***“Great Power Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Is Conflict Imminent?”***

*(30 September 2021)*

**Senior Leader’s Opening Remarks.**

Good Afternoon,

On February 19, 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin used his first media briefing to describe China as our “pacing threat,” the only country that poses a systemic challenge to the United States.

He stated at that briefing, “*From the Department of Defense standpoint, … my No. 1 concern and my No. 1 job is to defend this country and protect our interests…”*

*“And so, we in this department are going to do everything possible to ensure we have the right operational concepts, the right plans in place, and that we have resourced the plans with the right capabilities to present a credible deterrence not only to China, [but to] any other adversary who would want to take us on.”*

Our response at the Command and General Staff College is to focus our efforts on this “pacing threat” and enhance our understanding of the Indo-Pacom Theater, and specifically China. One step we are making to this end is to conduct a series of Faculty Development Seminars and professional forums on the Indo-Pacom Theater and China. Today’s panel is the first step in that direction.

So, the topic of our CASO panel today is: ***“Great Power Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Is Conflict Imminent?”***

Our panel is sponsored by U.S. Army Cultural and Area Studies Office (CASO) of the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and is conducted jointly with U.S. Army War College, Combined Arms Center (CAC) International Liaison Office, and CGSC.

Our session today includes four panel members:

**\* Dr. Roger Cliff, Research Professor of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College;**

**\* Colonel Jim Walker, British Army Liaison Officer, Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth;**

**\* Dr. John H. Modinger, Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command & General Staff College; and**

**\* LTCOL Paul Mostafa, Australian Army, Department of Joint, Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command & General Staff College.**

The complete bios of the panel members can be accessed at CASO website.

This event is open to all military and civilian employees on Fort Leavenworth. Per installation health protection procedures, masks must be worn indoors. For outstations, the event is available live on CGSC's Facebook page and via Video teleconference (VTC).

The panel is scheduled until 3:00 p.m. central time, is unclassified, and will be video recorded for viewing later for those unable to attend.

The opinions and discussion points during the session are those of the speakers and the moderator, and do not necessarily represent official positions of the United States government.

After the initial remarks for about 7-10 minutes, our panelists will jointly answer your questions, and reply to your comments.

Our Moderator today is Dr. Mahir J. Ibrahimov (Dr. I.), Director of the Cultural and Area Studies Office (CASO), U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Without further ado I would like to turn the floor over to Dr. Ibrahimov, who will continue moderating throughout the session.

Thank you!