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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. DEFSEC Emphasize Strengthening Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific



Figure 1: U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at Security Conference in Singapore on May31,2025

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth presented the [Vision of the Indo-Pacific](#) in Singapore last week. He stated that the U.S.'s strong presence and readiness to stand by its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific is a reality. The practical approach of working with ASEAN and other Indo-Pacific Partners for mutual benefit and shared purpose aligns the interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners with national interests. He reiterated President Trump's commitment to achieving peace through strength, which requires restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. Hegseth alluded to the fact that the U.S. military's focus is reorienting toward deterring aggression from Communist China.

He called upon the allies to strengthen their defense capabilities and push for an increase in defense spending for collective defense. "Ultimately a strong, resolute and capable network of allies and partners is our key strategic advantage," he said. "China envies what we have together, and it sees what we can collectively bring to bear on defense, but it's up to all of us to ensure that we live up to that potential by investing." He further stated that China is utilizing hybrid warfare and gray-zone tactics in the strategic and resource-rich region. He stressed on military-industrial cooperation with allies and partners and to gain the strategic advantage to prevent the "Imminent threat" of China.

Hegseth warns countries who are economically dependent on China can be risky. He stated, "Economic dependence on China only deepens their malign

influence and complicates our defense decision space during times of tension.”

The Southeast Asian countries have endeavored to maintain a delicate balance in their relations with both the United States and China over the years. ASEAN countries depend on Beijing for trade and commerce and have their military cooperation with the United States.

As Tensions between the U.S. and China have been brewing, particularly with the tariff measures and the new visa policy for Chinese students who enroll in critical courses in U.S. universities. The ASEAN countries have been exerting tremendous pressure and face challenges on the issues of tariffs and a sustainable environment. It is important to mention that during the recent ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN countries emphasized the importance of unity within the organization and discussed ways to enhance ASEAN's role in contributing to global development.

Bangladesh Former Prime Minister Charged by Special Tribunal

In a significant development in Bangladesh's political landscape, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been formally charged with crimes against humanity by a special tribunal in Dhaka, stemming from the mass uprising in August 2024 that led to her ouster. Hasina and two others have been charged with "crimes against humanity" for their alleged roles in the brutal crackdown on student protesters. The special tribunal has ordered Hasina to appear before it by June 16, 2025.

The current interim government is led by Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, who took office as Chief Adviser shortly after Hasina's resignation. The interim government has formally sought Hasina's extradition from India to face these charges in Bangladesh. [Read More](#)

Pacific Island Countries Build Wall to Prevent Sea Rising

Pacific Island countries have been facing the risk of climate change and rising seas. Kiribati, Tonga, Solomon Islands, and Fiji have been building seawalls in some of its populated areas. Many are low-lying atolls or small islands just meters above the current sea level. Rising sea levels directly threaten land, infrastructure, and freshwater sources. Australia, New Zealand, and international organizations have been supporting the projects. However, observers state that making seawalls is a costly and short-term solution to the problem. [Read More](#)

French President Warns of Double Standard in the Conflicts

French President Emmanuel Macron addressed the security dialogue in Singapore. In his remarks he made a case of France an Indo-Pacific country and a reliable partner in the region mentioning its overseas territories French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and others. He emphasized strategic autonomy and draws a similarity between European Union and ASEAN countries, encouraged them to uphold it as the tension grows in the Indo-Pacific. He showed his

dissatisfaction with the U.S. policies and criticized of applying double standard in the conflicts of other part of the world. He said, “we want to cooperate, but we do not want to depend. We want to cooperate, but we do not want to be instructed on a daily basis what is allowed, what is not allowed, and how our life will change because of the decision of a single person.”

The European Union (EU) does not have a military component as a hard power security actor, and the ASEAN countries are eager to understand the EU's role regarding China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, a region where several Southeast Asian nations have disputes with China.

Macron calls on forming a new alliance of Europe and Asia, a coalition of independence, to provide sustainable growth and to stabilize open and rule-based order. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

When was the battle of Bukit Timah took place?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| a. 1942 | c. 1944 |
| b. 1965 | d. 1967 |

What is the capital of Tibet?

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a. Kathmandu | c. Lhasa |
| b. Thimphu | d. Shigatse |

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Podcast: **North Korea's Missile Program and Security in the Korean Peninsula**, May 14, 6:30 PM EDT. [Listen Here](#)
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Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for May 25 Newsletter Quiz

Q. Which country overtook Japan to become the 4th largest economy in the world?

c. India

Q. Lee Kuan Yew was the Prime Minister of which country?

a. Singapore

Contributions: Indu Saxena