680) Washington — The U.S. role in the Asia-Pacific region is to be an “honest broker,” not peacekeeper, according to Admiral Charles R. Larson, commander in chief of U.S. forces in the Pacific.

In prepared testimony presented to the Senate Armed Services Committee March 4, Larson said the United States “will not and cannot be the regional peacekeeper, but we will be called upon as a guarantor, leader of a coalition and, through military-to-military contacts, as an ‘honest broker’ in times of tension.”

The end of the Cold War has diminished certain regional tensions which are being replaced by new possible threats to stability, he said. Among those he listed are: The growing gap between the rich and the poor, environmental degradation and its threat to resources, and weapons proliferation.

“As long as we remain engaged, the likelihood of a global conflict emerging in the Pacific is at a historic low and still diminishing,” Larson said. “But the cornerstone of our successful strategy for regional peace and prosperity is a continued credible military presence.

“But we do not ‘go it alone’ in the Pacific,” Larson said. “Our many friends and allies contribute to regional peace and stability. Together these bilateral security relationships provide a framework for Pacific stability with the U.S. as the common glue that holds the framework together.”

Following is the text of Larson’s prepared testimony: INTRODUCTION Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I know of no year in American history like the one just past, when in a span of a few months the United States won two victories over dangerous and determined enemies. In the Soviet Union, a system of tyranny seven decades old faced its own people in the streets — and ceased to exist. In Kuwait a brutal aggressor was pushed back behind his own borders, a friendly nation was liberated, and the rule of international law was upheld. We won the first victory by a strategy of containment, and we won the second by a strategy of coalition. As a result, friendly nations respect our word and not-so friendly nations respect our power. And around us we see a world disorderly, but at peace today, with the opportunity for continued investment and prosperity tomorrow. I think we all deserve some credit — the Congress and the administration, the military and the American people. In facing these challenges, we “got it right” with our strategy, our tactics, our people, and our equipment, and our nation is better off as a result.

But victory in the past is no assurance of success in the future. This past December, within sight of my headquarters in Hawaii, we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. We were reminded of the heroism and sacrifice of our citizens — but also of the terrible price a great nation must pay when it “gets it wrong” — when it elects isolationism and defense on the cheap rather than engagement and an adequate military presence and capability.

Today we stand again at a decision point in our nation’s history and in its external relations. We can maintain a military force capable of engagement in peace, deterrence in crisis, and victory in conflict. Or we can cut those forces to the point that they have inadequate influence in peace and run unacceptable risk in conflict. We must avoid this result no matter how tempting the promise of short-term profits.

We know that our own security and economic growth are now linked to the political progress and economic growth of others. When democratic values advance and free market ideas flourish, so do we. When democracy retreats and access to markets and resources is closed, our nation suffers. We simply cannot withdraw from the new world and retreat to the comfortable isolation of pre-World War II America. We must go forward or be left behind.

What we can do is seize the new opportunities of a new age to build a better world — a world built on shared interests and shared ideas. By promoting democracy and democratic values and by supporting regional security and stability through our military presence, we create an environment for continued world economic growth. The need for our engagement and the benefits it can produce are especially evident in the Asia-Pacific theater where a combination of enduring and emerging realities provide us both opportunities and challenges for the future.

ENDURING AND EMERGING REALITIES The first enduring reality is U.S. interests. Our concerns with security, economic growth, regional stability and healthy alliances flow from enduring American values and are not likely to change.

The second is the geography of the region — from Arctic seas and tundra to tropical islands and inland deserts separated by vast expanses of ocean. The sheer size, about 105 million square miles, creates some critical time/distance factors.

Many Pacific nations annually feel the wrath of nature as typhoons and hurricanes traverse the region. Add to this the so-called “rim of volcanic fire” around the Pacific and you have a near certainty for frequent natural disasters of potentially great magnitude.

The diversity among Pacific nations is often mirrored by diversity within the nations. Many have populations with varied ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and relations among the factions are often tense.

There are, likewise, territorial disputes, boundary disputes, and historic animosities between nations, religious, ethnic, and culture groups. Historically, these tensions have served as flashpoints for conflict — some occurring now. While we are in a period of relative peace, these tensions create a vulnerability to instability which is manifested today in low-level but active conflict.

Related to these historic tensions and animosities is the diversity of national security concerns among individual Pacific nations. Concerns about internal order and uneasiness about the intentions of neighboring states are not uncommon among these countries.

The production, trafficking and use of illegal drugs, particularly in the Golden Triangle Region of Burma, Laos and Thailand, ranks as an enduring reality that remains a grave concern, threatening the very fabric of societies world wide.

While the possibility of conflict with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is at a historic low, residual Soviet military capability cannot be ignored. We still see force modernization and remain concerned about the security of nuclear weapons as the CIS continues to evolve.

Paralleling and strengthening forces for change is a continuing revolution in communications. This explosion of information access and availability, which can reach virtually every spot on the globe, has speeded the processes of democratization and political change. As more people become aware of conditions elsewhere, the inevitable comparisons they make often result in challenges to the existing order. This revolution in access to information will continue to grow.

U.S. domestic concerns with education, the homeless, drugs, poverty, and a sense of lost competitiveness is an emerging reality. Resources to solve these serious problems cannot come from deficit spending, and already declining U.S. defense budgets will continue to be targeted for additional savings.

FAVORABLE TRENDS Impacting these enduring and emerging realities are some very important and positive trends.

The first is phenomenal economic growth of many Pacific nations. The so called “Four Tigers” of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore and now Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia are all sustaining economic expansion in excess of six percent per year. That growth has been spurred and sustained by free market economics, trade, and international investment. The encouraging result is growing economic interdependence among the nations of the region.

We are a beneficiary of this interdependence, exporting about \$130 billion to this region every year, creating an estimated 2.5 million jobs for Americans. Conversely, we are in the midst of a long-term period of trade imbalance that continues to tug at the threads of a strongly woven fabric of bilateral relations.

We also see a trend toward democratic forms of government, and greater freedom to express dissenting opinions. The rise of this democratic pluralism in the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan is encouraging.

At the same time, we continue to see a decline in communism and its continued failure in countries that cling to this bankrupt ideology. The former Soviet Union and Mongolia have succumbed to reform pressures, Vietnam is adopting more liberal policies, and even the Maoist version of communism in the PRC is attempting economic reform while yielding slowly to pressures for greater freedom.

As long as we remain engaged, the likelihood of a global conflict emerging in the Pacific is at a historic low and still diminishing. The PRC and the CIS have great internal incentive to avoid conflict. Even in the regional hot spot, the Korean peninsula, we see some success of North-South dialogue and a desire among major powers to avoid conflict and to press for greater contact and reconciliation between the Koreans. The success of the UN actions in the Persian Gulf has had an important impact in building support for coalition action. Japan, and to a lesser extent Korea, played important supporting roles in that action. Many South-east Asian nations with sizable Muslim populations were caught in a delicate political situation. By and large, they were supportive of the UN actions. The lesson that a UN-sponsored coalition came to the aid and rescue of a small country brutally victimized by a powerful neighbor has not been lost on many Pacific nations.

The success of highly trained U.S. military personnel and their high technology weapons in the Gulf War has highlighted our successful strategy of maintaining technological superiority.

These positive accomplishments and favorable trends are remarkable when placed in a historical context which highlights the poverty, turbulence, and conflict so evident in the region twenty to forty years ago. There is clearly cause for cautious optimism. At the same time, there are some disturbing trends which could upset the relative stability and growing prosperity of the region.

DISTURBING TRENDS While economic growth, spurred by free market economies and trade is the success story, the distribution of that new-found wealth, both within the nations of the region and among them, is troubling. Individual prosperity and conspicuous consumption often dwell side by side with absolute poverty. Many South Pacific nations, lacking natural resources, seem condemned to nearly a single product or subsistence agrarian economy.

A by-product of the cold war era and the spread of technology is the increasing availability of sophisticated weapons. Longer range delivery systems, precision guidance mechanisms, and more lethal munitions are readily available on the world market. Of grave concern is the proliferation of chemical — and possibly nuclear — weapons which could do great harm if they came into the wrong hands. North Korea and China have been major suppliers of arms to third world countries for years, although we welcome the PRC's recent acceptance of the missile control technology regime.

Population growth, urbanization, aging populations, and disease cut many different ways among the Pacific nations. But the increasing demands for resources, be it shelter, food, or medical and health care, will be an increasing drain on national resources of particular concern is the potential impact of the spread of the AIDS virus. Rising infection rates portend enormous impact on international travel and commerce.

Finally, environmental degradation threatens the future of many resources. The pollution from rapid industrialization threatens water supplies, air quality, and coastal waters. Poorly managed resource extraction, be it timber cutting, mining or fishing, could threaten the future of important industries and economies.

REGIONAL FOCUS With these realities and trends in mind, let me talk about specific nations. **JAPAN** The U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship is the single most important in the Pacific Command. The recently signed Tokyo Declaration outlined a global partnership. The U.S.-Japanese security relationship is the stable foundation from which that global partnership can be launched. The linchpins of our alliance are the Mutual Security Treaty and excellent military-to-military relationships. U.S. force presence in Japan provides a visible demonstration of our commitment to the peace and stability of the entire Asia-Pacific Region. Japan is the largest single U.S. trading partner and the largest U.S. customer of foreign military sales in Asia or Europe. The Japanese Self-Defense Force use of U.S. weapon systems provides economic benefits and promotes interoperability among our forces while joint exercises continue to encourage professional interaction between our militaries.

Under a new host-nation support agreement which took effect in FY92, Japan will provide \$3.8 billion annually by FY95. Over the next five years, host-nation support contributions could exceed \$17 billion. A constructive dialogue must be maintained if we are to continue our long-term relationship which looks to the future and the full range of U.S. interests, not just the old Soviet threat. We must resolve trade and economic issues and promote Pacific prosperity. Future U.S. growth is tied to the Pacific Basin, and the U.S.-Japan relationship is key in the region.

KOREA Our security relationship with the Republic of Korea (ROK) continues to transition from a leading to a supporting role. We have already replaced the United Nations Military Armistice commission senior member with a ROK officer and have relinquished responsibility for the DMZ to the ROK Military. This year, a ROK Army general will become the Ground Component Commander of the Combined Forces Command.

We remain troubled over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Secretary Cheney's announcement of suspending East Asia Security Initiative (EASI) Phase II force reductions in Korea sent the right message at the right time. While the governments of South and North Korea have signed an agreement on non-aggression, cooperation, and exchange, we must remain firm on a verification process through inspections to ensure the North's implementation of the non-nuclear declarations.

The ROK government acknowledges the importance of our forward-deployed forces through its commitment to a growing cost-sharing program, contributing \$150 million in 1991. An agreement has been reached for a \$180 million contribution for 1992, and a pledge to increase to a level of one-third the won-based stationing costs of U.S. forces by 1995. Our ultimate goal is to establish a realistic base figure and index annual contributions according to ROK economic/budget indicators.

ASEAN Throughout ASEAN, I have pursued military-to-military contact to foster regional security. Each country is a separate, bilateral partner. Accordingly, the scope and character of the many exercises and exchanges we conduct vary among the ASEAN members. In all cases the interaction is productive. I am keenly interested in continuing these programs, because participants, without exception, believe they are mutually beneficial. In concert with our departure from the Philippines, we plan to continue exploring bilateral opportunities for training and logistics support. We are not looking for "bases." However, we will seek training opportunities throughout the region as appropriate in order to maintain a balanced military approach to the ASEAN nations. Our progress with Singapore in this regard is a good example. We recently completed a survey of ranges in Southeast Asia and Australia, and the results were quite positive. While each opportunity for access and training has its own drawbacks, I am confident we will be able to develop an approach that is agreeable with each country and beneficial to U.S. interests.

PHILIPPINES The Philippine government's decision to terminate our stationing agreement has changed the situation there and in the Western Pacific. We are fully engaged in complying with the requirements of departure and relocation. We will continue an appropriate military-to-military relationship with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in accordance with our treaty obligations. As such, I still co-chair the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Board with the chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. That body manages military aspects of the Mutual Defense Treaty, which is the bedrock of our allied relationships. How that relationship is maintained depends in large part on the future actions of the Philippine government.

VIETNAM/CAMBODIA/LAOS The U.S. has recently embarked on three major new diplomatic initiatives with Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos: The resolution of the POW/MIA issue, support of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, and pursuit of our government's "Road Map" for normalizing relations with Vietnam and Cambodia.

The recent establishment of the POW/MIA Joint Task Force (JTF) "Full Accounting" under my command presents great opportunities for the resolution of this highly sensitive issue. Our intent is to execute a comprehensive casualty resolution campaign to determine whether any unaccounted-for Americans are still alive. Headquartered in Hawaii, we have JTF field offices in Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, and Bangkok where we are presently working in a favorable climate of cooperation with local officials. Our proposed operations TEMPO in Vietnam is five investigation and two excavation teams in-country at any one time, up from the current two and one, respectively. The U.S. military will continue to support diplomatic objectives in an effort to bring about a long-sought era of peace and stability in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE More than 75% of the world's estimated opium production is located in the Golden Triangle of Burma, Thailand, and Laos. Over 56% of the heroin seized in the U.S. originates in the Pacific. Viewed from the national level, cocaine is the primary drug threat. However, heroin, hashish, and "ice" pose a considerable growing threat and cannot be ignored. We must continue to enhance our detection and monitoring capabilities and assist in programs which encourage Pacific nations to take the necessary actions to stem the flow of drugs.

INDIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN By any measure of economic, political, or military power, India dominates the strategically important Asian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean. Currently, ethnic, religious, and national friction between India and Pakistan, and less powerful neighbors complicate U.S. relations in the region and could potentially threaten U.S. interests. We have encouraged a program of service component initiatives with India to expand our military-to-military relationship carefully and constructively. We realize, too, that an improving relationship between India and the U.S. cannot be at the expense of our other friends in the region.

AUSTRALIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC Our bilateral relationship with Australia under the **ANZUS** Treaty is the basis of stability and peace in the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. The strong partnership will continue, based on shared goals and interests. Australia remains committed to deterrence and regional stability through participation in joint exercises, the sharing of facilities, and the granting of access to U.S. ships and aircraft.

Regrettably, New Zealand's nuclear policy caused the U.S. to suspend its security obligation with them under the **ANZUS** Treaty. Therefore, our regional interests reside in the strong bilateral security relationship between the U.S. and Australia.

The United States is responsible for the security and defense of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands under the Compacts of Free Association. Their diplomatic ties and participation in regional affairs and global organizations are increasing. The president's summit meeting in October 1990 and complementary U.S. efforts to reverse the post-World War II perception of benign neglect and to replenish the pool of good will have been successful. Additionally, World War II commemorations offer a unique opportunity to further this initiative during the coming four years. We also plan to continue our training and security assistance programs, ship visits, and humanitarian activities in the South Pacific.

CHINA, MONGOLIA, RUSSIA Our military relationship with China has not progressed since military contacts still remain under presidential sanction. Our principal concern is China's potential for missile proliferation and the export of technology for weapons of mass destruction. While we are closely monitoring developments in China, their formal agreement to abide by the Missile Technology Control Regime is a step in the right direction. We are hopeful there will be continued progress that will allow renewed military interaction with China.

Mongolia continues to show promise as it strives for democracy and an open economy in the face of monumental economic challenges and a harsh climate. In an effort to assist, we provided much-needed medical and other humanitarian supplies to them during the past year. We look forward to increased contact in the years ahead to support the Mongolian military's development as a professional, non-political, nation-building institution.

Russia remains an area of potentially serious instability, due in large part to the turbulence within its still eminently capable military machine. Of equal importance is the obvious opportunity for improved relations. I strongly urge closer contacts and more frequent interaction with Russia. Last September I hosted my counterpart, GEN-COL Kovtunov, commander of the Far East Military Theater of Operations. We shared an extremely beneficial and productive week visiting the Pacific Command. People-to-people contacts like this are invaluable — they break down barriers, promote understanding between our military forces, and produce tangible peace dividends. We are currently working to support the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in developing initiatives to expand these contacts to mid-level and more junior officers.

STRATEGY FOR STABILITY Our strategy for this varied and dynamic region is focused on securing and advancing America's enduring interests — not just countering narrow, specific threats which are constantly changing. Twice in the past 18 months President Bush has clearly articulated our nation's defense policy for this new era — once on 2 August, 1990, at the Aspen Institute, and again on 27 September, 1991, in a nationally televised address. In these speeches he identified four foundations for our defense:

— Strategic Deterrence; — Forward Presence; — Crisis Response; and — Force Reconstitution. As a Unified CINC, I regard forward presence and crisis response to be part of my primary mission. They require a different, more regional approach, unlike the old Cold War strategy which revolved around deterring global war. Today our strategic focus is on regional issues — especially military activities for engagement in peace and flexibility for deterring or defeating regional instability in crisis.

Secretary of State Baker reinforced this approach last fall when he identified three pillars for foreign policy in Asia. The first two, encouraging economic integration and fostering democratization, are certainly important to our long-term security and prosperity in Asia, but they cannot stand alone. They derive their strength from the third pillar: a defense structure for diverse security concerns.

In building this network of bilateral security systems, we apply the six principles of security policy laid out by Secretary of Defense Cheney late last year:

— Continued American engagement in the Pacific region; — Strong bilateral security arrangements; — Modest but capable forward deployed U.S. Forces; — A sufficient overseas support structure; — Greater responsibility sharing by our partners; and — Deliberate policies of defense cooperation. In synthesizing this guidance from the president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense, we developed a strategy for the U.S. Pacific Command based on forward presence and robust military relationships with friends and allies. But the cornerstone of our successful strategy for regional peace and prosperity is a continued credible military presence. As we draw down our military forces in this new and more competitive world, it is imperative that we, as Secretary Cheney says, “get it right.” The EASI is a solid plan and a sound strategy. It accommodates planned reductions in keeping with the “base force” philosophy. That base force of highly trained and responsive soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines must remain responsive to the regional threats. This force must be well-equipped, mobile, reliable, and flexible. But we do not “go it alone” in the Pacific. Our many friends and allies contribute to regional peace and stability. Together these bilateral security relationships provide a framework for Pacific stability with the U.S. as the common glue that holds the framework together.

Our strategy of regional stability through multiple bilateral relationships depends heavily on a robust program of security assistance. It is vital to maintaining our regional leadership role. No other program has had, or promises to have, a greater impact on our mediating role in Pacific affairs or our ability to mount credible responses to crises. No other foreign assistance program is making greater contributions to conflict deterrence or sustained access to resources and facilities of the Asia-Pacific Region.

One security assistance program which has proven especially beneficial to the region is International Military Education and Training (IMET). IMET is designed to facilitate cooperative military relations with nations that cannot afford education and training purchases. It impacts directly on the most “valuable” people — the future leaders of countries involved. It successfully promotes important U.S. values and professional skills while enhancing interoperability between defense partners. Our continued participation in this program, our expansion of burdensharing programs, and bilateral agreements result in mutually beneficial relations with allies and friends.

We must continue to sustain an active foreign military financing program in-theater — one which will serve to enhance defense responsibility/sharing, force interoperability, collective/coalition defense capabilities, and U.S. system acquisition.

Security assistance, including both foreign military financing and the IMET programs, is integral to our long-term ability to safeguard U.S. interests with fewer defense resources. These programs allow us to sustain the U.S. regional leadership role.

SUMMATION My goal is to have a U.S. Pacific Command capable of executing our strategy and managing the challenge of change well into the 21st Century. Our aim is to encourage regional stability, the advancement of democracy and human rights, and free and open trade. In so doing, we will discourage regional hegemonies, deter conflict, and contribute to maintaining an environment conducive to economic growth and the development of future trading partners.

The U.S. military in the Pacific may be called upon to play new roles. We will not and cannot be the regional peacekeeper, but we will be called upon as a guarantor, leader of a coalition and, through military-to-military contacts, as an "honest broker" in times of tension. Of course our priority missions of deterrence and defense will not diminish as we face this future of lesser stability and greater uncertainty. As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated recently: "In a very real sense, the primary threat to our security is...being unprepared to handle a crisis or war that no one expected or predicted." As we evolve to a smaller base force, we must insure that it remains able to respond rapidly and decisively when American lives and interests are threatened.

Within the region we have achieved success by tailoring our approach to each country. We have successfully established a network of unique, yet compatible bilateral relations. The result is a complementary system contributing to the stability of the entire region. The firm foundation for the fragile stability of this region is the presence of U.S. forces. We need your support to ensure a winning combination of Personnel and equipment as we work to secure our nation's interests for today and tomorrow.

Finally, I wish to recognize the men and women of the all-volunteer force who represent America in the Pacific theater. Every one of these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines is an American ambassador. Their dedication and impressive duty performance bear the mark of true professionalism. I am proud of them. I believe we owe them our full support. These are the individuals who will protect America's interest in peacetime and crisis. With your continued support, we will maintain stability in the Pacific and provide a firm foundation for America's security and prosperity in the years to come.

Chairman Nunn, your support and the support of the distinguished members of your committee, have demonstrated a strong resolve to protect America's vital security interests. I wish to thank you for your stalwart support of the men and women of the Pacific Command.

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