



Consortium of Indo-Pacific

Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail March 17-23, 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.

U.S. Defense Secretary to Visit Indo-Pacific Countries

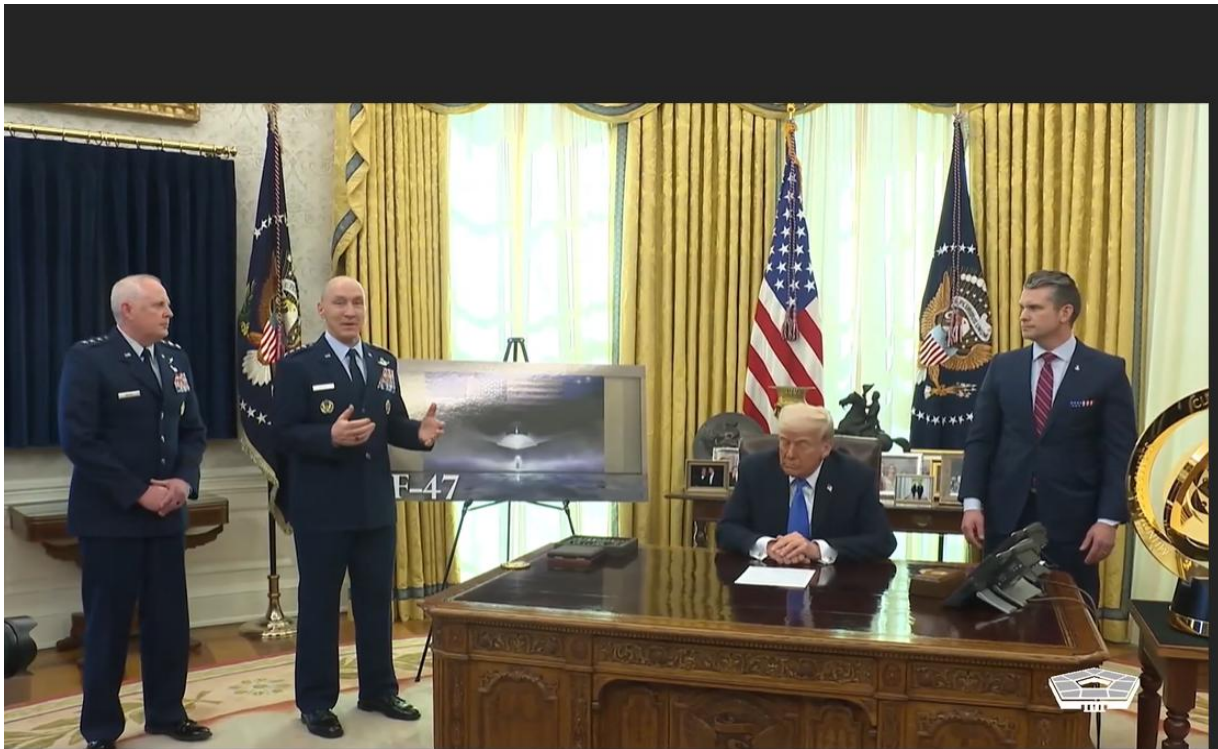


Figure 1: President Donald J. Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth brief the media at the White House, March 21, 2025. IMAGE / defense.gov

At the outset of his first visit to the Indo-Pacific, [U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth will Visit Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and the Philippines](#). He will hold bilateral meetings with U.S. military officials and civilian leaders to strengthen the U.S. alliance and partnership in the region. After his first stop, Oahu, Hawaii, he will head to Guam, a strategically located U.S. military base in the Pacific. On his travel to the Philippines, he will advance security objectives with Philippine leaders and meet with U.S. and Philippine forces. In Japan, Hegseth will participate in a ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. The Chief Pentagon spokesperson said, "These engagements will drive ongoing efforts to strengthen our alliances and partnerships toward our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific."

It is important to highlight that Hegseth's visit comes at a time of increasing tension in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait due to the coercive maneuvers of the Chinese Coast Guard on the disputed islands.

Notably, the Trump administration advocates "peace through strength" and aims to strengthen defense capabilities and interoperability with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Last Friday, at President Donald Trump's [press briefing](#) at the Oval Office, Hegseth announced the production of the new sixth-generation F-47 Fighter Jet designed by unparalleled drone technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to establish U.S. Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD). Speaking to the press, Secretary Hegseth said, "[The F-47] sends a very direct, clear message to our allies that we're not going anywhere and to

our enemies that we can, and we will, be able to project power around the globe, unimpeded, for generations to come."

The flurry of visits, including U.S. Intelligence Chief Tulsi Gabbard's trip to Japan, Thailand, and India and the forthcoming visit of Vice President J.D. Vance, shows the unwavering support and commitment to the Indo-Pacific region.

Earlier, just after the President's inauguration day, U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, hosted the Quad foreign ministers meeting reaffirming the U.S. commitment to establish a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

U.S. Intelligence Chief Visits Indo-Pacific Countries

U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Tulsi Gabbard visited Hawaii, Japan, Thailand, and India this week. During her visit she met with the country's top intelligence officials and diplomats to "strengthen existing partnerships and intelligence collaboration." As per the Office of DNI "Having been born and raised in the Indo-Pacific region, DNI Gabbard brought a nuanced understanding of the area's crucial partnerships and complex challenges as she explored opportunities to advance President Trump's America First policies across the Indo-Pacific."

In India, she held multiple meetings including with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's Defense Minister Mr. Rajnath Singh, and National

Security Advisor Mr. Ajit Doval. The visit highlights strong U.S.-India defense and security partnership that is bolstered by the leadership of and friendship between Prime Minister Modi and President Donald Trump. Her engagements in India focused on intelligence-sharing, defense, counterterrorism, and transnational threats. Furthermore, she addressed the multinational conference in India, “Raisina Dialogue”, where she remarked on the collective effort to drive toward President Trump's goals of a peaceful, free, secure, and prosperous society. [Read More](#)

Japan Hosts Foreign Ministers of China, and South Korea for Trilateral Meeting

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. IWAYA Takeshi, held a Japan-China-South Korea Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with H.E. Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, and Cho Tae-yul, the Republic of Korea. The three Ministers concurred in promoting a “future-oriented cooperation” to deal with the common challenges. They expressed their concern on North Korea’s missile program and also exchanged their views on the situation in Ukraine.

Japan and South Korea counterparts also held a bilateral meeting and reiterated their commitment to strengthen the cooperation among Japan, the ROK and the U.S., as the “global situation enters a period of upheaval.” Both

leaders expressed their concern over North Korea's nuclear and missile activities, the advancement of Russia-North Korea military cooperation, and North Korea's malicious cyber activities, including cryptocurrency thefts, that fund its nuclear and missile programs. It is worth noting that North Korea launched multiple ballistic missiles in response to the U.S.-ROK joint military exercise last week. [Read More](#)

USINDOPACOM Commander Visits Sri Lanka

Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Adm. Samuel J. Paparo visited Sri Lanka from March 19-22 and held multiple meetings and engagements including the President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath, Deputy Minister of Defense Maj. Gen. (retired) Aruna Jayasekara, and other top defense officials. During his trip to Colombo he discussed shared security challenges, collaboration on maritime domain awareness, disaster response, and military cooperation.

Paparo visited Sri Lanka Navy Ship (SLNS) *Vijayabahu*, that is one of three former U.S. Coast Guard cutters transferred to the Sri Lanka Navy which are now being used to combat transnational crime, support humanitarian and disaster response efforts, and uphold Sri Lanka's sovereignty in the Indo-Pacific. A fourth cutter is expected to be delivered in early 2026.

Further, in October 2024, the U.S. also transferred a Beechcraft King Air maritime patrol aircraft to provide key capabilities for the Sri Lanka Air Force

and Navy to patrol its own waters, counter maritime threats, and secure vital trade routes in the Indian Ocean.

Notably, Sri Lanka's previous governments had strong economic and security relations with China and received huge financial assistance and loans from China. As a result of not paying these debts, China owns Sri Lanka's Hambantota port on a 99-year lease. Hambantota port is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, now a site of Chinese surveillance and spy ships. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines was recently arrested by the International Criminal Court (ICC). What position did he hold?

- a. President
- b. Defense Minister
- c. Prime Minister
- d. Leader of Opposition

Which country does the U.S. designate "sensitive country" status?

- a. South Korea
 - b. Pakistan
 - c. China
 - d. Thailand
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Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Podcast on **U.S.-Latin America Relations and Implication for the Indo-Pacific** March 20th, 2025, 6:00 PM EST. [Listen Here](#)
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Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for the March 16th Newsletter Quiz

Which is the top manufacturing country in the Indo-Pacific?

a. China

Which country's officials are sanctioned by the U.S. in response to the deportation of Uyghurs to China?

c. Thailand

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