



Hearing on “Part of Your World: U.S.-China Competition Under the Sea”

March 2, 2026

Opening Statement of Chair HON. Randall Schriver

Good morning and thank you all for joining us. Welcome to the second hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission’s 2026 Annual Report cycle. At the outset, thank you to our witnesses for sharing your expertise and for the work you put into your testimonies and preparation. I’d also like to thank the Senate HELP committee for allowing us to use their hearing room and our colleagues in the Senate Recording Studio for their assistance in livestreaming this event. All written testimonies and a transcript of this hearing will be posted on our website, [USCC.gov](https://uscc.gov).

Since our founding, the United States has been a maritime nation. From the earliest days of the Republic, our security and prosperity have depended on the free use of the seas. Since the end of the Second World War, the United States Navy has underwritten global commerce, deterred conflict, and safeguarded the maritime commons. American sea power has ensured that the oceans remain peaceful, open to all, and are governed by law and norms rather than coercion.

That maritime order is not an abstraction. As an example, more than 80 percent of global trade by volume moves by sea. Fiber-optic cables laid on the seabed carry vast amounts of international data traffic and trillions of dollars in financial transactions daily.

Today, that order is being tested. The People’s Republic of China is working to reshape the Indo-Pacific in ways that advantage its own interests at the expense of others. It has systematically adopted and pursued an increasingly expansive and belligerent view of its maritime interests. Inside the first island chain, we have seen China assert sweeping claims, build and militarize artificial features, and seek to restrict the lawful activities of other states.

This competition is not confined to the surface of the ocean. Rather, China is investing heavily in capabilities designed to operate in, and potentially control, the undersea domain – an environment that has long provided the United States with decisive strategic advantages. China is advancing a growing fleet of increasingly capable submarines, unmanned underwater vehicles, seabed sensors, and sophisticated oceanographic mapping programs. Many of these systems have clear dual-use applications, blurring the line between civilian research and military preparation.

The United States retains significant advantages in the undersea domain. But advantages erode if they are not maintained. As strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China intensifies, we must ensure that this domain remains a source of strength and deterrence — not vulnerability.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and to a substantive discussion of how we safeguard America’s interests in this increasingly contested domain.

I will now turn the floor over to my colleague and co-chair for this hearing, Vice Chair Michael Kuiken.