



Hearing on “China’s Stockpiling and Mobilization Measures for Conflict and Competition”

June 13, 2024

Opening Statement of Commissioner Cliff Sims

Good morning, and welcome to the sixth hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission’s 2024 Annual Report cycle. Thank you all for joining us today. I would like to remind everyone watching that the testimonies from our witnesses are available on the Commission’s website, uscc.gov, where a transcript of today’s hearing will also be posted.

Today’s hearing takes place amid rising geopolitical tensions in East Asia and across the world. My time in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence made it clear to me and many of my colleagues that China’s leadership intends to dominate the world militarily, economically, and technologically. Increasing challenges to these ambitions – both domestically and globally – have compelled the Chinese Communist Party to prepare Chinese society for so-called “worst-case” and “extreme” scenarios.

This directive is filtering down through all levels of the Party-state, from the halls of power in Beijing to Party cell meetings in towns, villages, and companies across China. The Party’s paranoia and lack of confidence in its own legitimacy cause it to imagine “hostile foreign forces” behind any domestic threat to its absolute power. The CCP is actively cultivating a siege mentality throughout Chinese society, further tightening its control over daily life.

CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has exhorted the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), Party leaders, and the Chinese people to “dare to struggle”-- a Maoist phrase that suggests preparing for conflict – and to improve its ability to mobilize military and civilian resources in wartime. This enhanced capacity to mobilize has implications for the most acute threat of China breaking the peace: a military invasion of Taiwan. Various U.S. military and intelligence leaders differ on their estimates of when the PLA will be “ready” for war, with some stating it could be as soon as next year.* As a result, we are entering a perilous moment, with China’s capabilities rising to meet its leaders’ stated commitment to “unifying” Taiwan with the Mainland, even by force if coercion and threats fail.

Against this backdrop, it is of supreme importance that we develop a deep understanding of China’s preparations for conflict and can discern when they are preparing to make a move. Understanding China’s vulnerabilities and strengths will enhance U.S. leaders’ ability to make well-informed decisions that

* Former U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Commander John Aquilino and current Commander Samuel Paparo have both recently said publicly that the PLA will be capable of invading Taiwan by 2027. Air Force General Mike Minihan wrote a memo in January 2023 predicting that China could invade Taiwan as early as 2025. John C. Aquilino, written testimony for U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Hearing on U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in The Indo-Pacific Region, March 20, 2024; Courtney Kube and Mosheh Gains, “Air Force general predicts war with China in 2025, tells officers to prep by firing 'a clip' at a target, and 'aim for the head,’” *NBC News*, January 27, 2023.

promote peace and prosperity, as we do not want war. But in the event that China makes an unprovoked, unjust, and ill-advised decision to break the peace, we must be able to win.

To our distinguished witnesses, thank you for joining us to discuss these important issues. We look forward to hearing from each of you.

I will now turn the floor over to my colleague and co-chair for this hearing, Commissioner Goodwin.