

U.S. Official Urges Asian Allies to Contribute Fully to Regional Defense

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Elbridge Colby, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy calls on Asian allies to share responsibility more equitably for regional security, emphasizing the need for sustainable collective defense amid rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific.

Elbridge Colby, the United States Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, has called on Asian allies to increase their contributions to regional defense to ensure a sustainable collective security framework. Colby stressed that all allies, particularly in Asia, must “pull their weight” to maintain a credible deterrent and to share the burdens of defense equitably.

In recent remarks, Colby cited European allies as examples of nations that meet shared responsibility standards, highlighting that their contributions help secure peace and stability through collective strength. He noted that applying similar standards in Asia would allow the U.S. to focus on broader strategic objectives while reinforcing partnerships across the region.

The comments come amid heightened concerns over China’s growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. The Trump administration has prioritized strengthening deterrence capabilities and ensuring that allies actively participate in their own defense. Colby’s remarks underscore the administration’s strategy of reinforcing the region’s collective defense posture while distributing the financial and operational responsibilities more evenly among allies.

Burden-sharing has been a persistent issue, particularly regarding the costs associated with hosting U.S. forces abroad. In South Korea, where U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) are stationed, Colby emphasized that allies should aim to meet what he described as the “global standard” of defense spending. He referenced NATO targets, which call for member nations to allocate 5 percent of their gross domestic product to defense by 2035. Currently, South Korea’s defense budget accounts for

approximately 2.32 percent of GDP, highlighting the gap between current contributions and the standard expected by U.S. defense policymakers.

Colby's remarks also reflect a broader strategic shift toward sustainable and balanced defense arrangements. By encouraging allies to assume a greater role, the U.S. aims to maintain credible deterrence without overextending its resources. The approach emphasizes shared responsibility, ensuring that regional partners develop capabilities and funding levels commensurate with the threats they face.

The upcoming summit between U.S. and South Korean leaders is expected to address these issues, with discussions likely focusing on enhancing defense cooperation and clarifying expectations for contributions from regional allies. Strengthening these partnerships remains central to countering strategic challenges posed by regional powers and securing long-term stability.

Analysts suggest that Colby's statements send a clear signal that the U.S. expects tangible commitments from its partners, including increases in defense spending, operational support, and strategic alignment. This approach is intended to create a more resilient and sustainable regional defense architecture, ensuring that collective security remains robust in the face of potential threats.

As discussions continue, the emphasis on equitable burden-sharing is likely to influence future defense planning, investments, and alliance negotiations. Colby's call for full participation by Asian allies underscores the importance of joint responsibility in maintaining peace and security across the Indo-Pacific region, reinforcing the United States' commitment to strong, collaborative defense partnerships.

