



China, No

June 4, 2025

“China’s behavior towards its neighbors and the world is a wake-up call,” U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth [warned](#) at last weekend’s Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. “We cannot look away, and we cannot ignore it.”

“Hegseth throws down gauntlet to China” was how *Newsweek* headlined its [story](#) on the Defense Secretary’s “assertive policy address” at Asia’s “premier defense summit.”

“We will stand with you and work alongside you to deter Chinese aggression,” the Secretary pledged to Asian allies. Moreover, he declared that, as a first step, “the Department of Defense is prioritizing forward-postured, combat credible forces in the Western Pacific to deter by denial along the first and second island chains.”

“Hegseth described Chinese coercion and aggression against Taiwan and the South China Sea more clearly than any prior U.S. defense secretary,” [offered](#) Bonnie Glaser, managing director, of the German Marshall Fund’s Indo-Pacific Program.

Today is June Fourth, 36 years to the day that the People’s Liberation Army rolled tanks into Tiananmen Square, firing on and killing students and other peaceful protesters. Had the George H.W. Bush administration delivered a stronger message to China back then, maybe Hegseth wouldn’t be required to restate President Trump’s insistence that China not be allowed “to invade Taiwan on his watch.”

Or [talk openly](#) of doing “what the Department of Defense does best—fight and win—decisively.”

“[B]arely a month after the bloodshed in Tiananmen Square,” Ted Galen Carpenter [wrote](#) five years ago, “the White House dispatched National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft on a secret trip to Beijing to mend ties. That visit followed an impassioned personal letter that Bush sent to Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping” in which the president “came perilously close to kowtowing to a brutal, autocratic regime.”

Contributing to the clear and present danger we face today.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.