

# Russia Will Help China Advance Submarine Technology, US Indo-Pacific Commander Says

China would then be able to close the gap on 'American undersea dominance,' the chief said.

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U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Adm. Samuel Paparo speaks during a joint press conference with Philippines' Military Chief General Romeo Brawner after the Philippines-US Mutual Defense Board meeting at the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio on Aug. 29, 2024. Ted Aljibe/AFP via Getty Images



By Frank Fang

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In return for China's support during its war on Ukraine, Russia will likely assist Beijing to advance its submarine fleet, the head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said on Nov. 23.

"I expect Russia to provide submarine technology to the PRC that has the potential of closing American undersea dominance over the PRC," Adm. Samuel Paparo [said](#) at the Halifax International Security Forum, using the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

**Share** Paparo added that China "has rebuilt, helped to rebuild Russia's war machine, with 90 percent of its semiconductors and 70 percent of the machine tools that have rebuilt that war machine."



Although China boasts the [largest navy](#) in the world with more than 70 ships, the Chinese submarine fleet is considered inferior to its U.S. counterpart. A [report](#) published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in June, said that U.S. submarine capabilities remain an area of unquestionable U.S. dominance," because the United States has 66 nuclear submarines while China has 12.



Large nuclear submarines are much more capable than diesel-electric submarines, operating with far greater range, stealth, and offensive power," the report says.

In addition to its 12 nuclear submarines, China has 48 diesel-powered/air-independent powered attack submarines, the Pentagon [said](#) in a 2023 report, estimating that the Chinese submarine fleet will reach 80 units by 2035.

Paparo also expressed concern about the growing cooperation among China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

"There is a certain transactional symbiosis among them where each fulfills the needs of the others—where one is resource-poor, the others

fulfill those resources—where one has operational needs, the others are fulfilling those needs,” Paparo said.

Earlier this month, the State Department [said](#) more than 10,000 North Korean troops were actively fighting Ukrainian forces in Russia’s Kursk region.

In exchange for the troops, Russia gave North Korea anti-air missiles, South Korean national security adviser Shin Won-sik [said](#) on Nov. 22.

Paparo said he expected Russia to also provide North Korea with submarine and missile technologies.

“This is a dangerous environment, and this is adding complexity to the environment itself,” he said.

On Nov. 19, Paparo described the Indo-Pacific region as the “most stressing theater” at an [event](#) held by the Brookings Institution. He explained that U.S. weapons can be “moved with alacrity to any theater” and “none are reserved for any particular theater.”

“It imposes costs on the readiness of America to respond in the Indo-Pacific region, which is the most stressing theater for the quantity and quality of munitions, because the PRC is the most capable potential adversary in the world,” Paparo said.

Asked about the possibility of China attacking Taiwan by 2027, Paparo dismissed it as a definitive date.

“It was never a ‘sell-by’ date. It was never a date where the PRC had declared, ‘We’re going on this date,’” Paparo said, before adding that the date should be a “worthy benchmark” and that the United States “had better pay close attention” to China’s military activities.

“The closer we get to it, the less relevant that date is, and the more we must be ready today, tomorrow, next month, next year, and onward,” he said.

Last year, CIA Director William Burns [said](#) CCP leader Xi Jinping had instructed his military to be prepared to invade Taiwan by 2027.

China considers Taiwan to be part of its territory even though the communist regime has never ruled the self-governing democratic island.

Paparo also commented on the possible scenario of China carrying out an amphibious assault on Taiwan across the Taiwan Strait.

“I think the cross-strait invasion would be exceedingly difficult, given some of our advantages,” he said.

Should China decide to impose a sea blockade on Taiwan, Paparo said he “would be confident” of the United States’ ability to break through it.

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**Frank Fang**

journalist

Frank Fang is a Taiwan-based journalist. He covers U.S., China, and Taiwan news. He holds a master's degree in materials science from Tsinghua University in Taiwan.



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