

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2176

To authorize the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Defense Commission to enhance defense cooperation between the United States and allies in the Asia-Pacific region, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 26, 2017

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida (for herself, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. GALLEGRO, Ms. HANABUSA, Ms. BORDALLO, and Mr. CASTRO of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To authorize the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Defense Commission to enhance defense cooperation between the United States and allies in the Asia-Pacific region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Asia-Pacific Defense
5 Commission Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) The United States has worked cooperatively
4 with its allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific region
5 for decades on issues of mutual concern having re-
6 gional and global strategic and economic importance,
7 including—

8 (A) deterring and confronting external ag-
9 gression against allies and partners;

10 (B) ensuring the free flow of energy and
11 commerce, and freedom of navigation in inter-
12 national waters;

13 (C) dismantling terrorist networks that
14 threaten the safety of the region;

15 (D) preventing the development, use, and
16 proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;

17 (E) adapting to climate change and severe
18 weather events, including cooperation on hu-
19 manitarian assistance and disaster response;
20 and

21 (F) promoting respect for the international
22 liberal order based on commonly respected
23 norms and values.

24 (2) The close security relationships between the
25 United States and its five treaty allies in the Asia-
26 Pacific region—Australia, Japan, the Philippines,

1 South Korea and Thailand—as well as the security
2 relationships between the United States and its non-
3 alliance security partners in the region remain vital
4 to the United States national interest and a corner-
5 stone of regional stability.

6 (3) The United States opposes North Korea’s
7 illegal and reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons.

8 (4) Countering North Korea’s destabilizing ac-
9 tivities in the region by diplomatic, economic, and
10 defensive means is a top national security issue for
11 the United States as the threat posed by North
12 Korea endangers United States allies, threatens to
13 destabilize the Asia-Pacific region, and if unchecked,
14 poses a grave nuclear proliferation challenge to the
15 world.

16 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF ASIA-PACIFIC DEFENSE COM-**
17 **MISSION.**

18 (a) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—It is the policy of the United
20 States to continue to maintain a strong military pos-
21 ture in the Asia-Pacific region in order to reassure
22 United States allies, deter aggression, and respond
23 swiftly to crises.

24 (2) ENHANCED MILITARY TRAINING AND EXER-
25 CISES.—The Secretary of Defense, in consultation

1 with the Secretary of State, shall seek opportunities
2 to enhance military training and exercises with
3 United States allies in the Asia-Pacific region to
4 deepen cooperation between the militaries of the
5 United States and such allies, to expand operational
6 capabilities, and to encourage respect for human
7 rights and the rule of law.

8 (b) JOINT DEFENSE COMMISSION.—The President
9 may establish a regional joint defense commission to be
10 known as the Asia-Pacific Defense Commission. The pur-
11 pose of the commission shall be to strengthen cooperation
12 between the United States and its allies in the Asia-Pacific
13 region to combat joint threats. The commission may un-
14 dertake the following activities:

15 (1) Strengthening counterterrorism operations
16 and building capacity to track, investigate, and pros-
17 ecute individuals engaged in terrorist activities.

18 (2) Improving regional maritime security and
19 capabilities to interdict illegal arms shipments.

20 (3) Bolstering regional cybersecurity initiatives
21 and protecting critical infrastructure.

22 (4) Strengthening military preparedness.

23 (5) Facilitating defense-related transfers, sub-
24 ject to the requirements of the Arms Export Control
25 Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.).

1 (6) Facilitating efforts to enhance training, pre-
2 paredness, and operations by allies to address North
3 Korean maritime weapons transfers.

4 (7) Coordinating intelligence collected by the in-
5 telligence services of the countries participating in
6 the commission, identify the most immediate threats
7 to inform the security services of such countries, and
8 create guidelines for the coordination of multilateral
9 direct action against shared threats.

10 (c) ASIA-PACIFIC REGION.—In this section, the term
11 “Asia-Pacific region” means the region corresponding to
12 the area of responsibility of the United States Pacific
13 Command, as defined by the Department of Defense uni-
14 fied command plan.

15 (d) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
16 gress that the United States Navy should regularize free-
17 dom of navigation operations, in accordance with inter-
18 national law, in the Japanese-administered Senkaku Is-
19 lands, in the South China Sea, and in regular ports of
20 call at strategic ports in the Asia-Pacific region.

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