

July 23, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
100 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

During your trip to Southeast Asia, I urge you to actively engage with the leadership from Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines to promote and expand efforts to conduct bilateral and multilateral military operations with the member states of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. I also request that you promote possible opportunities to conduct military exercises, or joint combined exchange training, with the Taiwan (Republic of China) Armed Forces.

Strengthening our partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility (AOR) is a critical component to ensuring the U.S. and its allies and partners' interests are protected. This region has both military and economic significance to the U.S., and should our ability to project forces forward ever be called into question, it could have irrevocable destructive effects on the defense of our nation and the stability of our economy.

In the event of a regional conflict in the Indo-Pacific AOR, the existence of unified command and bilateral military experience with our partner nations will be vital to ensuring our success. By further developing Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines' operational experience with the Quad, the U.S. can ensure the existence of a strong deterrence to the People Liberation Army's active aggression in the region.

Additionally, encouraging our partners to engage with Taiwan is a show of united strength that will not only frustrate the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but serve as a powerful deterrent in the region. This is true now, more than ever, as the CCP has increased its naval operations in the region and air incursions into Taiwanese territory. The future defense of Taiwan will depend on not just the U.S., but all of our Indo-Pacific allies and partners working in concert to push back on the CCP's attempts to dominate and intimidate the region. The development of robust multilateral military coordination between these countries and Taiwan will increase the CCP's apprehension toward utilizing force in order to advance its illegitimate regional claims.

In order to project a credible threat of deterrence, the U.S. has to do more with its partners and encourage others to do the same.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator