



FACT SHEET

SECRETARY AUSTIN'S NINTH TRIP TO THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's ninth trip to the Indo-Pacific comes at a time when the Department of Defense continues to do more than ever alongside allies and partners to deliver on a shared regional vision of peace, stability, and prosperity.

Each of the Secretary's stops — in India, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Indonesia — will underscore the depth of the longstanding U.S. commitment to strengthening the Indo-Pacific's dynamic security architecture. Throughout 2023, the United States has continued delivering groundbreaking achievements for peace, stability, and deterrence in a free and open Indo-Pacific, including by:

STRENGTHENING ALLY AND PARTNER CAPABILITIES

The United States is supporting its regional allies and partners as they contribute to peace, stability, and deterrence, including by:

- ▶ **Bolstering India's defense modernization plans through the co-development and co-production of major defense platforms**, including by advancing the principles outlined in the Roadmap for U.S.-India Defense Industrial Cooperation.
- ▶ **Driving defense technology innovation through the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)** by engaging investors to harness private capital, leading a new Education Series for defense start-ups, and launching the first two joint challenges to enable start-ups in both countries to develop technological solutions for shared defense issues.
- ▶ **Strengthening deterrence and modernizing the U.S.-ROK Alliance** through regular bilateral consultations, exercises, and asset deployments to ensure that peace and stability are maintained on the Korean Peninsula and in the region.
- ▶ **Continuing to facilitate the ROK's acquisition of the capabilities necessary to lead the combined defense**, as specified under the U.S.-ROK Conditions-Based OPCON Transition Plan.
- ▶ **Coordinating closely with the Philippines on defense modernization**, including through the expeditious conclusion of a Security Sector Assistance Roadmap, to identify investments in priority capability areas over the next five years that will bolster combined deterrence, improve capacity to resist coercion, and enhance interoperability.
- ▶ **Delivering greater maritime transparency through the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** by enhancing partners' abilities to monitor and police their waters.
- ▶ **Investing more than \$475 million since 2016 via the Maritime Security Initiative**, which provides a maritime common operating picture and enhances the maritime operational capabilities of seven ASEAN Member States.

NETWORKING ALLIES AND PARTNERS

The United States is joining together with Indo-Pacific allies and partners in ways that strengthen peace and security across the region, including through trilateral and multilateral security efforts with:

- ▶ **Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK)**, cooperating more deeply than ever following President Biden, President Yoon, and Prime Minister Kishida’s summit at Camp David. The three countries agreed to enhance trilateral defense exercises, strengthen interoperability, and improve information-sharing on the nuclear and missile threats posed by the DPRK.
- ▶ **The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, advancing engagement with ADMM-Plus through capacity-building programs and training courses. This includes providing training to support the incorporation of women, peace, and security principles into regional security planning and operations, as well as launching an emerging leaders fellowship program that will provide support, mentorship, and professional development to young civilian and defense leaders in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▶ **Australia, India, and Japan (“the Quad”)**, deepening interoperability and coordination through the annual Exercise MALABAR, and bringing greater transparency to the region by leveraging cutting-edge technology to provide near-real-time data and analysis of maritime activities in partners’ territorial waters through the IPMDA.
- ▶ **Partners across the Indo-Pacific region**, expanding the scope and complexity of our exercises, advancing our science and technology cooperation, and supporting efforts to deepen our force posture cooperation.

OPERATING TOGETHER ACROSS THE INDO-PACIFIC

The United States is participating in combined operations that enhance interoperability, boost deterrence, and demonstrate our shared resolve against coercive behavior, including:

- ▶ **Exercise BALIKATAN with the Philippines**, which featured more than 17,600 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military, as well as Australian forces, and – for the first time ever – featured littoral live fire and cyber defense elements to support deeper interoperability between the United States and the Philippines.
- ▶ **Exercise PACIFIC VANGUARD with the ROK, Japan, and Australia**, which strengthened interoperability at sea by bringing together over 2,000 naval forces from the United States and three of its closest allies.
- ▶ **Exercise SUPER GARUDA SHIELD with Indonesia and over 12 nations represented**, which featured more than 4,000 servicemembers who participated in amphibious and airborne operations training, command and control simulation, academic exchanges, and professional development exercises.
- ▶ **Exercise COBRA GOLD co-sponsored with Thailand**, which not only saw a return to pre-pandemic levels of participation by dozens of countries – but also the largest U.S. contingent in a decade.
- ▶ **Exercise YUDH ABHYAS with India**, which was a bilateral Army exercise held this year in Alaska to enhance interoperability in high-altitude areas and extreme climates through tactical drills, using a U.N. peacekeeping scenario.
- ▶ **Exercise MALABAR with India, Japan, and Australia**, hosted in Australia for the first time this year, which facilitated high-end training in anti-submarine exercises, communications, at-sea replenishment of ships, and air defense.