

U.S. NSA IMPLIES LAC SITUATION DISCUSSED AT QUAD LEADERS MEET

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Jake Sullivan

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters after the Quad leaders summit that China was discussed at the meeting but was not the focus. He also implied that one of the China-related challenges discussed was the India-China border situation.

“The four leaders did discuss the challenge posed by China and they made clear that none of them have any illusions about China but today was not fundamentally about China,” Mr. Sullivan said, adding that the focus was on pressing crises, such as COVID-19 and climate.

Mr. Sullivan implied that the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was discussed by the Quad leaders as one of several examples of Chinese aggression. He was responding to a question on his and Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s meetings next week with their Chinese counterparts in Anchorage, Alaska.

“This is our effort to communicate clearly to the giant Chinese government, how the U.S. intends to proceed at a strategic level. What we believe are fundamental interests and values, and what our concerns with their activities are, whether it’s on Hong Kong or Xinjiang or in the Taiwan Strait, or frankly, the issues that we heard today from our Quad partners: their coercion of Australia, their harassment around the Senkaku Islands, their aggression on the border with India,” Mr. Sullivan said, implying that the India-China border standoff had been discussed.

“The Quad at the end of the day — at the end of today — is now a critical part of the architecture of the Indo Pacific,” Mr. Sullivan said.

Also discussed were cybersecurity incidents impacting Quad members.

The discussions included not just the cyberattacks on U.S. targets (Microsoft Exchange and SolarWinds) but also cybersecurity incidents in India, Japan and Australia, Mr. Sullivan said.

Weeks ago, news broke that spyware originating in China had made its way into several Indian power installations and port facilities.

‘Quad isn’t a new NATO’

Mr. Sullivan reiterated that the Quad was not a military alliance or NATO equivalent (it has been referred to by some commentators as an ‘Asian NATO’). He was responding to a question on whether there would be greater Quad security cooperation with Taiwan so that it would become more costly for the Chinese to move against Taiwan. “So the way that we look at this is that the Quad is not a military alliance. It’s not a new NATO, despite some of the propaganda that’s out there,” Mr. Sullivan said, adding that it was an opportunity to cooperate on economics, technology, climate and security. While maritime security, humanitarian and disaster response were core to the Quad agenda , “where we go from there on everything from freedom of navigation to broader regional security questions that has to be worked through,” he said.

Huawei decision

Asked about recent news that India was likely to block Indian telecom operators from using Huawei equipment for security reasons, Mr. Sullivan said it was a sovereign decision for India to make but consistent with the decisions the U.S. has been advocating. The U.S. — during the Trump administration — campaigned internationally for countries to exclude Huawei from its 5G networks, citing security concerns.

Overall, Mr. Sullivan sounded an optimistic note on the Quad. “Today is a big day for American diplomacy. This summit is a big deal for the President and for the country...,” he said.

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