



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail July 7-13, 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.

Sec Rubio's First Indo-Pacific Trip, Assures Southeast Asian Countries Amid Rivalry with China



Figure 1: Sec. Marco Rubio participates in US-ASEAN Summit in Malaysia /Image /instagram.com/secrubio/

US Secretary Marco Rubio have made his maiden visit to Southeast Asia to participate in the U.S.-ASEAN Foreign Ministers Summit. Rubio assures ASEAN countries of America's continued presence, engagement, and cooperation in the region, viewing China as the biggest threat to American interests in the region. It is worth noting that ASEAN countries face challenges in managing high tariffs imposed by US President Trump and express concern about the US engagement in the region. Further, Rubio's visit coincides with the countries receiving tariff letters, which are set to take effect on August 1, including Malaysia, 25 percent; Thailand and Cambodia, 36 percent; Indonesia, 30 percent; Laos and Myanmar, 40 percent.

Rubio's meeting with his Southeast Asian counterparts underscores the urgency of continued engagement and revitalizes US-ASEAN relations. He rejects the notion that the US is abandoning the region, while emphasizing the importance of advancing cooperation, including [signing a civil-nuclear cooperation agreement](#) with Malaysia and Thailand. He emphasized the growing strategic importance of the region and [stated](#) that the “history of the 21st Century will largely be written in this region.” He also supported the effort of full membership of Timor-Leste in the ASEAN group which has been an Observer member state since 2017.

US intends to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN in the key focus areas of cybersecurity, digital economy, defense cooperation, and energy. US-ASEAN

elevates its relationship with the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2022. To strengthen the US-ASEAN partnership, President Trump is anticipated to attend the upcoming ASEAN Leaders Summit in October.

On the sidelines of the US-ASEAN FM's meeting, Sec. Rubio met with Japan and South Korean counterparts for a trilateral summit. He stated "the indispensable trilateral partnership" with East Asian countries. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to bolstering defense and deterrence and to the complete denuclearization of North Korea. They also stressed that the alliance cooperation is critical to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. They also welcomed the further institutionalization of trilateral collaboration.

Rubio also met with his Chinese and Russian counterparts during the ASEAN Ministerial summit in Malaysia.

US and Allies launch Military Drill in Pacific

US Pacific Air Forces, in collaboration with US allies and partners, launched Resolute Force Pacific (REFORPAC) 2025, marking the largest contingency response exercise ever conducted by the US Air Force in the Indo-Pacific region. REFORPAC will include over 300 aircraft and involve U.S. Air Force personnel, partner nations, and other U.S. military branches. The exercise is designed to show PACAF's capacity to deliver and maintain air power with regional allies in "contested environments."

As per report, during the REFORPAC 2025, PACAF will conduct its most comprehensive contingency-response exercise, training military members to maintain readiness and execute missions under stress. The exercise will take place in multiple locations in the Pacific, including Hawaii, Guam, Japan and international airspace.

Col. Paul Davidson, commander of the 35th Fighter Wing, stated, "We have recently established the new 35th Munitions Squadron, merged our fighter squadrons into one cohesive unit, and begun sharing our resources with participating REFORPAC units. Together with our Japanese allies, we are testing our combined capabilities to defend Japan from any adversary." [Read More](#)

Australian Prime Minister Kicks Off Six-Day visit to China

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is on a six-day trip to China. Albanese [seeks to expand trade and tourism](#) between Australia and China. This will be the second visit of the Australian Premier since he was first elected in 2022. Unlike his predecessor, the conservative government, Albanese has maintained good relations with China. Albanese is set to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and other top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

It is worth noting that US President Trump's push for tariffs and defense spending could be a potential reason for Australia to continue the cordial relations with Xi Jinping. Furthermore, US defense officials are reviewing the

AUKUS Pact and may consider additional measures to strengthen collective defense among allies. [Read More](#)

US and Allies Release Statement on the Anniversary of 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea

The ninth Anniversary of the 2016 Arbitral Award coincides with the ASEAN Ministerial and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Kuala Lumpur, underscoring its continued importance in the South China Sea dispute. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Lazaro, [reiterated at the ARF](#) that the "Award remains a cornerstone of the Philippine Maritime Policy, along with the 1982 UNCLOS." Additionally, the Secretary noted that the Award provides a framework for how maritime matters and concerns in the South China Sea can be addressed.

Also, Japan Foreign Minister Iwaya Takeshi released a statement emphasizing the importance of the tribunal ruling, which is "final and legally binding on the parties to the disputes." He stated, "Japan strongly opposes these attempts, which threaten regional peace and stability. On this occasion, Japan also reiterates its serious concern over repeated actions that obstruct the freedom of navigation and overflight, as well as increase regional tensions, including dangerous actions against Filipino and other countries' vessels and aircraft."

In a press statement, the United States calls on China to abide by the 2016 arbitral ruling and to cease its dangerous and destabilizing conduct.

[Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Where is Misawa Air Base located?

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| a. United States | c. Japan |
| b. Australia | d. South Korea |

Which country will hold the ASEAN Chair in 2026?

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| a. Singapore | c. Philippines |
| b. Cambodia | d. Laos |
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Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Upcoming Event: US-Japan Alliance, August 22, 9:30 EST
 - ❖ Blogpost: [Russia and Ceasefire: Lessons from 125 Years](#) Read Here.
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Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for July 6 Newsletter Quiz

Q. Which region is known as "the roof of the world"?

d. Tibet

Q. What document did America sign on July 4, 1776?

b. Declaration of Independence

Contributions: Indu Saxena