



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Shri Thanedar (D-MI)**

### ***Combatting the Grey Zone: Examining Chinese Threats to the Maritime Domain***

**June 4, 2024**

The People's Republic of China has grown increasingly aggressive within the maritime domain. The PRC has made many illegitimate territorial claims and has directed its naval forces to defend waters that are not China's waters to defend. The PRC's actions have threatened the free flow of travel and commerce throughout the Indo-Pacific, increasing tensions in an irresponsible manner.

Most recently, the PRC issued rules allowing China's Coast Guard to detain foreigners who cross into waters China illegitimately claims as its own. These rules, if acted upon, have the potential to significantly increase tensions in the region—which are already high. In addition, many Chinese fishing vessels continue to participate in illegal, unreported, and unregulated, or "I.U.U." fishing.

Huge populations are reliant on the stocks of fish in the Indo-Pacific. I.U.U. fishing threatens to damage the ecosystem and deplete those stocks, threatening the livelihood of those populations. Taken together, the PRC's actions in the maritime domain undermine the rules-based order the global maritime community relies on to maintain safety, security, and sovereignty at sea.

The United States and its partners face tremendous challenges in responding to the PRC's activities—especially in a way that seeks to ease tensions rather than further inflame them. China is a key U.S. trading partner, and according to the United Nations, one-third of global shipping passes through the South China Sea. The United States must be strategic in its efforts to counter the PRC's aggression and not simply build towards conflict. The U.S. Coast Guard is key to such strategic efforts.

The Coast Guard is uniquely able to help counter the PRC's "grey zone" tactics, in collaboration with international allies and partners. The Coast Guard's multi-faceted missions allow the service to partner with countries in the region on a range of operations, from search and rescue, to disaster relief, to fisheries enforcement, all of which help to improve diplomacy.

Congress must ensure the Coast Guard has the necessary resources to maintain a steady presence in the Indo-Pacific and help counter PRC aggression. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how this Committee can be helpful in advancing those efforts.

# # #

Media contact: Adam Comis at 202-225-9978