H. R. 1632

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2019

Mrs. Wagner (for herself, Mr. Castro of Texas, and Mr. Yoho) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To require a strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Southeast Asia Strategy Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Southeast Asia is the fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific region and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional intergovern-
mental organization, remains the centerpiece of the
Indo-Pacific region’s architecture.

(2) The United States has reaffirmed that the
security and sovereignty of its Southeast Asian allies
and partners, including a strong, independent
ASEAN, remain vital to the security, prosperity, and
stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

(3) The United States has committed to rein-
vigorating its longstanding security alliances with
the Philippines and Thailand, as well as bolstering
partnerships with a range of Southeast Asian na-
tions.

(4) A central element of United States strategy
for the Indo-Pacific region is strengthening United
States alliances and partnerships and working with
and through allies and partners to address common
challenges and to enhance shared capabilities.

(5) ASEAN member states are critical United
States security partners in preventing violent extre-
mism, protecting the freedom and openness of the
maritime domain, engaging in global peacekeeping
operations, and preventing the trafficking of weap-
ons of mass destruction.

(6) ASEAN member states are vital to the
prosperity of the United States economy and exports
to ASEAN economies support more than 500,000 jobs in the United States.

(7) The United States and ASEAN have recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of their ties and established a new strategic partnership that will enhance cooperation across the economic, political-security, and people-to-people pillars of the relationship.

SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to—

(1) cooperate more closely with the ASEAN and ASEAN member states in the interest of promoting peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region;

(2) establish and communicate a comprehensive and focused strategy that articulates the role and importance of Southeast Asia to the United States, the value of the United States-ASEAN relationship, the mutual interests of both parties, and the concrete and material benefits all nations derive from strong United States engagement and leadership in Southeast Asia; and

(3) affirm the importance of ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving regional architecture of the Indo-Pacific region.
SEC. 4. STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ASEAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Defense, shall develop and submit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive and focused multi-year strategy for engagement with Southeast Asia and ASEAN.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An identification of enduring United States interests in Southeast Asia and efforts to bolster the effectiveness of ASEAN as an independent and unified regional leader.

(2) An identification of—

(A) the future of Southeast Asian alliances, partnerships, and multilateral engagements, including efforts to expand security interoperability and economic connectivity, and build networks of allies and partners with other United States partners in the Indo-Pacific region; and

(B) partners outside ASEAN that support United States interests in Southeast Asia, such as an ASEAN-centered and rules-based order,
including multilateral efforts to coordinate engagement with ASEAN.

(3) A list of ongoing and planned initiatives and programs to strengthen the United States partnership with Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN through trade, investment, energy, and economic and political diplomacy in Southeast Asia and through development and capacity building, including efforts to improve the environment for private sector-led economic development, public-private partnerships, infrastructure development, development of the digital economy and technology, and other initiatives relating to education, disaster management, and public health.

(4) An assessment of ongoing and planned initiatives to directly assist Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN in developing institutional capabilities, including with respect to enforcing international law and sanctions, and initiatives to cooperate with ASEAN as an institution in these areas.

(5) An assessment of ongoing and planned efforts to promote and engage with Southeast Asian countries on human rights and democracy, to strengthen the rule of law, civil society, and trans-
parent governance, and to protect the integrity of
elections and personal data from cyber threats.

(6) An assessment of ongoing and planned se-
curity cooperation, assistance, and training initia-
tives within Southeast Asian countries, including—

(A) maritime security and political initia-
tives for protecting the maritime commons and
supporting international law and freedom of
navigation in the South China Sea; and

(B) efforts to combat terrorism, human
trafficking, piracy, and illegal fishing, and pro-
mote more open, reliable routes for trade.

(7) An assessment of ongoing and planned
funding for relevant United States Government de-
partments and agencies on the implementation of
initiatives highlighted in the strategy and an identi-
fication of additional strategic, management, proce-
dural, legal, personnel, and funding resources needed
to fully implement the strategy.

(c) UPDATES TO STRATEGY.—The Secretary of
State, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce and
the Secretary of Defense, shall submit to the appropriate
congressional committees an updated strategy under sub-
section (a) for each of the four years following the year
in which the initial strategy is submitted under subsection (a).

(d) **Appropriate Congressional Committees Defined.**—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.