

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary Camille Dawson**

**“Resourcing U.S. Priorities in the Indo-Pacific FY23 Budget”**

**Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee**

**on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia, and Nonproliferation**

**June 8, 2023**

Chairman Bera, Ranking Member Chabot, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify regarding the President’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget request for the Indo-Pacific.

The United States is an Indo-Pacific nation. Our interests are inextricably tied to the region and decades ahead, no other region will be as pivotal to the future of the United States and the world as the Indo-Pacific. The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC’s) coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific Strategy, released in February, is the Biden-Harris Administration’s positive vision for what we hope to achieve in the region.

In support of the Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy, the President’s FY 2023 budget request includes a diplomatic engagement budget of \$472 million and a foreign assistance budget of \$1.15 billion for East Asia and the Pacific. This represents a 10 percent increase from the President’s FY 2022 request.

I’d like to provide a brief overview of how the President’s Budget directly supports the five pillars of the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

First, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs is working alongside SCA, USAID, and with other interagency partners to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific. We have seen increasing challenges to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific—all of which threaten stability, transparency, and prosperity.

To counter these trends, the FY 2023 Budget Request for EAP will support programs that advance democratic governance, civil society, and freedom of press; support human rights; and strengthen the rules-based international order to ensure Indo-Pacific governments can make choices free of manipulation and coercion.

The budget request builds on past success. For example, we have strengthened anti-corruption efforts and fiscal transparency in the region as a founding member of the Global Anti-Corruption Consortium (GACC).

Across the region, we have supported media literacy programs to assist journalists and strengthen their capacity to detect and counter disinformation in the Indo-Pacific.

Second, we are building connections in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. America's network of alliances and partnerships is our greatest strength. The President's Budget supports our bilateral relationships with countries across the region and also strengthens our engagement with regional groupings and institutions including ASEAN, the Quad, the Pacific Islands Forum, the Mekong-U.S. Partnership, and APEC to build capacity and address regional challenges, from climate resilience to digital connectivity to regional security.

A prime example of this is the U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership. Through this partnership, our programs aim to advance sustainable solutions to improve transportation, water and resource reuse, and health system capacity for cities in the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN).

Building connections also requires us to be physically present. We have announced plans to open an Embassy in Honiara and are significantly increasing our diplomatic presence around the region.

Third, we are driving Indo-Pacific prosperity. The Indo-Pacific is home to more than half the global population and 60 percent of the global economy—which means the prosperity of the American people is linked to the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) is part of President Biden's commitment to putting workers at the center of our economic and foreign policy while strengthening our ties with allies and partners to increase our shared prosperity and deepen our economic cooperation.

The President's Budget will advance regional prosperity by promoting fair and resilient trade and investment, labor rights, basic and advanced education, and economic sustainability through private sector-led growth, creating new markets and trade and investment opportunities in the United States. In the Pacific, the request will ensure that we will continue to be an indispensable partner to the region. In Papua New Guinea, for example, the United States, through USAID in coordination with the interagency, is working together with Australia, Japan, and New Zealand through the Electrification Partnership infrastructure project to connect 70 percent of the population to electricity by the year 2030. Also, through USAID, we are contributing support for an undersea cable spur in Palau, which will expand secure, high-speed communications.

Fourth, we are bolstering Indo-Pacific security. Recognizing that security is necessary to enable prosperity, the President's Budget will support a network of security partners and allies to uphold international law, deter aggression, and build the capacity of Indo-Pacific partners to enable them to respond to both domestic and transnational security threats, and prevent and resolve conflicts. This includes enhancing coordination with regional and global partners in support of Taiwan's security and cross-Strait stability.

Funding for cybersecurity capacity building has allowed the United States to assist Thailand in establishing their first National Cybersecurity Agency, in line with international best practices. U.S. assistance has also deepened U.S.-Vietnam cooperation to advance regional security and enable Vietnamese security forces, including the Coast Guard, to monitor the maritime domain.

Fifth, we are building regional resilience. America's security depends on working with our allies and partners to address shared challenges. The President's budget supports COVID-19 recovery to spur economic growth in a region vital to U.S. prosperity and supports the development of more robust health systems to withstand future strains on public health infrastructure.

Foreign assistance will also promote energy and climate resilience through decarbonization, clean-energy investment, environmental preservation, sustainability, and climate infrastructure efforts. For example, the Mekong Dam Monitor provides free, publicly accessible satellite data on dam operations and reservoir water levels, used by local policy makers and communities alike to plan economic activities and adjust to the impacts of climate change and infrastructure development along the Mekong River basin.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.