

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as our nation's 26th Secretary of Defense. We appreciate your focus on the Asia-Pacific, a region of critical importance to the United States. Following your first official visit to our allies in Japan and South Korea, we write to express our support for the creation of an Asia-Pacific Stability Initiative (APSI).

An APSI provides the opportunity to enhance and support our nation's strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific. We believe that priorities, such as expanding the scope of bilateral and multilateral exercises, investing in operationally-relevant infrastructure, addressing shortfalls in critical munitions, and increasing the rotational and prepositioned presence of U.S. ground, air, and maritime forces will help grow our warfighting capability and reassure our allies and partners. We strongly encourage you to consider APSI as part of the new base defense budget your Department is now drafting.

Like you, we remain concerned with the eroding military balance resulting from a resource-constrained U.S. defense budget, the People's Republic of China's (PRC) two-decade military modernization, a resurgent Russia expanding fighter and bomber aviation into the Pacific, and a belligerent North Korea wherein Kim Jong-un has detonated more nuclear weapons and tested more missiles than both his father and grandfather, combined. Moreover, we are also concerned with the continued rise of terrorist groups. In a region with increasingly complex threats originating from a multitude of different actors, U.S. leadership is required to uphold and reinforce the rules-based order that has benefitted all nations since the end of World War II. An Asia-Pacific-focused initiative like the APSI will show both allies and adversaries that the U.S. remains committed to ensuring peace and security in a region that contains the world's three largest economies, four most populous countries, six of the world's largest armies, and five of the seven U.S. mutual defense agreements.

Again, congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Defense. We look forward to your continued attention on Asia-Pacific policy in order to support our nation's defense and warfighters in the years ahead. Thank you for your continued service to both our country and to the men and women in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan
U.S. Senator



Mazie Hirono
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator



Joni Ernst
U.S. Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
U.S. Senator



Joe Manchin
U.S. Senator



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Todd Young
U.S. Senator