

Opening Statement of Commissioner Peter Videnieks

June 11, 2009

Washington, D.C.

Thank you Vice Chairman Wortzel. And, thanks to our witnesses for being here today to help us to understand China's naval modernization. The Department of Defense 2009 *Annual Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China* states, "since 2000, China has expanded its arsenal of anti-access and area-denial weapons, presenting and projecting increasingly credible, layered offensive combat power across its borders and into the Western Pacific." Given the importance of the Western Pacific to the United States, it is crucial that we understand exactly how China's naval modernization impacts U.S. national security.

In recent years, China has modernized its naval forces. It has constructed or procured dozens of new vessels, including very modern submarines and surface combatants. It has also improved its offensive weapons systems, developing anti-ship cruise missiles and pursuing anti-ship ballistic missiles. This technological progress has been mirrored by a similar improvement in the navy's institutional aspects. Organizational restructuring, personnel reforms, and training improvements have all been carried out over the past few years with the goal of transforming the People's Liberation Army Navy into a modern, capable naval force.

Therefore, the purpose of this hearing is to examine the impact of this naval modernization on the United States, particularly on U.S. national security interests in the Western Pacific region. What effects will China's offensive weapons' development have on the U.S. military's ability to respond to a crisis in the region? Will China's naval modernization negatively impact the U.S.'s strategically-important sea lines of communication? And finally, what should be done to ensure that the United States maintains its freedom of navigation in the Western Pacific? These are a few questions that I am interested in exploring during today's hearing.

We thank all of you for participating, and we'll begin with today's first panel.

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