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- [Speeches](#)
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- [Biography](#)
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- [Today in DoD](#)
- [News Releases](#)
- [Press Advisories](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Transcripts](#)

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- [Imagery Archive](#)
- [Highlights](#)
- [Photo Essays](#)
- [Week in Photos](#)

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**The U.S. Strategic Rebalance to Asia: A Defense Perspective**  
*As Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, New York City, NY, Wednesday, August 01, 2012*

Thanks, Suzanne, for the introduction. Good evening everyone, distinguished guests – wonderful to be here with you tonight, especially, as Suzanne noted, after testifying before Congress this morning on the uplifting topic of sequestration. Washington, as you know, was built on a swamp. And in my mind the three-hour sequestration debate in August confirms this legacy.

I appreciate Mr. Taranto being here tonight, and other distinguished guests.

The Asia Society—great place—is the nation’s premier center for the study of Asian politics, art, business, and culture. You are doing cutting-edge work on Afghanistan and Pakistan, on China, North Korea, intra-Asian issues, and a whole host of other topics – both here in the United States, and throughout Asia.

Your work has fostered greater understanding between Asia and the United States, and has brought the talent and wonders of both worlds together. I congratulate you on your achievements. And I was of course pleased to see that in June you honored Michèle Flournoy with your Policy Achievement award, a fitting achievement for one of our best strategic thinkers and public servants. Thank you for doing that.

I also want to thank Ashley Tellis for agreeing to moderate the discussion following my remarks this evening. He’s an old and dear friend. And he has made very significant contributions to U.S.-Asia relations – including, but not limited to, signal advancements in our relations with India. I am grateful you could be here tonight Ashley.

I have just returned from a 10-day trip across the Asia-Pacific, with stops in Hawaii, Guam, Japan, Thailand, India, and South Korea. On the trip, I visited our military installations, spoke with our men and women in uniform, and met with our Allies and partners.

Everywhere I went, I was inspired to see our men and women in uniform performing so superbly. They work every day with our Allies and partners to build a safe, secure, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region – which is a core objective of our new defense strategy, as I’ll be saying more about. They deserve our gratitude, they certainly have our gratitude.

President Obama announced our new defense strategy in January, at the Pentagon. Since then, the President, Secretary Clinton, and Secretary Panetta have each visited Asia – each, in their own way, to describe the importance of the region to the United States, and the investments of time and resources that the entire U.S. government is making in our relationships in this region.

I went to Asia, at Secretary Panetta’s behest, to make sure our forces and our partners understand that we are not just talking the talk. We’re walking the walk. And tonight I would like to describe to you what we are doing to execute the so called “rebalance” to the Asia-Pacific region.

Let me start by situating our work within its historical and strategic context.

We in the United States find ourselves today at a strategic inflection point in national defense. After a decade of conflict, one war has ended, in Iraq. The other, in Afghanistan, has not ended, but will transition soon to Afghan lead, thanks to the superb effort of the men and women of U.S. and coalition forces. They’ve done exceptionally well.

But while we’ve been fighting insurgency and terrorism, the world has not stood still. Our friends and enemies have not stood still. And technology has not stood still.

So the time has come for us in the United States to look up, and look around, look out, to what the world will need next – to the security challenges that will define our future after Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is important to note that we would need to make this transition no matter what, but we are subject to a second great current. And that is the need to keep the United States’ fiscal house in order, as outlined in the Budget Control Act, which Congress passed last year.

That act required the Department to remove \$487 billion dollars from its budget plans over the next ten years. It also, by the way, threatened a drastic process of sequestration if Congress does not pass a comprehensive and balanced overall budget plan that the President can sign. Sequester – not the subject of this talk, but a very important thing – would be chaotic, wasteful, and damaging to every function of government and should not take place.

Leaving aside sequester, while the U.S. has a defense – our base defense budget will not go down, neither will it continue to go up as it had for the last ten years. That’s the \$489 [sic: 487] billion dollar difference.

So these two forces, one of strategic history, and the other of fiscal responsibility, led us to design a new defense strategy for the 21st century, in a remarkable process this last winter steered personally by the President and Secretary Panetta. It truly was remarkable, and unprecedented in my experience.

We're building a force for the future. It's what Chairman Dempsey – our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – calls the Joint Force of 2020. And as Secretary Panetta has said, it's gonna be agile, it's gonna be lean, it's gonna be ready, technologically advanced, and able to conduct full spectrum operations and defeat any adversary, anywhere, anytime.

Our new strategy has several areas of focus. And the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific is one of the most prominent and important. The logic of the rebalance is simple. The Asia-Pacific region has enjoyed an environment of general peace and security for more than 60 years, allowing Japan to rise and prosper, then Korea to rise and prosper, next Southeast Asia to rise and prosper, and now China, and in a very different way India, to rise and prosper.

And yet none of this was a foregone conclusion, when you consider where the Asia-Pacific region was at the end of World War II. As President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Secretary Panetta have noted, the security and prosperity of this region was enabled first and foremost by the enduring principles the U.S. has stood for in the region, and that we believe are essential to peace, prosperity, and security.

These principles include our commitment to free and open commerce; a just international order that emphasizes rights and responsibilities of nations and fidelity to the rule of law; open access, by all, to the shared domains of sea, air, space, and now, cyberspace; and the principle of resolving conflict without use of force.

And it has been our strong U.S. security presence and alliances that have allowed these principles to take root among the nations of the region. There is no multilateral organization like NATO in the region. And in the absence of an overarching security structure, the United States military presence has played a pivotal role over those last past sixty years, providing nations with the space and the security necessary to make their own principled choices. We intend to continue to play that role. It's good for us, and it's good for everyone in the region.

It is often said that security is like oxygen. When you have enough of it, you pay no attention to it. But when you don't have enough, you can think of nothing else. So it's in the nature of things for some in the region to take security for granted. But we can't afford to make that mistake.

If that security were ever to go away, if old animosities were ever to take root, and conflict to occur, all of the people in the Asia-Pacific region that have been lifted up into prosperity in the post-War period, would be set back significantly. The global economy would be set back significantly. We don't want that to happen. And that is partly why we are rebalancing our efforts in the region.

The rebalance is not about any single country or group of countries. It is not about China, it's not about the United States. It's about a peaceful Asia-Pacific region, where sovereign states can enjoy the benefit of security and continue to prosper.

The rebalance is reflected in the force structure decisions we make and are making – that is, what we keep and what we retire; in new investments we're making in technology and new weapon systems; in innovative operational plans and tactics; in our posture and presence – that is, where we put things; and in alliances and partnerships in the region.

To those who doubt we have the resources to accomplish all of this, I would to the contrary point out two factors that make it eminently possible, even within the limits of a smaller budget than we anticipated. First, with Iraq behind us and Afghanistan slated to wind down, capacity will be released that can be allocated to the Asia-Pacific region. And I'll give you examples of that.

Second, to meet our strategic objectives, within the new budget we are prioritizing investments in capabilities that are especially relevant to the Asia-Pacific region, as opposed to, say, counterinsurgency, where we've [innovated] so successfully and so heavily over the last decade. So for both those reasons, we can do this. It's not a question of our resources.

Let me first offer some examples of how we are shifting our capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. And I will start with the Navy. [I was] just in Yokosuka a little while ago. Also Pearl Harbor, and many other places in the theater – Apra Harbor, and so forth, on Guam.

Specifically, the drawdown in Afghanistan will release naval surface combatants, and eventually carriers, as well as naval intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and processing, exploitation, and dissemination capabilities. EP-3 signals reconnaissance aircraft have already moved from CENTCOM to PACOM.

Two Firescout Unmanned Aerial Vehicles will be released from Afghanistan, and several electronic surveillance aircraft will become available for redeployment. Navy P-3s, a type of maritime patrol aircraft, have conducted maritime surveillance missions in the Middle East for the last decade; now they will return to the Asia-Pacific region. Much more of course is on the way as our presence in Afghanistan is reduced.

We are also shifting our overall naval posture to the Asia-Pacific region. As Secretary Panetta said, we intend to have 60 percent – historic high – of our naval assets based in the Pacific by 2020, a substantial historical shift. We will have a net increase of one aircraft carrier, four destroyers, three Zumwalt destroyers, ten Littoral Combat Ships, and two submarines in the Pacific in the coming years.

For the last decade, destroyers and amphibious ships, moreover, have conducted security cooperation missions in Africa, South America, and Europe. The Navy is fielding new ships now, like the Joint High Speed Vessel and the Littoral Combat Ship, to perform security cooperation missions in those regions. That will free up additional amphibious ships and destroyers to redeploy to the Asia-Pacific region.

And because we're homeporting destroyers in Rota, Spain, that releases capacity for six destroyers to shift their rotational deployments to the Asia-Pacific region.

So much for the Navy. The Air Force will also shift capacity from Afghanistan to the Asia-Pacific, to include the MQ-1 Reaper – I'm sorry, that should be the MQ-9 reaper – the U-2 reconnaissance aircraft, the Global Hawk – high-altitude, unmanned reconnaissance aircraft. We'll re-task intelligence assets from the Air Force's Distributed Common Ground System, which is now currently of course engaged in CENTCOM operations, for the PACOM region.

In addition, the Air Force will be able to allocate space, cyber, and bomber forces from the United States to the Asia-Pacific region with little new investment. As operations in Afghanistan end, for example, B-1s will become available, augmenting the B-52s already on continuous rotational presence in the region.

The Army and the Marine Corps also have an important role to play in our rebalance. The Army and Marines Corps are making the most titanic transitions coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan, because they've been so deeply involved in both conflicts.

The Army's presence in Korea, for example, will be protected from any budget changes. And there will also be no reduction, at all, in the Marine Corps presence west of the International Date Line. In fact, the Asia-Pacific region will see more of the Army and Marine Corps for the simple reason that they will not be in Iraq and Afghanistan any more. They'll be among other places in the Asia-Pacific region.

Beyond our traditional focus on Northeast Asia, moreover, we are enhancing our presence in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region. We now have Marines rotating through Australia, four Littoral Combat Ships on a rotational basis in Singapore, and forward stationing in Guam. We are working with Australia to establish a rotational bomber presence, building on the success of bomber rotations to Anderson Air Force Base in Guam.

How about – in addition to the capacity released by the drawdown in Afghanistan and Iraq – how about new investments, new defense investments that reflect our needs in the Asia-Pacific region?

We won't lose the counterinsurgent capabilities we've worked so hard to develop in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we are integrating the lessons we've learned there over the past decade. But we are turning the great ingenuity of our department to the Asia-Pacific region, not only in hardware and technical investments, but intellectually – in language and culture skills, regional and strategy affairs.

The Department of Defense is making investments in Guam, first, as a strategic hub for the Western Pacific. That's why we're forward-stationing Marines there, why we have a continuous rotational presence of Air Force bombers at Anderson Air Force base. We will make significant investments in the naval facility at Apra Harbor. I was just there, a week and a half ago.

And Anderson, we will invest in fuel, maintenance, and other infrastructure at what is a huge base – for those of you who remember Anderson. To support the Marine Corps realignment from Okinawa to Guam and other training needs of our forces and allied forces, we will invest in modern infrastructure and training ranges up the Marianas, Saipan, Tinian, and so forth, as well as Guam.

While we did decide to make some reductions in the Air Force tactical air squadrons worldwide, by removing some of the older or single-purpose aircraft to make way for newer aircraft, like the F-35, we made no changes in the tactical air posture in the Asia-Pacific region – none at all.

We have recently deployed an F-22 squadron to Kadena, which is also the first overseas base to permanently station the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. In other words, we're putting our newest aircraft out there.

In addition, we are continuing on, despite the Budget Control Act, with the new stealth bomber, with the KC-46 tanker, and with a host of intelligence and surveillance platforms in the Air Force, all going forward despite the budget environment. That's what reprioritizing our investments is about.

As part of our new strategy, we are protecting our investments in future-focused capabilities that are so important to the region. For example, cyber capabilities. We will continue our science and technology investments to protect the seed corn of tomorrow.

We will continue to invest in special operations forces, including counterterrorism, which we've gotten good at over the last 10 years, and which we need to keep being good at it, and which are, in fact, relevant to the Asia-Pacific region. We're protecting all of our major space initiatives, and making significant investments in electronic warfare and radar.

The Navy is investing in the Virginia-class submarine payload module, which will allow our attack submarines to carry up to 40 cruise missiles. That's a good capability to have.

The Navy will sustain its undersea dominance through continued improvements in anti-submarine warfare, including the Virginia-class submarine – as I just said, the submarine itself, and the payload module – the P-8A maritime patrol aircraft, the MH-60 helicopter.

And the Navy is fielding the Broad Area Maritime Sensor – BAMS, which is a marinized version of the Global Hawk – in fiscal 2016 to expand the range and capacity for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in the region.

We are focused on delivering capacity, managing resources, and following-through on our investments. Secretary Gates and Secretary Panetta both held regular video teleconferences on Iraq and Afghanistan. I've been part of them for four years now.

Secretary Gates had them all the time – in Iraq, with first Lloyd Austin, and then Ray Odierno; and Afghanistan, Stan McChrystal, Dave Petraeus and then John Allen – where the commanders and all the key players in the Pentagon would work on those very urgent problems associated with Afghanistan and Iraq.

Given the priority of the Asia-Pacific rebalance, he has – Secretary Panetta has decided to use the same model to provide continuous attention to the region, including Sam Locklear, our Pacific commander.

And to support the Secretary in this, I will convene a series of what I call the Deputy's Management Action Group, which is the principal management forum of the department, specifically focused on our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. We are watching every dollar, every ship, and every aircraft to implement the rebalance successfully.

These capacity shifts and new investments in U.S. forces, however, are only a part of our strategy. Following our long historical commitment to the region, we seek to build partnerships that leverage the unique strengths of our various Allies and partners – to confront critical challenges, and meet emerging opportunities. The security of the Asia Pacific region can only be ensured by shared commitments and shared choices by everyone in the region.

So with our Allies and partners, we are building an architecture for peace and prosperity in the region. To do so, we are taking a strategic and comprehensive approach to our security cooperation in the region.

Our shift in capacity will be reflected in our plans and in our activities. We are also building partnership capacity, improving interoperability, and cooperating with others on capabilities. We conduct a broad range of bilateral and multilateral exercises – on such topics as maritime security, contingency response, and humanitarian assistance.

Our security cooperation in the region includes a range of Foreign Military Sales, Direct Commercial Sales, and technology cooperation. Exports are a "two-fer" for us: They help us build our partners' capabilities, and they help us economically. We are improving our overall export control system under President Obama's Export Control Reform Initiative, and taking steps to improve our sometimes cumbersome internal DoD processes.

We're making our decision process more anticipatory, looking ahead, looking at what partners are likely to want in the future, and beginning our thinking and processes earlier. These reforms should make it easier for us to cooperate with our partners across the region.

To strengthen our regional missile defense posture, we are cooperating with Japan and South Korea on missile defense technologies. We are integrating Japanese sensors into our space surveillance network, and cooperating with Australia on space capabilities.

We are enhancing our access and sustainment across the region. In addition to rotationally deploying Littoral Combat Ships in Singapore, as I mentioned earlier, we are exploring options for increased training with them.

With the Philippines, we are exploring options for rotational force deployments in priority areas. We are focused on building the Philippines' maritime security presence and capabilities, and strengthening their maritime domain awareness.

We are building trust and confidence in the region through bilateral and multilateral relationships. We are advancing roles, missions and capabilities with Japan – a very important initiative – and making progress in the transition to South Korean-led operational control on the Korean Peninsula. We leverage multilateral forums, like ASEAN, to address international law and norms issues, like the excessive claims being made on the South China Sea.

And we are committed to developing a sustainable military-to-military program with China – to improve mutual understanding and reduce risk. We seek to strengthen our very important relationship with China in all ways, and believe that China is key to developing a peaceful, prosperous, and secure Asia-Pacific region.

One of the major purposes of my trip was to strengthen our alliances – with Japan, Thailand, and South Korea – and deepen our partnership with India. With each ally and partner, we are enhancing our defense posture and building capacity.

The U.S.-Japan alliance, take the first, has been the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region for over 50 years. In Japan, I held immensely productive discussions with Defense Minister Morimoto, an exceptional thinker and a tremendous partner to the United States. I should mention that Minister Morimoto will be arriving in Washington tomorrow, I believe.

We spoke, he and I, at length about the roles, missions, and capabilities effort. It is clear to me that we – just as we are thinking about our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, Japan is considering itself and its own role in the region.

Japan is assessing its role in regional peacekeeping operations and humanitarian/disaster response, and considering which capabilities it will need for the future. The Japanese are exploring forward stationing of their own forces on Guam, and looking to increase joint exercises.

When in Japan, I met with the sailors of the *USS Blue Ridge*, the Command Ship of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet, which is homeported in Yokosuka bay. And last year, in Operation Tomodachi, the men and women of the *USS Blue Ridge*, along with thousands of other servicemembers, worked with the Japanese Defense Forces to lessen the suffering caused by the earthquake and tsunami.

I mention that because our men and women in uniform are skilled at interacting with foreign cultures and societies. You don't find that skill everywhere in the world. We should be very proud of it, as proud as we are of our combat capabilities in our forces. I'm very proud of them.

Like Japan, the U.S.-South Korean alliance is a linchpin of our security in Northeast Asia. In South Korea, I held productive discussions with the South Korean government, visited the demilitarized zone and the Joint Security Area, and spoke with our troops down at Camp Humphreys.

There's nothing abstract about our rebalance in Korea. Our men and women and our allies have a mission; all you need to do is look north to see what they have to do. It's been a dynamic time on the Korean Peninsula, and our alliance provides a stabilizing and deterring presence. As we strengthen our own capabilities, we are looking to South Korea to strengthen theirs as well, while maintaining the interoperability we've enjoyed for the last 50 years.

Next, Thailand. In 2008, we celebrated, believe it not, the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our relations with Thailand. Last week, we pledged to examine new initiatives with Thailand in humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and I personally look forward to continuing my conversations with the Thai ministry of defense. Wonderful visit.

Last, India. India is also key part of our rebalance, and, we believe, to the broader security and prosperity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The U.S.-India relationship is global in scope, like the reach and influence of both our countries.

And our security interests converge: on maritime security, across the Indian Ocean region; in Afghanistan, where India has done so much for economic development and the Afghan security forces; and on broader regional issues, where we generally share long-term interests.

I went to India at the request of Secretary Panetta, and with a high-level delegation of U.S. technical and policy experts. Our purpose was to work with the Indians on developing a joint vision for U.S.-India defense cooperation. Take it up a level.

Through a series of meetings with Indian government and industry leaders, we agreed to create a continuing working mechanism, with the strategic engagement of the National Security Advisor, Menon, and myself, to implement that vision.

We believe that the only limit to our cooperation should be our independent strategic decisions – as any two states can differ – not bureaucratic obstacles or inefficient process – procedures. So we are deepening relationships between our defense organizations, from research to defense sales. We are moving beyond purely defense trade, and towards technology sharing, co-production. We are harnessing the potential of our private industries. On the U.S. side, we will be ready to adapt our sometimes inscrutable practices to make a match with India. We see tremendous opportunities here for the future, and I am committed to realizing them.

In conclusion, the United States has been a Pacific power for hundreds of years: since our first treaty, as I mentioned, with the Thais in 1833; since Commodore Matthew Perry landed his expedition near Edo, present day Tokyo, in July of 1853. And our engagement with the region has always been one of partnership and cooperation.

Our goal today remains the same. It is to ensure the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region so that every state in the region may prosper. We in the Pentagon are investing to sustain peace, and working with our partners every step of the way. Thank you very much.

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**Main Menu**

- [Home](#)
- [Today in DOD](#)
- [About DOD](#)
- [Leaders](#)
- [Organization](#)
- [Mission](#)
- [History](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Available jobs with DOD](#)
- [Top Issues](#)
- [Afghanistan](#)
- [Warrior Care](#)
- [Cyber Security](#)
- [Defense Strategic Guidance](#)
- [News](#)
- [DOD News Page](#)
- [Today in DOD](#)
- [News Releases](#)
- [Press Advisories](#)
- [News Transcripts](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Speeches](#)
- [Casualty Status \(PDF\)](#)
- [Contracts](#)
- [Casualty Releases](#)

- [Special Reports](#)
- [AFPS Articles](#)
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- [Home](#)
- [Today in DOD](#)
- [About DOD](#)
- [Top Issues](#)
- [News](#)
- [Photos/Videos](#)
- [Military/DoD Websites](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Inspector General](#)
- [Privacy & Security](#)
- [Link Disclaimer](#)
- [Recovery Act](#)
- [FOIA](#)
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