

**TESTIMONY FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY SHERMAN
“RESTORING AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IN THE INDO-PACIFIC”
HEARING OF THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

APRIL 6, 2022

Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about the Biden Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Even as we work every day, in lockstep with our Allies and partners, to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and to impose severe, coordinated costs and consequences on Russian President Vladimir Putin and his enablers, we are also continuing to advance our foreign policy priorities in every region of the world through sustained diplomatic engagement.

The United States is a proud Indo-Pacific nation. Our future is entwined more closely with the Indo-Pacific than with any other part of the world. The Indo-Pacific is the fastest-growing region on Earth. And it will be decisive to addressing virtually every priority issue—from promoting strong economic growth, to combating the climate crisis, to strengthening global health security, to upholding the rules-based international order.

Our vision—a vision we share with our Allies and partners across the region—is to ensure the Indo-Pacific remains free and open, and becomes more interconnected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.

These priorities are all reflected in the five pillars of the Indo-Pacific Strategy released by the White House in February.

First, advancing 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 combat these trends, we are working to build the capacity of Indo-Pacific nations and regional institutions to build strong civil societies, combat corruption and promote good governance, strengthen democratic systems, and promote human rights and a free and independent press.

We are also working to uphold and strengthen the rules-based international order, so that nations in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere can make decisions free from coercion; ideas and people can flow freely; problems are dealt with openly and according to a transparent set of rules; and the seas and skies are governed according to international law.

Second, building connections in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. America’s network of alliances and partnerships is one of our greatest strengths. That is why we are prioritizing strengthening our collaboration in a variety of forums—including with ASEAN, at the Pacific Islands Forum, and through the Mekong-U.S. Partnership. We elevated the Quad, created AUKUS, appointed a Special Presidential Envoy to lead our COFA negotiations with the Freely Associated States, and reinvigorated trilateral diplomacy with Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Third, 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. We are proud the United States was selected to host APEC in 2023. As President Biden announced last year, we are working to develop an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework with our Allies and partners. We look forward to continuing to consult with Congress as we refine our economic approach to the region.

Fourth, bolstering Indo-Pacific security. Threats to our security are evolving, and our security approach must evolve with them. We are strengthening and deepening our five treaty alliances and other vital partnerships across the Indo-Pacific and working to enhance our capabilities—as well as those of our Allies and partners—to keep the peace, defend our interests, and deter aggression and other threats, including in the maritime domain.

Fifth, building regional resilience. America’s security depends on working with our Allies and partners to address shared challenges—like the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. In partnership with COVAX, we have donated more than 180 million doses of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines across the region. We are investing in clean energy and climate resilience across the Indo-Pacific—creating good jobs in the region and supporting jobs at home, as well.

We look forward to working with Congress to ensure our work advancing the Indo-Pacific Strategy continues to be appropriately and fully resourced.

I want to end where I began, which is with Ukraine. What happens in Ukraine will have a bearing on the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, it already is, as countries battered by two years of the COVID-19 pandemic must now contend with rising prices for grain, energy, and fertilizer, all as a direct result of Putin’s war of choice. These trends underscore the urgency of our work to build shared prosperity and resilience, including by accelerating the transition to clean energy.

We are also deeply concerned about the growing strategic alignment between Russia and the People’s Republic of China, as represented in their February 4 joint statement. We have expressed those concerns directly to the PRC, as have our Allies and partners.

The strong and coordinated response from the international community—including nations in the Indo-Pacific—to Russia’s flagrant violations of international law and principles like sovereignty and territorial integrity sends a strong signal that such actions will not go ignored.

Thank you again for having me. I look forward to taking your questions.