



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

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Greetings Colleagues,

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

U.S. Approves Funds for the Pacific's Freely Associated States



Figure 1: IMAGE/ CRS /reports

The United States [enacted legislation](#) providing financial assistance for the Compacts of Free Association Freely Associated States (COFAs) of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. The legislation was signed by President Biden on March 9, 2024, aimed at providing long-term financial assistance to the islands. The bill allocates a total of \$7.1 billion to be disbursed over a 20-year period with the intent to help the islands address critical issues of climate change and support their development initiatives as the U.S. administration views these COFAs "the bedrock of the U.S. role in the Pacific."

Top officials from the Defense Department, State Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) [testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) hearing in Washington. In his testimony, Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Assistant Secretary at the State Department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said, "The Pacific Islands face significant challenges to their security and prosperity including from climate change and economic shocks, making the region more vulnerable to influence from the PRC." He further stated that financial assistance is crucial for maintaining stability, prosperity, and safeguarding defense interests in the Pacific Islands.

Ely S. Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, said, "The United States is a Pacific power, and our defense posture in the Pacific Islands countries, ranging in levels of presence from a permanent footprint to rotational forces is critical for U.S. military logistics, sustainment, and power projection." He highlighted the

expanding U.S. engagement not only in security aspects but in humanitarian, disaster relief, and people to people ties with these countries. As he further stated, "the Pacific Islands region draws strength from our longstanding partnerships, as well as the geographic proximity of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and other U.S. territories. territories."

Michael Schiffer, Assistant Administrator, USAID Bureau for Asia, testified that "The only way for us to tackle complex problems in the Indo-Pacific is to align the three Ds of diplomacy, defense, and development, drawing on our successful whole-of-government approach." He stated that USAID is pro-actively engaged with the most pressing challenges of climate, health security, good governance, human rights, and digital infrastructure, and the "investments in the Pacific Islands region are a critical part of the United States' vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific that contributes to greater global security and prosperity."

It is important to note that in recent years, the U.S. has revamped its relations with the Pacific countries in light of growing dominance of China in the region. The United States has deepened its relations by establishing new embassies, appointing the first-ever special envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum, diplomatic recognition, and signing the security agreement with Papua New Guinea. However, China's growing presence in the Pacific islands, through investments and military expansion, poses a potential flash point in the Pacific and in the wider Indo-Pacific region.

U.S. and Thailand Co-host IPEF Meeting in Bangkok

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity Framework (IPEF) ministerial meeting was [held](#) in Bangkok. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo, [joined](#) Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara along with the ministers from the 12 other IPEF partners.

Secretary Raimondo lauds the significant progress made since the negotiations for the proposed IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement, and the Agreement on IPEF in November 2023. She acknowledged the efforts and contributions of all countries involved in the negotiations and implementation of these agreements. She said, I continue to be amazed by the energy and collaborative spirit that each of our IPEF partners brings to the table and by how much we have accomplished together in such a short amount time.”

It is worth noting that IPEF was launched in May 2022 to promote economic cooperation in Indo-Pacific countries. It is based on four pillars: trade, supply chains, a fair economy, and a clean economy. However, the trade pillar has yet to achieve the desired momentum to attain its objectives. [Read More](#)

India Tests Agni-5 MIRV Missile

India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) [test launches](#) its maiden indigenously developed Agni-5 missile. This Inter Continental Ballistic Missile system consists of Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology and is able to fire multiple warheads. This successful test puts India in selected group that includes the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom who have MIRV capability. The test is a testament to India's technological prowess and its capability to develop advanced defense systems. This test is named Mission Divyastra. [Read More](#)

One Year Anniversary of the Pillar I of the AUKUS Agreement

On the first anniversary of the announcement of Pillar I of the AUKUS agreement, the House Foreign Affairs Committee [released](#) a statement stating that the sale and transfer of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines will further strengthen the already close defense cooperation between the U.S. and Australia. The acquisition of these submarines will also provide the U.S. with a critical base to help secure a free and open Indo-Pacific. Australia is making significant investments to host these submarines and is contributing billions of dollars to the U.S. industrial base. To ensure the success of Pillar I, the U.S. must

restore the purchase of a second Virginia-class submarine in the fiscal year 2025 budget.

South Korea Hosts Summit for Democracy

U.S. Secretary of State Mr. Blinken Delivered the opening remarks at the third democracy summit in Seoul, South Korea. He said, “We come from nations large and small; East and West; developed and developing economies. But we’re all united by a fierce conviction: that democracy is the single most powerful tool for unleashing human potential and delivering results for our people.” [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which country is hosting the Summit for Democracy?

- a. Japan
- b. South Korea
- c. India
- d. U.K.

Which social media Platform is deemed a threat to “national security and young American's mental health” by the U.S. Congress?

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram

c. Tik-Tok

d. X, formerly Twitter

Consortium Highlights

❖Podcast: **A Conversation with John Antal.** Consortium's military history team talks to the Author, Col. (Retd.) John Antal, *7 Seconds To Live and Next War.* [Listen Here.](#)

❖CIPR Views: **U.S. China Counternarcotics Cooperation Indicates Improved Relations?** A View by Consortium Intern Changyu 'Veronica' Hou. [Read Here.](#)

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