

FY2024 NDAA: U.S. Military Posture in the Indo-Pacific

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Background

According to the [2022 National Security Strategy](#), “no region will be of more significance to the world and to everyday Americans than the Indo-Pacific.” The [2022 National Defense Strategy](#) also identifies attempts by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to “refashion the Indo-Pacific region” as part of “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security.” The United States maintains a large defense presence in the region, including [approximately 375,000 personnel](#) and 66 bases (for more information, see CRS Report R47589, U.S. Defense Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific: Background and Issues for Congress).

Military posture refers to the positioning and organization of such forces and facilities (some [definitions](#) also include international agreements as a third posture element; due to space constraints, this product covers only [U.S. forces and facilities](#)). The Department of Defense (DOD) has [stated](#) that military posture is “the fundamental enabler of U.S. defense activities and military operations overseas, and is also central to defining and communicating U.S. strategic interests.” As the PRC [improves its military capabilities](#), some [analysts](#) argue that an Indo-Pacific conflict is [plausible](#) in the future, and [maintain](#) that military posture may influence both whether a conflict occurs and how it may unfold.

Congress examines military posture in the Indo-Pacific during its annual defense authorization process. **Table 1** summarizes provisions concerning military posture in the House-passed (H.R. 2670) and Senate-passed (S. 2226) versions of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY2024 NDAA).

Table 1. Selected Indo-Pacific Posture Provisions

Selected provisions from the House and Senate bills for an FY2024 NDAA

House-passed (H.R. 2670)	Senate-passed (S. 2226)
<i>The Pacific Deterrence Initiative and Similar Programs/Authorities for Posture Investments</i>	

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House-passed (H.R. 2670)	Senate-passed (S. 2226)
<p>Section 1301 would authorize FY2024 appropriations for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) and extend associated planning and reporting requirements through FY2026.</p> <p>Section 1302 would require the Department of Defense (DOD) to commission an independent assessment of PDI activities.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p>	<p>Section 1344 in S. 2226 is similar to Section 1301 in H.R. 2670.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p> <p>Section 1341 would establish an Indo-Pacific Campaigning Initiative intended to strengthen regional alliances, deter aggression, dissuade “gray-zone” activities by potential adversaries, improve DOD’s understanding of the regional operating environment, shape the perceptions of potential adversaries, and improve DOD’s ability to operate with regional partners. It would also require a report on regional campaigning activities.</p> <p>Section 1349 would require DOD to identify locations in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR) that are not sufficiently capable of mitigating damage to U.S. aircraft that may result from an attack by military forces of the People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China). It would further require DOD to develop a plan to improve these locations to increase aircraft survivability.</p> <p>Section 2801 would authorize the INDOPACOM Commander to carry out certain unspecified military construction projects not otherwise authorized by law, provided the cost of any such project does not exceed \$15 million.</p>
<i>Regional Missile Strategy and Missile Defense Issues</i>	
<p>Section 1066 would require DOD to conduct a study on its ability to defend U.S. military forces and bases in Europe and the Indo-Pacific from missile and air attack.</p> <p>Section 1666 would require DOD to provide a report identifying U.S. missile defense investments with particular application to Hawaii.</p> <p>Section 1688 would require DOD to develop a strategy for ground-based, theater-range conventional missiles in the Indo-Pacific.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p>	<p>No similar provision.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p> <p>Section 1350 in S. 2226 is similar to Section 1688 in H.R. 2670.</p> <p>Section 1631 would designate the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment as the senior DOD official responsible for designing, developing, acquiring, and sustaining a Guam missile defense system.</p> <p>Section 1637 would direct DOD to develop a comprehensive strategy for an integrated air and missile defense architecture covering the INDOPACOM AOR.</p>
<i>Other Posture-Related Reports and Plans</i>	
<p>Section 1068 would require DOD to provide a report assessing the status of efforts to establish a joint force headquarters in the INDOPACOM AOR.</p> <p>Section 1079 would require DOD to conduct a study of the effectiveness of low-cost anti-ship weapons in the Indo-Pacific.</p>	<p>No similar provision.</p> <p>No similar provision.</p>

House-passed (H.R. 2670)	Senate-passed (S. 2226)
Section 1080 would require DOD to develop a Pacific Islands security strategy.	No similar provision.
Section 1099 would require DOD to provide a report on U.S. military requirements in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan.	No similar provision.
Section 1314 would require DOD to conduct a study on the feasibility of naval blockades of fossil fuel shipments to China in the event of a U.S.-China conflict.	No similar provision.
No similar provision.	Section 344 would require DOD to provide a plan to maintain Navy and Air Force proficiency in executing the emergency movement of munitions stored in Guam onto aircraft and naval vessels.
No similar provision.	Section 1075 would require DOD to provide a report on the capacity of existing infrastructure, resources, and personnel in Guam to meet INDOPACOM strategic objectives.
No similar provision.	Section 1356 would require DOD to commission a federally funded research and development center to conduct a study to improve the current command structure and posture of U.S. forces within the INDOPACOM AOR.
No similar provision.	Section 1365 would require DOD to provide a report on the ways in which its contingency operational plan for a major conflict in the INDOPACOM AOR depends on critical infrastructure facilities, capabilities, and services.

Source: CRS analysis of H.R. 2670 (House-engrossed version) and S. 2226 (Senate-engrossed version).

Notes: Unless otherwise indicated, any reports, studies, plans, or strategies identified above would be required to be provided to the congressional defense committees.

FY2024 NDAA Provisions

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative and Similar Programs/Authorities

In the FY2021 NDAA (P.L. 116-283), Congress established the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), a set of prioritized investments and activities intended to deter adversary aggression, assure allies and partners, and strengthen regional posture and capabilities (for more information on PDI, see CRS In Focus IF12303, *The Pacific Deterrence Initiative: A Budgetary Overview*). Both the House and Senate bills for an FY2024 NDAA would authorize PDI appropriations in FY2024, as well as extend associated reporting requirements through FY2026 ([Section 1301](#) in H.R. 2670 and [Section 1344](#) in S. 2226). The House bill would also require DOD to commission an independent assessment of PDI effectiveness ([§1302](#)).

The Senate bill would create new programs, requirements, and authorities for regional posture investments, as well as establish an Indo-Pacific Campaigning Initiative ([§1341](#)) to accomplish six broad objectives related to campaigning (i.e., the conduct and sequencing of logically linked military activities). The Senate bill would also require DOD to (1) identify operating locations within [the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command \(INDOPACOM\) area of responsibility \(AOR\)](#) that might be used in a military conflict with the PRC but lack sufficient protection for U.S. aircraft, and (2) develop a plan to improve aircraft survivability at these locations ([§1349](#)). Finally, S. 2226 would allow the INDOPACOM commander to carry out otherwise unauthorized regional military construction projects valued at \$15 million or less to support rotational deployments, enhance infrastructure preparedness and resilience, and reposition and

store materiel (§2801; for more information on military construction, see CRS Report R44710, *Military Construction: Authorities and Processes*).

Regional Missile and Missile Defense Issues

To improve U.S. missile capabilities, both H.R. 2670 (§1688) and S. 2226 (§1350) would require DOD to develop a strategy for ground-based, theater-range (i.e., between 500 and 5,500 kilometers) conventional missiles in the Indo-Pacific with the aim of addressing current capability gaps, technical requirements, prospective basing locations, employment concepts, international partnerships, and programmatic details.

To defend against adversary missile threats, H.R. 2670 would require DOD to conduct a study on its ability to protect facilities and forces in Europe and the Indo-Pacific from missile and air attacks (§1066) and provide a report on investments to improve the detection and sensor capabilities of the INDOPACOM air and missile defense architecture, particularly those providing coverage of Hawaii (§1666). S. 2226 would designate the [Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment](#) as the DOD official responsible for overseeing the development, acquisition, and sustainment of a Guam missile defense system (§1631; for more information on Guam missile defense, see CRS Report R47643, *Guam: Defense Infrastructure and Readiness*). It would also direct the heads of INDOPACOM, [U.S. Northern Command](#), [the Missile Defense Agency](#), and the Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense Organization to cooperatively develop a strategy for an integrated air and missile defense architecture for the INDOPACOM AOR (§1637).

Other Reports and Plans

The House and Senate bills each contain provisions that would require new posture-related reports and plans that provide information in support of DOD and congressional decisionmaking.

H.R. 2670 would require DOD to provide reports on the establishment of an INDOPACOM joint force headquarters (§1068); the effectiveness of low-cost anti-ship weapons in the Indo-Pacific (§1079); U.S. military requirements in the event of a PRC attack on Taiwan (§1099); and the feasibility of implementing a naval blockade to interdict PRC-bound fossil fuel shipments during a regional conflict (§1314). H.R. 2670 would also require DOD to develop a comprehensive Pacific Islands security strategy (§1080).

S. 2226 would require DOD to provide reports on the emergency movement of Guam-stored munitions to ships and aircraft (§344); the capacity of Guam-based infrastructure and resources (§1075); and the dependencies of INDOPACOM's contingency operational plan on critical infrastructure facilities, capabilities, and services (§1365). It would also require DOD to commission a study of the current command structure and posture of U.S. forces located in the INDOPACOM AOR (§1356).

Author Information

Luke A. Nicastro
Analyst in U.S. Defense Infrastructure Policy

Ilana Krill
Research Assistant

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