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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
“America as a Pacific Power: Challenges and Opportunities in Asia”
April 28, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Some of the world’s most dangerous flashpoints are in Asia, as are some of our closest allies. These are critical relationships to foster. Deputy Secretary of State Blinken is just back from the region. We welcome him to the Committee. America is a Pacific power, and we must act like one.

This Committee has played a leading role shaping U.S. policy toward Asia. We took the lead imposing tough sanctions on North Korea; highlighting human rights in Southeast Asia; and strengthening our alliances with democracies in the region.

Since North Korea’s January nuclear test – its fourth – Pyongyang’s belligerence has only increased. This rogue regime poses a direct threat to the United States. Last weekend it launched a missile from a submarine; reports suggest another nuclear test could be on the horizon. The good news is that earlier this year the President signed into law sanctions legislation this Committee pushed to aggressively target North Korea’s cash. This strong, bipartisan measure helped the Administration get a sweeping U.N. Security Council sanctions resolution.

So the Administration has the tools it needs to tackle the North Korean threat and keep Americans safe. But will it use them? A recent U.N. report found several countries still pushing cash to Kim through prohibited arms deals. They must be pressed to stop. And the Administration must designate more companies, banks and individuals. North Korea is a human rights house of horrors. So how is it that not *one* North Korea official has been sanctioned specifically for human rights abuses?

Looking south, the Beijing government continues its aggressive push into the South China Sea with land reclamation and the militarization of contested islands. Our allies are increasingly alarmed. And while these disputes must be resolved peacefully, that will be best done with a policy of strength, resolve and clarity - rejecting Beijing’s apparent moves toward de facto control over international shipping lanes.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam’s poor human rights record continues. Bloggers and journalists are harassed and jailed. When he travels to Vietnam next month, President Obama could send a clear and unequivocal message to the communist government and firmly stand by that country’s brave dissidents, unlike he did in Cuba. I would also urge the President to stress the importance of restoring the Bien Hoa Military cemetery, the resting place of many South Vietnamese soldiers that fought to preserve their freedom, a cause especially important to the Vietnamese American community.

And while there is hope for the new government in Burma, it must now perform for all Burmese, including the Rohingya population. I hope to hear that we are making the protection of this persecuted minority one of our priorities.

Finally, no discussion of Asia is complete without mentioning its dynamic economies. We must continue efforts to open new markets for our businesses and build the capacity of tomorrow's trade partners. Trade can play a key role in strengthening U.S. alliances.

The United States has played a critical role in Asia – our power and presence helped shape the economic miracles in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – all vibrant democracies today. But that proud legacy has to be protected through constant vigilance and engagement.

I know turn to the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.