

Speaker 1 ([00:01:59](#)):

(silence).

Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. The panel session is about to begin.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to panel five; In the Interest of All: Advancing International Security with Allies and Partners. Please welcome Admiral John Aquilino, General Laura Richardson, Dr. William Inboden, Ms. Leanne Caret and moderator David Ignatius of the Washington Post.

Speaker 3 ([00:04:27](#)):

You want a picture first?

David Ignatius ([00:04:28](#)):

I guess we... Yes.

Speaker 3 ([00:04:38](#)):

Let's push together there. Thank you.

David Ignatius ([00:04:38](#)):

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome from your photogenic panel. I hope everybody had a good coffee break and is well caffeinated for our discussion of advancing security through alliances and partnerships. I don't have to tell this audience that this is a moment in which we have threats around the world that are concerning. We have in the Washington Post this morning, a report that 175,000 Russian troops may be prepared to line up along the Ukraine border posing an extraordinary threat to Ukraine and indeed to the NATO Alliance. In Vienna talks to restore the JCPOA just appeared to have broken down, big concern for our allies and partners. And in Asia, Admiral Aquilino's area of responsibility, severe and rising concerns about China. In this world of danger, the United States has a unique asset and that is this network of alliances and partnerships that we have around the world. And so that's our starting point is this precious thing that we have gathered over the years.

But I want to begin with a question for each member of our panel. I'll put it to each of you in turn that a time when the theme of America first and pulling back to this country has resonance in both our political parties, there is some concern among some allies and partners that I talk to about our stay in power, about our credibility as their partner. So I want to ask each of the panelists in turn, starting with Admiral Aquilino to respond to that, what do you see in the part of the world that you cover and what can we do whatever the level of credibility is now to expand it? Admiral Aquilino you're living in the age of AUKUS and maybe AUKUS is the answer that we ought to think about as a baseline, but tell us how that question looks to you.

Admiral John Aquilino ([00:06:51](#)):

Thanks, David. It's great to see you again and it's an honor to be here with this distinguished set of panel members. So as I look through the Pacific, we have to remember for 80 years, we have generated the security and prosperity that's existed throughout the Indo-Pacific. The US is a Pacific nation. We've been there. We've been with these allies and partners for all those years. So what I have seen in my travels, and I've just recently over the past seven months, come back in the execution of realignment or excuse me, the validation of our five treaty alliances. So Japan, Korea, Thailand, Australia, and the Philippines and everything I see from those nations, as well as the rest of the nations in the region is there is no

concern about the strength of the US alliances and partnerships. Again, our value and the value of our partners is clear in this region. So for me, it is validated in every one of my meetings.

Additionally, on the AUKUS piece, that is certainly a benefit. When you look at the different sets of security relationships, whether they're bilateral, whether they're exercises and experiments and other things we do multilaterally AUKUS is additive. So trilateral relationship with Japan, Korea and the United States, the ASEAN nations who get together, the quad. So AUKUS is a different and an additive security relationship that will be extremely helpful to keep that peace and prosperity in the region, so I certainly welcome it. Australia has made a big step, and I think it'll increase the security in the region. For the solution sets long term, it is our allies and partners coming together to demonstrate the adherence international rule based order for the stability in the region and to continue that. So we are stronger when we're together and again, I think that'll be the focus of this panel. So we welcome all of our allies and partners for all of our ops and execution.

David Ignatius ([00:09:18](#)):

I want to come back to AUKUS with you in a few minutes, but let me turn to General Richardson who has just taken over US Southern Command. We have some great allies and partners in your area of responsibility, but they don't get the headlines. I want to ask you whether you worry that we're in danger of ignoring the partnerships that are in our own backyard sometimes, in our at least political debate in Washington and how again, to go back to my basic question, this time when people are asking questions about America's forward commitment, how would we demonstrate that better to people in the western hemisphere who are part of your AOR?

General Laura Richardson ([00:10:05](#)):

Well, thank you very much and thank you for having me on the panel. And it's my pleasure to talk about the SOUTHCOM area of operations and I've been in the seat five weeks and I've been able to travel to Columbia and Brazil so far, two of our biggest security partners. And I'm happy to say as Admiral Aquilino talked about, they've been by our side, our allies and partners, for a really long time. Columbia fought with US in the Korean War, Brazil fought with us in the World War II. So we have a long history with our allies and partners in the region, and they want to partner with us and they want to be with the US. They want to do things with us. In fact, in Brazil, it was kind of scratching our heads as to why don't we do more? And what can we do more? Because all of the challenges that we have, the cross-cutting threats challenge, our collective security across all domains. And quite honestly, we need to work together stronger.

I think our allies and partners exponentially make us stronger. And so I think we have to look at that from that perspective of what they have to bring, what we have to bring. We have to look at it from their perspective and their lens. A lot of times we look only through, I think our lens. I learned that working in NORTHCOM and working with Mexico on how we look at the board issue and the southwest border and things coming to our United States border, they also look at it that's their Northern border and so they look at it from a different perspective and understanding those two different perspectives, I think helps us work closer together.

I see a lot of opportunity. We can talk a lot about all the challenges, but I think, in terms of the headlines, you're exactly right, David, this AOR doesn't get the headlines. And when you're talking about the things that have happened in Africa, some of those things that have happened in Africa with our adversaries are now happening in the SOUTHCOM region, and that doesn't get any headlines. I like to say, I always look use the football analogy. You got to be on the field with their jersey on, your number on, and you got to be there looking them in the eye because they want to partner or with us, they want

to partner and they want to be teammates with us all the time. They prefer that we don't have to... We're not pulling them, kicking and screaming to come partner with us and do exercises. They're there. They want to do it, and they want to do more. And I think that we just got to capitalize upon that.

David Ignatius ([00:12:51](#)):

General Richardson before I move on, I just want to take you up on your comment that some of our allies and partners in Southern Command want us to be doing more, are looking for more from us as an ally. What are some of the things that you hear them asking for? Not to say that you're ready, it's a policy decision. What are you hearing?

General Laura Richardson ([00:13:13](#)):

They love to do exercises with us. And quite honestly, the exercises lead to things that happen, for example, the Haiti earthquake that occurred a few months ago, not a lot was heard. The big news story was operation allies welcome, and bringing our Afghan guests out of Afghanistan into the country. Well, meanwhile, SOUTHCOM was working very closely with nine partner nations, responding to that Haiti earthquake, 7.2 earthquake that occurred in Haiti. And so you just look at the partner nations that we have, the relationships that we have in that region is really tremendous. And so I think the exercises... our exercise program is decreased a little bit this year. We're going from 11 down to eight exercises, but when you look at some of these exercises UNITAS, PANAMAX, Tradewinds, these are all names of exercises that many of you have already heard of, and that have been around for many, many years, but it gives the opportunity to showcase the professional militaries that we do have and that these partner nations have, but then it also helps train them.

They become key exporters of security, as well, in the region. So we're not only just participating in an exercise to work towards another one, it actually trains them to be able to be better security partners in the region as well.

David Ignatius ([00:14:47](#)):

That's a helpful specific. I just want to remind this audience and people who may be watching, streaming, that you can get in this conversation, ask your own questions, send them via the app, the RNDF app or via Twitter, #RNDF and they'll land on my screen as some just did this minute. So I want to turn to Dr. Will Inboden, who was, in addition to running the Clements Center now was the director of strategic planning for the Bush 43 NSC has thought about these issues a lot. Allies are fickle and they can be a nuisance, and they're a nuisance sometimes because they really don't pay their fair share. They look to us for security, but as the NATO debate during the Reagan presidency showed, they just don't pay what they promise they will. From your perspective, over many, many years, talk about the ups and downs of alliances and where you see us now, whether you think I'm right in worrying that we may be losing a little bit of credibility.

Dr. William Inboden ([00:15:59](#)):

Well, David, I'll try to both affirm and reassure your worries there. I think for as long as the United States has had allies and alliances, we've had frustrations with our allies and alliances and our allies have had frustrations with us. I know Eliot Cohen is here at the conference today and I'm a big fan of his work and his book Supreme Command's profile on Winston Churchill. There's a great quote from Churchill writing in the 1930s and Churchill says the history of coalition warfare is the tale of the reciprocal complaints of allies. It's kind of part of the warp and wolf of fighting alongside each other, of doing diplomacy

alongside each other. But going back to Admiral Aquilino's point about the last 80 years of American alliances, I want to take us back to what was there before that.

And this is one reason I think why in America's DNA there is some skepticism among some parts of our political leadership and the body politic about alliances is because for the first 150 years of our country's history, going back to Washington's farewell addressed, we didn't have permanent alliances and they were seen... there were two big reasons for that, which continue as concerns today. The first is that allies will drag us into wars or fights or conflicts that aren't in our interest, that we don't want. And the second is that they won't pay their fair share, that they'll be free riders. Now as someone who's very pro alliances and I'll get into some reasons why there, I think it's important that we remember those parts of our country's deeper history because those concerns continue to recur pretty regularly and we're seeing them in our debates today.

But I think the really key inflection point is in that postwar moment, 1945 to '55, when so much of the current structure of our alliance system today was built, when we abandoned that previous tradition of no allies and embraced it, it's no coincidence that that's also when the United States had our great debut on the world stage as the leading superpower. So our embrace of alliances went hand in hand with our increase in national power. And I think they've overall been mutually reinforcing since then, but given that there are these recurring tensions, we can't be complacent about it and say, "Oh, just because we've always had those tensions that therefore we don't need to worry about it." The reason we've been able to manage them is because they take proactive management for each generation, for each generation of politic of political leadership.

I always mention the two areas that I'm really concerned about are... Well, first there's five, I think key factors that maintain the sinews of our alliances, those are shared interests. We certainly have those with the threats from Russia and China today. They're the treaties themselves designed to transcend political pressures, especially when we're speaking about our NATO allies or our allies in Asia Pacific. There's the institutional connections, everything from The Five Eyes to even the shared NATO around the same... using the same cartridge. Those three factors are in pretty good shape. The next two key preserving the sinew of alliances are the ones I worry about and those are presidential leadership and public opinion. And this is not a partisan comment about the Biden administration. Our last few presidencies I think have failed to show the commitment to allies, to make the case to the American people why these matter to us.

When was the last time we heard an American president give a full throated endorsement of alliances and say why they matter, make the case to American people, this is why we have these commitments because of what they've done for us? And that in turn of course is why we're seeing some diminishing public support. So I think it can be turned around, but it's going to take those last two factors of presidential leadership and public and moving the needle in public opinion, because there's other building blocks, the institutional commitments, the treaties and the shared interests are there.

David Ignatius ([00:19:43](#)):

So Ms. Caret, you run Boeing's defense and space business. Curious what you're hearing as you talk to your international customers, customers generally about America's stay in power, and the question comes up, how you answer that, how you say, "Yeah, we're here for you today. We'll be here for you 10 years from now."?

Ms. Leanne Caret ([00:20:05](#)):

Well, thank you for the question. And it's just such an honor to be on this panel with Admiral Aquilino and General Richardson. We owe them incredible debts of gratitude for everything that they do every day for us. And as industry one of the big lessons for us has always been that our proximity to the fight doesn't define our contribution to the fight. And so we view ourselves as an extension of the services, we view ourselves as wanting to be there to provide the equipment, the tools, the training, the services, and be forward thinking in our own investment strategies to enable that. That ties directly in to what we're hearing around the globe and despite the pandemic, we have maintained operating rhythm where we are talking to everyone, either in person or as everybody else with Zoom and the different technologies and the message is clear, the support from the US is still as strong as it's ever been, we have seen zero downturn in terms of believing that the US is a firm ally and partner to the nations.

As a matter of fact, we're continuing to see even more progress within the department in terms of how do we be more proactive in terms of when we're working cooperative relationships, when there's weapons systems support that is needed, how can we help provide the information necessary so that not only does that nation get the benefit of what the US has already done, but in turn, how do we take back from that benefit that we saw with that developing nation or on that weapon system and bring it back so that the US benefits? So we've seen this reciprocal behavior over the years and we're seeing it as much now as ever before. So there has been, David, zero in my mind, any indication that there isn't a belief in that the US Military is in with the allies and that that support remains as strong as ever.

David Ignatius (00:22:03):

Let me take a specific example, our European allies and NATO, still are very strong alliance or are precious to us, but we hear increasingly from some Europeans, especially France, that they want to focus on an independent European defense capability and they give all sorts of reasons for that. You can understand why. I'm curious what that means for a company like Boeing, whether that's going to complicate your life as the Europeans move into their own space always saying, "Yes, we're going to be cooperative with NATO, but we want our own." Is that going to make life harder for you?

Ms. Leanne Caret (00:22:47):

Well, I'll start by saying competition is good and I think it's really important to recognize in this day and age, our ability to turn technology faster to bring forward more innovative and creative solutions is critical. It's not just the weapon system itself, it's the interoperability. And so as we think about moving forward with nations who have desires for different products and services, they open up those competitions many kind times to the global landscape as well. So we are competing at home and abroad and it is up to us as industry to be proactive, to look at where there's leverage opportunities. That interoperability is so key because when the conflict happens, very rarely do you not see allies coming together. And so even if they decide that they want to go invest and strengthen their industrial base, we still want to make sure that we're giving them an opportunity to offer them something that they can assess, look at and we can be competitive in that.

And we owe great service to the US government who advocates on behalf of US products in those situations. And so we work very closely with the defense security contract agency, with the State Department to see if what have as industry here in the US has application around the world.

David Ignatius (00:24:09):

So Admiral Aquilino, I want to drill down a little deeper on AUKUS. AUKUS appears to all of us to be a big strategic idea. It's something that had a lot of churn because of French unhappiness initially, but it's a

big idea. The nuclear Navy has been a jewel of the US Navy, our undersea capabilities. It can't have been easy to open the aperture to truly take in Australia and Britain as partners in AUKUS. I'd love to hear, I'm sure the whole audience would love to hear how AUKUS over time will make life different for INDOPACOM, what will be done differently. And also your first thoughts about how China is going to react to this new extension of the area where we have extraordinary really unmatched capability, undersea warfare. How will the Chinese react to that?

Admiral John Aquilino ([00:25:13](#)):

Thanks, David. Let me start by, I think highlighting one of the reasons that AUKUS came about. So what I know we're watching in the region is the largest military buildup we've seen since World War II, that has driven the Australians to assess the capabilities they need and this was an Australian decision to be able to invest in a nuclear submarine program that provides the capabilities they need against the security threats in the region that they see. We certainly endorse their decision as we've partnered with them. We'll develop those capabilities and what I think you'll see around the rest of the region is there's real concern from the nations in the area on the security challenges that you've heard articulated by my secretary and the focus on the Indo-Pacific. There are true challenges.

AUKUS is one solution. It is additive to the other security arrangements. To Leanne's point, it's interoperability with the United States, all those allies and partners that is beneficial. We value that interoperability and as the security apparatus works together, it does make us stronger. If I could jump on one of Will's points here, the discussion was the fickleness of allies and partners. That's the problem I'd rather have because the other side of that coin is being the nations with no allies and partners and that's what we're looking at in the region. So from the United States' perspective, we continue to work with these allies and partners. And to Laura's point, in INDOPACOM we execute 120 exercises annually with our allies and partners and we're looking to make those more minilateral or multilateral a can contribute to that, whether it's undersea, on the sea, above the sea, or in space and cyberspace, we want to expand that whether they're increased multilateral events. If you look at the exercise, Rim of the Pacific, which will be upcoming in '22. Last time, there were 27 nations with maritime forces, ground forces, air forces.

So from where I sit, that's what right looks like. That's what's been going on for 80 years. So we need to continue down that path and we welcome those other sets of security exercises, relationships, however you want to characterize them. The work with the quad nations associated with exercise Malabar. We would see that expanding. So AUKUS is a small microcosm that applies to the entire rest of the security apparatus and we're here to support all of our allies and partners who would like to expand or increase their capability.

David Ignatius ([00:28:23](#)):

I want to be sure I understand the specific question of whether AUKUS itself should be, as a few people have begun to suggest expanded. Should New Zealand be part of AUKUS, should other nations that can contribute specifically to the mission side of AUKUS be considered as additional members, or is this tripartite packed fine the way it is for now?

Admiral John Aquilino ([00:28:53](#)):

I think it's going to start there. There's certainly technology sharing agreements and other things that would have to work. We haven't discussed specifically adding to AUKUS with other nations at this point, but that shouldn't subtract or detract from our ability to execute increased cooperations through other

means, other than just nuclear propulsion. We're ready to take on any of those additional efforts that our partners and allies are interested in and start those discussions.

David Ignatius (00:29:24):

We'll come back to the quad in a subsequent round, but I want to turn to General Richardson. As we're talking about China and the challenges, to put it mildly, that China presents, one overlooked area is Latin America and your staff sent me a figure, which astonished me that 19 of 31 countries in the hemisphere have signed up to the Belt and Road Initiative. Assuming that number is right it's startling, that China is making inroads to that extent. Talk from your perspective as the new combatant commander about the Chinese presence in your AOR, and then more specifically what we ought to be doing to counter it.

General Laura Richardson (00:30:18):

So thank you for that. I'd like to say that China's playbook for Africa is taking place in Latin America now and so while there might be the news talks about... I watched a news program that was highlighting what's happening in Africa. I think the news is a little bit behind and it's been happening in Africa for years and if we're not careful what's happening in Latin America will in five or 10 years have the same impacts. And so yes, out of the 31 countries, 16 dependencies, those Belt and Road, those folks that have... Countries that have signed up for the Belt and Road initiative, the 19 of 31. I mentioned the cross-cutting threats earlier that collectively make challenges for our security, and that has to do with COVID and COVID is still very prevalent in our countries in Latin America have suffered pretty good at the hands of COVID and are still dealing with that.

And so that in my mind has changed the geopolitical landscape for some of the countries as they continue to deal with COVID and we continue to try to help them, vaccines are continuing to be deployed to the different countries. I know the US when I was there in Brazil last week was donating AstraZeneca, 2.2 million doses of vaccine while we were there. So continued work that we have to do, but, when you look at the effects of that. And then you talk about the projects. So if you're having a problem with your economy already, and then the Chinese come with the Belt and Road Initiative with projects and money, and they're ready to start, it looks very attractive to some of our countries that are having a hard time with their economies. And so certainly though, there are what I see over time it'll be interesting.

Like I said, I've only been in the seat five weeks, but as I go through this, and I see the things that the different countries sign up for, there's a buyer's remorse at some point, because the host nation workers are not used for these Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese workers come in, and then that all in my mind helps with the spread of the PRC and the military bases and the state owned enterprises that China has, and is using throughout our AOR in Latin America.

David Ignatius (00:33:09):

Just to follow up on that, one way in which the United States might combat this attempt to draw countries into the Belt and Road Initiative, into China's economic agenda is greater sharing of technology, ideas, relationships. There's an interesting component of AUKUS that I want to talk about further, which is really about broad technology sharing, but we have a US-EU Council that met in Pittsburgh where technology discussions were a big part of it, same thing with the Quad. We don't have anything like that, that I know of with our own hemisphere and I'm wondering whether you think that's a missing piece. Brazil's pretty technologically advanced country. It's got to lot of things that we probably ought to be talking with them about. Would that be a good idea do you think?

General Laura Richardson ([00:34:06](#)):

I think it would be a good idea. If you don't mind, I'd just like to just talk briefly about one, the proximity of this. David, you said backyard, I'd like to use neighborhood because neighborhoods resonates with our allies and partners in Latin America and the proximity to our homeland here in the United States. Folks don't realize how close the SOUTHCOM AOR and all of these 31 countries in the Caribbean, Central America, South America. I can go to 83% of the countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR in a shorter time distance than it took most of you to come from DC here to this forum. And I was talking to my father, my parents are still living and I went to visit Columbia. My father was like, "Are you in the same time zone? How far away are you? How long did it take you to get there?" And I said, "Dad, you're in Colorado. I can get here faster to Columbia than I can to Colorado and I'm on the same time zone, Eastern Time zone. Didn't even change time zones."

You just think about the proximity. But when you think about what is in Latin America, in terms of the Amazon, they call it the lungs of the world. You have 31% of the world's fresh water is in Latin America. You have the lithium, 60% of the lithium in the world is in the Lithium Triangle; Argentina, Bolivia, Chile. You've got a lot of rare earth minerals, resources and capabilities that in my mind go hand in hand with what the Chinese are doing with the Belt and Road Initiative and expanding their reach into Latin America, just like they did in Africa. And so a lot of folks don't understand all of the rich resources that are really there in Latin America and in our Western hemisphere.

In terms of trade, I'll just talk about trade. If I talk about western hemisphere, add Canada and Mexico to it. 1.9 trillion. Western hemisphere is US's number one trading partner with 1.9 trillion. So it's off the charts what this AOR offers. And so I want to share that because as I've learned all of the great things about this region, I think it's very vulnerable. And so that goes to the point of why we have to be present all the time working really closely using all the levers available to work with our partners as they deal with these cross-cutting challenges.

David Ignatius ([00:36:45](#)):

Dr. Inboden I want to continue on this question of technology partnerships as next phase in our strategic partnerships. The Biden administration thinks it has a big idea here that this network that includes AUKUS, the Quad, US-EU dialogues is going to stitch together what over time they imagine is a kind of alliance of technologically advanced democracies, quasi democracies, but that's the big idea that they're trying to frame. You've been thinking about studying alliances like this for a long time. Do you think this is a good idea, A? B do you think it's realistic when we have countries like France, like India that are pretty darned resistant to some forms of cooperation? And what would you do, if it is a good idea, what would you do to make it better?

Dr. William Inboden ([00:37:44](#)):

I think it's a great idea. Again, I strongly affirm it. And this goes back to thinking about, in our area of, new era of great power competition, what are America's asymmetric advantages and two of the big asymmetric advantages that we have that China and Russia, for example, largely don't first is our alliances. And if we doubt that, just look at the view from Beijing or Moscow. If you're Xi Jinping, who are your closest friends in your neighborhood? Well, maybe North Korea, maybe Cambodia. It's not a very good list, right? If you're Putin, who are your closest friends? Belarus? Maybe Serbia? This is why those guys are spending so much time trying to split and break apart and undermine and weaken our alliances is even if America doesn't appreciate how important our alliances are, the bad guys do. And that gets to the technology part that you were asking about. And this is our second big advantage is the

United States is still all things considered the world's leader in technology and innovation. We're losing our edge in some areas, that this is nothing to be complacent about.

And yet there's a tremendous multiplier effect, both in terms of supply chain security and there was a great panel on that just before us here and also in thinking about the next generation of weapons platforms and essentially being able to deepen our alliances through this technology sharing partnerships and gain a real advantage over our adversaries. And here to invoke our namesake. I think there's a great precedent in the Reagan administrations playbook. It wasn't just Reagan's deep personal commitment to the allies, although that was a big part of it, but it was the technology sharing that was going on with the Strategic Defense Initiative, bringing Japan in as an important partner in that, bringing the United Kingdom in is an important partner in that, bringing West Germany in because President Reagan realized it's not just about outspending the Soviets, it's about outsmarting them. And we can outsmart them with better weapons if we are working with our allies and leveraging those joint technology advantages.

Even with a difficult country like France, which you asked about. And again, they're always a little bit of the outlier. They had already withdrawn from the NATO military command by time Reagan came along. But as David is a great, in some ways, historian of the intelligence community will know one of our best, most successful intelligence programs in the entire Cold War came from a great technology partnership with France over the Farewell Dossier, right? And again, great book that can be written on that. And so even if there's going to be other frictions at the surface level, there can be some deep, quiet, potent joint cooperation on the tech front. So I think there's a great precedent for the Biden administration to take a page from the Reagan playbook.

David Ignatius ([00:40:25](#)):

And Ms. Caret I want to ask you to close out this discussion about technology partnerships, because you really are at the cutting edge of that in a company like Boeing. This administration sometimes speaks language that we associate with industrial policy, kind of centrally managed, White House directed efforts to mobilize direct the private sector. Do you worry about that taking all the obvious benefits that all the panelists have noted about this kind of cooperation, do you worry about too heavy a hand and are you trying to express that as a company and make sure that you still have the freedom to operate and be innovative outside of whatever alliances and partnerships evolve in the technology sphere?

Ms. Leanne Caret ([00:41:20](#)):

Well, I'll build on some of Will's remarks with regard to the allies, that interoperability, the working together, the collaboration, there are different types of relationships between the US and different partner nations. And what we have seen, and AUKUS is a really great example of this is the conversation starting to turn about the sharing of technology and how do we do that within the appropriate channels. And what I've actually seen the department do and has been working on this for a period of time, which is to understand what those technologies are, where is their comfort in release, how do we simplify that process? Because probably one of the biggest opportunities we have in front of us is when we are offering a new system, a new technology, whatever it may be, what is that benefit to that ally nation? How do they get the maximum benefit from it? And then how do we make sure from a sharing perspective, we can each learn from each other?

So an easy example that won't cause anybody too much stress. What about when we're testing out a new system and what level of testing is ongoing here within the US, or what is needed on a different for that same weapon system or a slightly different variant of it in another country? How do we share in certification efforts? A lot of what we have opportunity here to do is to make certain that

we're able to deliver capability faster. And so what I'm impressed with is we are starting to have those very real conversations already. I think AUKUS is actually going to accelerate because it's going to bring in some certain country relationships that are going to give us a benefit to working together and to that cooperative partnering.

David Ignatius ([00:43:10](#)):

That's helpful. So Admiral Aquilino, probably top of mind for most people in this audience when they think about strategic dangers is Taiwan and the potential Chinese threat to deliver on their repeated statement, that they intend to reify Taiwan with the mainland. And I want to ask you straight up, what is the United States doing to strengthen Taiwan's ability to defend itself against what China announces is its goal?

Admiral John Aquilino ([00:43:46](#)):

Thanks, David. So we are doing what we have been doing since 1979 at the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act followed up by the three communications and the six assurances. We are contributing for the ability for Taiwan to defend itself. That's the responsibility and the task that's been provided to me and we are operating in accordance with both policy and law. So we have consultations, we do training. And like I said, we've done the same things. Despite what you read in the press on doing different things, we are not, we are doing exactly what we have been tasked in accordance with the law and the US policy.

David Ignatius ([00:44:32](#)):

So I want to ask you to take that a little bit further. One issue obviously is what weapons will best help Taiwan defend itself against an increasingly sophisticated Chinese threat. I mentioned to you before our conversation, there was a very interesting article in the journal, war on the rocks that I'm sure many in the audience read that several weeks ago asked is Taiwan buying the right things for its defense against this adversary. It's buying more subs, traditional legacy systems as they're called, more subs, more jets. Doesn't it need more swarms of drones, more weapons that would complicate the Chinese adversary's planning? Obviously you're not buying weapons for Taiwan, but I'm curious about whether you think there are ways that jointly the US and Taiwan can think about new systems, not the traditional hardware that we've had going through the Taiwan Straits, standing offshore, but different kinds of things that speak better to the ability to deter this very advanced adversary?

Admiral John Aquilino ([00:45:53](#)):

Thanks, David. Certainly Taiwan is currently under pressure as you've read about, and we've seen over the past number of months, and you could argue years. Recently, we've seen extensive maritime pressure, we've seen air pressures or pressures in the air domain, certainly in the cyber domain, on the sea, undersea, above the sea. That's a pretty tough neighborhood and we execute our responsibility, we talk to Taiwan about capabilities that we think will be beneficial. That said, they get to choose and because there are numbers of challenges, they're going to have to figure out how to decide which of those capabilities they want to invest in. And with the help of the defense industry, we hope to put those capabilities in their hands so that they can ultimately defend themselves in accordance with the Taiwan's Relations Act.

David Ignatius ([00:46:55](#)):

So we'll come back again to China, but I want to turn to General Richardson and ask about a part of the challenge in the western hemisphere, in the countries that are in your AOR that's very hard to get your arms around, but seems central to their security issues and that's corruption, of which Narco trafficking is the most visible part. But sometimes you look at these countries and you worry that they're just being eaten from inside out. You're a combatant commander. You don't run a drug enforcement agency, but are there ways that you can help these countries deal with corruption problems that really do seem in some cases to erode the integrity of the state institutions?

General Laura Richardson ([00:47:47](#)):

Yeah. So that's a really good question and I'm more than happy to talk about it because I think what the transnational criminal organizations and this problem in the western hemisphere creates the wedge for corruption, poverty, crime, all of those things to flourish. And then it allows a great opportunity for our competitors to come in and capitalize upon that. So I mentioned COVID before, and then you add this on top of it. It's a \$90 billion business that these transnational criminal organizations are involved in. It's very serious. The impact in the United States is a hundred thousand deaths a year, so we are being impacted by this as well. And so make no mistake, it affects all of us. And back to my point about the shared neighborhood and the proximity matters, it absolutely matters.

I'm very proud of the organization that SOUTHCOM has underneath it, Joint Interagency Task Force South, JIATF South for short, out of Key West. I'm sure many of you know about that organization, but the fact that... I mean, in my mind is obviously a best practice. 16 law enforcement agencies are within that command, 22 partner nations. And so, as I talked about earlier about the exercises and working with our partner nations, making them stronger, training them to help themselves is that we think that we can see about 10% of the entire problem and within that 10%, our partner nations are about 60% conducting their own interdictions. And so we help with detection and monitoring and actionable information that with those partner nations that are with our JIATF South and our law enforcement agencies, that that's a good news story. And the fact that we can share that actionable information in order for them to do their own interventions is really tremendous, but it's a big problem. As I said, we think we're only getting after about 10% of the problem.

And generally what's in the SOUTHCOM AOR ends up in our homeland and so I think quite honestly we have to continue to take that very seriously, continue to work with our partner nations. The capabilities that I need in my command to be able to see obviously is very important. And so we use very non-standard in some cases, because of the ability to not get enough. We use a lot of non-standard ways of being able to find the information, use the information and use it as actionable information.

David Ignatius ([00:51:01](#)):

We've gotten some good questions from our audience from all over. I don't know where they come from, but they're on my screen and I'm going to ask one of them to Dr. Inboden because it gets us to an area that's urgently important, but we haven't talked about enough. The question is, given its proximity to Russia and threats to Ukraine, how can we more strongly encourage Germany to take a bigger role in maintaining global security? And I'm going to add a little add on to that question. Will, how would you rate the Biden administration's efforts over these recent weeks to deal with this very menacing Russian threat on the Ukrainian border?

Dr. William Inboden ([00:51:48](#)):

Well, putting professor mode on and if I were to give them a grade, it'd be an incomplete, but not trending too well. And I worry in some ways that the Biden administration is playing catch there, but I

was critical at the time of the decision to waive the Nord Stream 2 sanctions. I understand the strategic bet that they were trying to make, which is that if we give Germany a pass on this, because most of the pipeline is already built, then maybe Germany will play ball with us in other areas, but it seems to have not cultivated any more goodwill or cooperation from the Germans and has also sent a sign of, I think weakness and a failure of deterrence to Putin. So I'm pretty worried. Again, I'm not privy to whatever is going on internally.

And like I said, in some ways they're inheriting a weak end as far as the last several years have not been good for the US-Ukraine relationship, really transcending the past three administrations now. And it's tough because one of the unique aspects of great power competition we have is, well, China is the first and primary threat. Russia is a very significant one and Putin is very savvy. It seems like he follows American politics and policy closer than most of us do. And he knows as we're focusing more on China, there may be an opening here for him to make a play towards Ukraine. I do worry about the administration perhaps almost kind of deterring itself about where worrying if they take stronger actions, whether it's sending more lethal weapons to Ukraine or making a more explicit defense commitment that it could cause an escalation spiral. I do think Putin at the end of the day is a rational actor who's going to take everything he can that he thinks he can get away with. And so I think there needs to be a more clear deterrence there.

David Ignatius ([00:53:32](#)):

And any thoughts on the specific question raised about Germany? We have a new government in Germany. They seem to be more interested, if anything, in defense cooperation with the United States than Chancellor Merkel did. It's interesting, even though they're normally more left wing, what do you think about that?

Dr. William Inboden ([00:53:52](#)):

Yeah, no, I do think there's a potential opportunity there. Their their defense white paper is much more forward leaning to hawkish on China, for example, than a lot of us had expected to see. So I do think there's some opportunities there. And again, sorry to invoke our namesake here, I think Reagan had a great model of... And Paula Dobriansky in the front row played a key role in this on the National Security Council staff of how to deal with some of these complications with Germany. Sometimes if an ally is frustrating you and not doing enough, you can either hit them or hug them. And sometimes you need to hit them and other times you do need to hug them.

Those can be there, but generally with Germany, I do think overall the hug them approach has worked a little more in the way that Reagan grabbed Helmut Cole and hugged him tight and got his support for deploying the Pershing IIs and the ground-launched cruise missiles over a tremendous domestic opposition there played a key role in then obviously what it eventually became the INF Treaty and getting the Soviets to back down and withdraw there. So I think there's a precedent of embracing Germany a little tighter, but while we're hugging them also delivering some hard words. And since there is this new government, perhaps a chance for a reset. At the end of the day, Germany will need to see that it's in their own interest too to take a stronger alliance against Russia.

David Ignatius ([00:55:05](#)):

Ms. Caret, we have two questions from our audience that are about the defense industry issues, and I'm going to put them to you and you choose what in this you want to answer.

Ms. Leanne Caret ([00:55:16](#)):

Or neither. Yeah.

David Ignatius (00:55:20):

As the speed of warfare increases, what role does technology plan being able to leverage alliances? That's a complicated one. More specific one, does the current export controls framework support how we need to partner with allies? And I assume the question is here, are we too stinting in terms of what we're willing to share? Stuff that you're producing that you think you could easily sell, is that something we should think about? And then second question, where are we on the burden sharing debate and where does it need to go? How do we balance the defense industrial needs of our allies and our industry? Should the US be buying more from our allies? So pick and choose among those.

Ms. Leanne Caret (00:56:05):

Well, how about I'll start again with where I started on the first question you posed David, which is we are an extension of the US government and so from a policy perspective, from an export perspective, we aren't making those policy decisions. What we are doing is making sure we stay in line to what the US policy is with regard to a specific nation, country and a weapon system. And depending on what that weapon system is, there could be a lot more latitude in terms of the purpose of it, where it can go, how much additional capability it can have or have not, or what up restrictions might be applied to it where it may not be releasable. What's important for us as industry in this entire conversation is to make sure that the US government is fully informed of what we have to offer, understand the development and understand... Which is where we do a lot of information sharing on our research and development arm in terms of where we're taking the future.

Now, how this all becomes relevant in this new age, where... And let's be frank, there is not going to be near enough money for everybody to do what they need to do and the world still needs to figure out how to pay for the pandemic. And so we actually put ourselves back in this more for less environment once again, where there are tough choices that need to be made, not only here in the US, but around the world. And so, as we think about the key, which is if we are truly collaborating together, if we are truly interoperable with our partners and our allies, then what is that right level of information sharing, not only from the key critical technologies that may be releasable, but how do we get mutual benefit from the efforts we're undertaking on any specific configuration so that we don't have to redo, re-certify rework and drive out time and money?

Now one way which we believe you achieve that is through the how. Industry for years has been chasing the Defense Department's budgets and trying to anticipate what that next capability is based on what that next conflict may or may not be. What is even more interesting as technology has continued to involve is the how, how are we designing? How are we building? How are we testing? How are we supporting these weapon systems so that they can be modernized in a rapid way relevant for that nation, for that partner? And so this starts with our investment in the entire digital journey and having that digital life cycle that is from concept to support and it takes our development programs from a 10 year cycle to perhaps from concept to first flight in two or three years. And when you start doing that, the exportability issues also take on an entirely different conversation, because now you're talking about what level of digital definition are you going to release? What does the US government want to have more controlled around? And how do we build upon that to keep these weapon systems relevant for the future fight?

And so I think it's actually... None of the questions you posed were easy, nor are they simple yes, no answers. What I would say is that as technology has evolved, it is a building block. It's a framework in

partnership with the US government about how do we approach interoperability so that we can bring the best capability to the fight, wherever that fight may be and whatever multiple areas it's occurring.

David Ignatius ([00:59:41](#)):

So we're basically of time. I have one more question for Admiral Aquilino. So it's a one minute straight at you. So we talked about the Quad, you mentioned the Malabar exercises, and I think we'd all love to know whether we're on the way to the Quad being a partnership that has more of a security dimension. I want to say more of a military dimension with Japan, with India, obviously with Australia.

Admiral John Aquilino ([01:00:17](#)):

David. So that choice going to be up to the individual nations. Those are political discussions. What I can tell you is the Quad militarily operate together frequently. But again, as we talk about the security discussions throughout the region, I'd almost like to expand it just for a second to global. So Laura and I are sitting here and we're talking about kind of stovepipes that in this security environment, I would argue don't exist. The problems we're discussing are global. We talked about... You said Belt and Road. I say One Belt, One Road, which was the original name it was given and there's a reason it was One Belt, One Road and that's because it was good for one nation. But the problem is global. As my secretary said, the Indo-Pacific is the most consequential theater for the US and our partners' and allies' future, but it expands. The Quad is one aspect of that.

You talked to, Will, about Germany and the EU nations, the United Kingdom just deployed the Queen Elizabeth to the Indo-Pacific in recognition of the importance of the Indo-Pacific globally. Two thirds of GDP flows through the Indo-Pacific to support the global set of nations. That's why it's important. We talked about France. France is a great partner. France has the largest EEZ in the Indo-Pacific of anyone and I've operated with them across the globe since I've been doing this business. And they're a great partner. So the expansion of these security relationships with allies and partners is the key and it's not just in the Indo-Pacific. Laura has number of Pacific nations with coastlines in the Pacific that we both talk to because the region is important for the security, the stability and the prosperity globally. Thanks.

David Ignatius ([01:02:23](#)):

So we have to end it there. It's a perfect note really on which to end it. Thank you to all of our panels. Thank you audience and let's...

Speaker 1 ([01:02:33](#)):

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes panel five. Please make your way to the first floor of the Air Force One pavilion, our luncheon discussion with Secretary Lloyd Austin is about to begin.