



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail December 15-21, 2025

Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific. Press the reply button for your feedback and comments.

Secretary Rubio Delivers End of Year Remarks, Signal Cooperation with China in 2026



Figure 1 US Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the press conference. Dec 19, 2025 /Image /state.gov

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's year-end remarks featured cooperation with China and prioritizing the Western Hemisphere in US foreign policy. He began with his comment on the national interest-based foreign policy. He said that based on America First, the US has recalibrated and re-examined its foreign policy to make America safer, stronger, and prosperous. Rubio clarified on a question on the recent China-Japan row that these tensions are pre-existing, and the US and Japan are close allies, and the US can continue with Japan with a "firm partnership" that can allow the US to find productive ways to engage with the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Government.

Japan's Prime Minister Sane Takaichi's remark over Taiwan that an attack on Taiwan could be a "survival threat" situation for Japan. The remark made China furious, and China asked Prime Minister Takaichi to retract her remark, as China views Taiwan as its breakaway province.

Secretary Rubio eschewing his position of China hawk signals a shift in the tone of and the potential of constructively working with China. He stated, "China is going to be – is and it will continue to be a rich and powerful country and a factor in geopolitics. We have to have relations with them. We have to deal with them. We have to find the things we are able to work together on."

It is important to note that President Trump, who engaged in meetings with both Takaichi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in late October, has not publicly articulated his stance on the escalating tensions between Japan and China. In contrast to his first term, President Trump, who intends to visit

China in April, has also refrained from making significant comments regarding Taiwan.

Furthermore, Rubio said that the United States and China are "mature enough" to see the tension now and in the future. And the United States is capable of working with China "without imperiling or in any way undermining our very firm commitment to our partners in the Indo-Pacific," including Australia, Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand, and others. [Read More](#)

US and South Korea Conduct Silent Shark 2025

The U.S. Navy and Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy completed the biennial theater anti-submarine warfare (TASW) exercise Silent Shark 2025 in Guam. The exercise featured at-sea and in-port events focused on submarine tracking and engagement tactics, improving theater-level undersea warfare capabilities vital to stability across the Western Pacific.

Silent Shark 2025 brought together a U.S. Navy fast-attack submarine, the ROK Navy's Dosan Ahn Changho-class submarine ROKS Ahn Mu (SS-085), and maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft from both nations. Conducted in the vicinity of Guam, the exercise featured at-sea and in-port events focused on submarine tracking and engagement tactics, improving theater-level undersea warfare capabilities vital to stability across the Western Pacific. [Read More](#)

Ahead of the ASEAN Meeting, Thailand and Cambodia continue violent clash

Thailand and Cambodia [continue to face off in border clashes](#) despite accepting the Kuala Lumpur Peace Accord. US President Donald Trump brokered peace between the two ASEAN countries, and the accord was signed by the leaders in his presence during his October visit to Malaysia. Additionally, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim played a crucial role in bringing the conflicting countries to the table of the peace agreement, as Malaysia is also the ASEAN Chair this year.

As the Special Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers is convened to address the current situation between Cambodia and Thailand in Kuala Lumpur on Dec. 22. As per press release, the Special Meeting reflects the commitment of ASEAN Member States to ASEAN unity and solidarity, as well as ASEAN Centrality in maintaining peace, security, stability and prosperity in this region, in accordance with the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

The US State Department also welcomes ASEAN's meeting and calls on both countries to end the hostilities. [Read More](#)

AUKUS Defense Ministers Meeting held in Pentagon

The United States Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles and United Kingdom Defense Secretary John Healey had their first meeting on AUKUS partnership. Defense leaders reviewed and discussed the ongoing progress on the AUKUS agreement.

Secretary John Healey acknowledged the spirit of cooperation and stated, "For the UK, AUKUS is quite simply the most important military collaboration for the last 70 years, since the US and the UK first agreed in this great city in 1958 to share nuclear technology." Furthermore, Additionally, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to revitalizing AUKUS with renewed determination, especially regarding its implementation.

The US Secretary of Defense emphasized the importance of achieving peace through strength in his remarks. Building on Hegseth's comments, the UK Secretary of Defense stated that in this new era, there is a need for more submarines in both the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions, along with greater burden-sharing among our closest allies, Australia and the UK. As the UK enhances its role in European security, all three nations must collaborate to protect our citizens and strengthen global deterrence. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

When did China do its first nuclear test?

- a. 1961
- c. 1962
- b. 1963
- d. 1964

Which city is historically known as Saigon?

- a. Ho Chi Minh City
- b. Hanoi
- c. Singapore City
- d. Kuala Lumpur

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Webinar on USNSS 2025 and Indo-Pacific, Dec. 23, 2025 at 8:00 AM ET
- ❖ Blogpost: Fighting and Winning Wars in the Cyber Age [Read here](#)
- ❖ Commentary: Lost Sky: The Grounded Airmen of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment [Read here](#)
- ❖ Commentary: Outcome of India-Russia Summit and the Implications for the Indo-Pacific [Read here](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for December 14 Newsletter Quiz

Q. How many countries have diplomatic relations with Taiwan?

- b. 12

Q. Which Southeast Asian nation has been facing ongoing civil conflict since 2021?

- d. Myanmar

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