



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.

DOD Delivers More Forward Indo-Pacific Force Posture- Says Ely S. Ratner



Figure 1: Assistant Secretary of Indo-Pacific Affairs Committee Ely S Ratner / IMAGE/DoD

The U.S. DoD has supported Indo-Pacific allies and partners, established more forward force postures, and invested in maintaining the U.S. military's position as the most capable fighting force worldwide, said the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely S. Ratner in his [testimony](#) before the House Armed Services Committee.

As per his remarks, the United States has connected stronger than ever with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. In East Asia, with Japan and South Korea through historic Camp David 2023; in Southeast Asia, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, Young Leaders Program, and U.S.-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation; with Australia, AUSMIN and AUKUS Agreement; with India, through the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X); in Pacific, U.S.-PNG Defense cooperation and recently passed the Compact of Free Association Amendments (COFA) Act of 2024.

He stated, "The People's Republic of China remains the only country with the will and, increasingly, the capability to dominate the Indo-Pacific region and displace the United States as a global power." Furthermore, he said that China's "coercive activities in Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, East China Sea, Line of Actual Control with India, and beyond clearly demonstrate its revisionist intentions."

Nevertheless, the Assistant Secretary underscores that any potential conflict in the region is neither imminent nor inevitable. In addition, the top officials of the Department of Defense affirm their

receptiveness to initiating dialogue, which would mitigate risks and prevent any inadvertent escalation.

It is worth mentioning that the Biden-Harris administration has marked the [second anniversary](#) of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. According to the State Department, the U.S. has remarkably strengthened its defense, economic, and people-to-people relations in the wider Indo-Pacific region in the last two years. [Read More](#)

Bharat-Bhutan strengthen Ties, Prioritizing Regional Development

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bhutan on March 21-22, 2024. His visit [emphasized](#) India's "Neighborhood First Policy" and regional development. The Indian Prime Minister [addressed the Joint Session](#) of the Parliament of Bhutan in Thimphu. In his address, he applauded Bhutan's commitment to constitutional democracy despite the "global trend of expansion and centralization of power." He further stated that both countries endure a strong relationship based on a "shared cultural heritage."

India aims to boost infrastructure development and connectivity in the challenging terrain of the strategic Himalayas. During this visit, both countries signed MOUs to cooperate in various fields, including trade, digital connectivity, space, energy, climate, sports, and youth. PM

Modi also [announced](#) financial assistance of 100 billion Indian Rupees for Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan.

The visit is strategically significant in their mutual relationship and global power competition in the region. Both countries have been facing challenges due to China's increasing influence and assertiveness in the Himalayan border region. Bhutan disputes with China at Doklam territory, and India has an [unsettled boundary of 3488 KM](#) (nearly 2167 miles) with China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). India has strained relations with China since the Galwan face-off in 2020. India has invested in boosting regional connectivity in the border region to counter Chinese infrastructure development and tiny villages along the border area.

India and U.S. Launch Tiger TRIUMPH 2024

The bilateral Tri-Service between India and U.S. forces [began](#) at Vishakhapatnam, India's Eastern Naval Command Headquarters. This marks the third time that U.S. and Indian military forces will come together for Tiger TRIUMPH. The amphibious exercise represents a robust strategic partnership between both countries and aims to share best practices and Standard Operating Procedures in undertaking multinational HADR operations.

During a press conference, U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti emphasized the importance of the friendship and camaraderie between the two countries. He highlighted the need for the U.S. and India to integrate their militaries effectively so that they can work together seamlessly in times of emergency. He further stated that the partnership between the two countries has grown stronger since 2019.

The joint exercise will comprise of a Harbor Phase and a Sea Phase, enabling the U.S. and Indian forces to engage in collaborative operational maneuvers, command and control, and joint sustainment operations. [Read More](#)

India Sets for National Election 2024

India, the largest democracy in the world with 965 million registered voters, is set to hold its general election from April 19 to June 1, as [announced](#) by the Election Commission of India (ECI). The voting will take place in seven phases across 28 states and 8 Union Territories (UTs). The upcoming elections in India will witness a fierce battle between the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the coalition of regional opposition parties, India Alliance, which is led by the Congress Party.

The two sides have been campaigning aggressively, highlighting their respective agendas and achievements, and trying to win the

support of the electorate. The outcome of the elections will determine who will form the government and lead India in the coming years. This is the 18th Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Parliament) election that will be contested for 543 seats and voter will vote directly to elect their representatives. India has constitutional democracy with Parliamentary system of government. The first general elections in India were held in 1951-52. [Read More](#)

Micronesia President Visits Washington

U.S. Defense Secretary Austin [welcomed](#) Micronesian President Wesley Simina to the Pentagon. In his speech, Secretary Austin emphasized the significance of the current moment in the relationship between the United States and Micronesia. According to him, this is a historic time for the two nations as the United States has recently renewed its defense and economic ties with Micronesia. It is worth noting that the U.S. has [recently approved funds](#) for Compacts of Free Association Freely Associated States (COFAs) of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. Secretary stated that “Renewing the Compacts was a landmark achievement, and it will help advance our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.” [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which Southeast Asian countries President resigned this week?

- a. Singapore
- b. Vietnam
- c. Laos
- d. Malaysia

Which country is auctioning off the house of a democratic leader?

- a. Afghanistan
- b. Vietnam
- c. Cambodia
- d. Myanmar

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Vodcast: **Post-Vietnam War Peace building & Reconciliation: A Path to Regional Stability**, with Mr. Jan Barry, Vietnam War Veteran and Peace Activist Mr. James A. Kurtz, Vietnam War Veteran and Active Member of Veterans of Foreign Wars, facilitated by Consortium Spring Intern Van Anh and coordinated by Indu Saxena. [Watch Here](#)
- ❖ CIPR Views **Prabowo's Presidency: What it Means for Indonesia's Future and the Indo-Pacific**. [Read Here](#).

