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**Testimony of
Mr. David F. Helvey
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia
before the
Subcommittee on East-Asian and Pacific Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
regarding
“Strengthening U.S. Alliances in Northeast Asia”
on
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to offer perspectives from the Department of Defense on efforts to strengthen and transform our Alliances in Northeast Asia.

Our treaty Alliances and partnerships remain the foundation for protecting our interests and achieving our security objectives in the Asia-Pacific region, which is why the modernization and continued transformation of these critical relationships forms a central pillar of President Obama’s strategy to Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. Our treaty alliances in Northeast Asia – with both Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) – contribute directly to this strategy, principally through their contributions to promote a secure and prosperous region; to facilitate the enhancement of a geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable defense posture in the region; to strengthen our readiness through updates to our operational concepts and plans; to invest in interoperable capabilities that are most relevant to the future security environment; and, to strengthen regional defense cooperation in a way that promotes shared interests and that advances international rules and norms. I am pleased to have the opportunity to describe how our Alliances help meet these objectives and I commend the committee’s continued interest in this important subject.

Mr. Chairman, we are actively working with Japan and the ROK to transform and modernize our alliances in ways that ensure they meet our original security goals of assurance and deterrence while also building our alliances into platforms for broader cooperation on traditional and nontraditional security challenges, both in Asia and globally. In fact, transforming our alliances and partnerships to meet the

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challenges of the 21st century is the central driver of our efforts with both Japan and the Republic of Korea. In recent years, and in concert with the senior leaders of both countries, we have developed for each alliance a forward-looking agenda based on enhancing security, increasing the ability of our militaries to work together seamlessly, and building our allies' capacity to contribute to regional and global security.

Our Alliance with Japan remains the cornerstone of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. In October, Secretary Hagel joined Secretary Kerry in Tokyo for the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC), or 2+2, a historic meeting that marked the first time Japan has hosted this bilateral meeting for the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State to meet with both of their counterparts. That meeting reaffirmed the indispensable role our two countries play in the maintenance of international peace and security, reconfirmed our Alliance's commitment to the security of Japan through the full range of U.S. military capabilities, and set forth a strategic vision that, reflecting our shared values of democracy, the rule of law, free and open markets, and respect for human rights, will effectively promote peace, security, stability, and economic prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. As part of our efforts to strengthen this critical partnership, we will be revising our bilateral Guidelines for Defense Cooperation for the first time since 1997, updating Alliance roles and missions in peacetime and during contingencies to reflect the contemporary security environment, and incorporating new areas of cooperation such as space and cyber defense. This revision of the Guidelines, which we hope to complete by the end of 2014, will ensure that our alliance is capable of responding to 21st century challenges.

In addition to updating Alliance roles and missions, we are taking steps to ensure that our forward military presence in Japan is sustainable over the long term. Critical to this effort is our plan for the realignment of U.S. Marine Corps forces on Okinawa. In December 2013, Governor Nakaima of Okinawa approved the Government of Japan's request for a landfill permit necessary to construct a new airfield at Camp Schwab to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. This was a major step forward, and is testament to the strong leadership and commitment to the Alliance on the part of Prime Minister Abe. Closing MCAS Futenma and returning other U.S. facilities and areas in Okinawa – approximately 2500 acres of land – is central to our plans to reduce the Marine Corps presence on Okinawa by about 9000 and establish a Marine Air Ground Task Force of about 5000 Marines on Guam.

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When this effort is complete, we will have operational Marine Air-Ground Task Forces in multiple locations across the theater, increasing our ability to respond quickly to regional crises and contingencies. The remaining Marines on Okinawa will be more concentrated in less populated parts of the island, and centered on a new air station that the Government of Japan will build. This realignment and movement of troops to Guam advances our goal of having a geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable force presence in the region. We are delighted that this effort is now on-track, and are confident that the ultimate result will be one that is good for the United States, for the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and for the people of Okinawa.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that Japan is one of our most significant ballistic missile defense (BMD) partners, as evidenced by our cooperation in co-developing the next generation sea-based interceptor, the SM-3 Block IIA; its role as host for the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet, and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force's own BMD-capable Aegis ships; and its agreement to host a second TPY-2 BMD radar, in addition to the radar already located in Shariki. We hope to have the second radar operational by the end of 2014. Japan is truly a model BMD partner, and we look forward to expanding on that cooperation in the future.

Similarly, the U.S.-ROK Alliance continues to serve as a linchpin of peace and stability in the region and is evolving into a partnership that contributes to security across the globe. Last year we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the U.S.-ROK Alliance, we welcomed President Park's first year in office, and we continued to stand together in the face of North Korean provocation. In October, Secretary Hagel met with Minister Kim in the 45th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). That meeting reaffirmed our bilateral commitment to build a comprehensive strategic Alliance based on common values and mutual trust as well as our two nations' mutual commitment to defend the Republic of Korea through a robust combined defense posture. To enhance effective deterrence options against North Korean nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Secretary Hagel and Minister Kim formally endorsed a bilateral "Tailored Deterrence Strategy" that establishes a strategic Alliance framework that strengthens the integration of Alliance capabilities to maximize their deterrent effects.

In light of the threats posed by North Korea, we are also taking a number of steps to enhance our force posture and capabilities on the Korean Peninsula. We are especially focused on enhancing the Alliance's military capabilities to ensure that our combined forces maintain the defense of the Republic

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of Korea and can deter and, if necessary, respond to North Korean aggression or provocation. One of our highest priorities is the development of comprehensive Alliance counter-missile capabilities to detect, defend against, disrupt, and destroy missile threats. This effort includes interoperable intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems and missile defenses, as well as the supporting command, control, communications, and computers (C4).

As part of our work to modernize the Alliance, we continually assess progress toward implementation of the Strategic Alliance 2015 (SA 2015) plan in order to ensure continued readiness to provide for the combined defense of the Korean Peninsula after the transition of operational control in wartime to the ROK. A new cost-sharing agreement with the ROK will help ensure that we have the resources necessary for the combined defense and that both countries are sharing in the investment the Alliance requires to defend South Korea. We continue to make progress in the development of our bilateral plans, including the completion last March of the U.S.-ROK Counter-Provocation Plan, which enables our two countries to respond jointly and more effectively to North Korean provocations. We also regularly exercise to ensure the readiness of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). Currently, we are in the middle of the bilateral military exercises KEY RESOLVE and FOAL EAGLE, which are, respectively, an annual command post exercise and an annual series of joint and combined field training exercises.

In addition to advancing our bilateral Alliances with Japan and the ROK, the dynamic nature of the region and the growing threat from North Korea make trilateral cooperation among the United States, the ROK, and Japan more important than ever. Simply put, trilateral security cooperation is an essential element of deterrence against North Korean threats. The Department of Defense encourages a healthy and open trilateral relationship in order to facilitate better relations with our two closest allies in Northeast Asia. To that end, we continually look for opportunities for our three countries to participate in military exercises and highly value our Defense Trilateral Talks (DTT) as a forum to promote cooperation, dialogue, and transparency between Tokyo and Seoul.

Let me turn briefly to offer some perspectives from the Department of Defense on another important relationship, the relationship with China.

China's economic dynamism, regional influence, and pursuit of a long-term, comprehensive military modernization program, present both opportunities and challenges for the U.S.-China relationship.

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Thus, we seek a constructive and productive U.S.-China relationship, in which we will pursue opportunities to engage where there is mutual benefit, while managing differences and areas of competition. Within the Department of Defense, we seek to build a U.S.-China military-to-military relationship that is healthy, stable, reliable, and continuous, and an important part of the overall bilateral relationship. The Department is pursuing three key areas of focus for the military-to-military relationship: (1) sustained, substantive dialogue; (2) concrete, practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as counter-piracy, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, military medicine, and maritime safety; and (3) building risk reduction mechanisms to manage differences responsibly.

However, we remain concerned about a lack of transparency regarding China's growing military and its increasingly assertive behavior in the maritime domain, highlighted by its announcement in November of an Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea and continued pressure against other claimants in the South China Sea based on its ill-defined "9-dash line" claim. We encourage all parties, including China, to reject intimidation, coercion and aggression and to base their claims on well-founded principles of international law and to pursue them peacefully through diplomatic processes in accordance with international law and norms through the establishment of peaceful, diplomatic processes for preventing maritime conflicts. A good first step would be timely conclusion of a China-ASEAN Code of Conduct for the South China Sea.

Moving forward, as the United States builds a stronger foundation for a military-to-military relationship with China, we will also continue to monitor China's evolving military strategy, doctrine, and force development and encourage China to be more transparent about its military modernization program. In concert with our Allies and partners, the Department will continue adapting U.S. forces, posture, and operational concepts to maintain a stable and secure Asia-Pacific security environment.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Defense will continue to prioritize the Asia-Pacific region, particularly our robust cooperation with Allies in Northeast Asia. We remain steadfast in our defense commitments to both Japan and the Republic of Korea and will continue to work to improve security cooperation, enhance military capabilities, and modernize each of these critical Alliances. We look forward to the continued support of this committee as we continue to rebalance toward the Asia Pacific.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.