

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

S. 4638

**TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 FOR MILITARY
ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND FOR MILITARY
CONSTRUCTION, TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS
FOR SUCH FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

PART 1

U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND AND U.S. SPACE COMMAND

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AND U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND AND U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND U.S. FORCES KOREA

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET POSTURE

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND U.S. CYBER COMMAND

U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND AND U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

AIR FORCE POSTURE

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY

ADMINISTRATION ATOMIC ENERGY DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

ARMY POSTURE

NAVY POSTURE

FEBRUARY 29; MARCH 7, 14, 21; APRIL 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18; MAY 16, 2024



Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM—Part 1

- U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND AND U.S. SPACE COMMAND ● U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AND U.S. AFRICA COMMAND ● U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND AND U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND ● U.S. INDOPACIFIC COMMAND AND U.S. FORCES KOREA ● DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET POSTURE ● U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND U.S. CYBER COMMAND ● U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND AND U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND ● AIR FORCE POSTURE ● THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION ATOMIC ENERGY DEFENSE ACTIVITIES ● ARMY POSTURE ● NAVY POSTURE

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 4638

TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 FOR MILITARY
ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND FOR MILITARY
CONSTRUCTION, TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS
FOR SUCH FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

PART 1

**U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND AND U.S. SPACE COMMAND
U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AND U.S. AFRICA COMMAND
U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND AND U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND
U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND U.S. FORCES KOREA
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET POSTURE
U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND U.S. CYBER COMMAND
U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND AND U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND
AIR FORCE POSTURE
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION ATOMIC ENERGY DEFENSE ACTIVITIES
ARMY POSTURE
NAVY POSTURE**

FEBRUARY 29; MARCH 7, 14, 21; APRIL 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18; MAY 16, 2024

Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services



Available via: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

JACK REED, Rhode Island, *Chairman*

JEANNE SHAHEEN, New Hampshire	ROGER F. WICKER, Mississippi
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, New York	DEB FISCHER, Nebraska
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, Connecticut	TOM COTTON, Arkansas
MAZIE K. HIRONO, Hawaii	MIKE ROUNDS, South Dakota
TIM Kaine, Virginia	JONI ERNST, Iowa
ANGUS S. KING, Jr., Maine	DAN SULLIVAN, Alaska
ELIZABETH WARREN, Massachusetts	KEVIN CRAMER, North Dakota
GARY C. PETERS, Michigan	RICK SCOTT, Florida
JOE MANCHIN III, West Virginia	TOMMY TUBERVILLE, Alabama
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, Illinois	MARKWAYNE MULLIN, Oklahoma
JACKY ROSEN, Nevada	TED BUDD, North Carolina
MARK KELLY, Arizona	ERIC SCHMITT, Missouri

ELIZABETH L. KING, *Staff Director*
JOHN P. KEAST, *Minority Staff Director*

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 29, 2024

UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES SPACE COMMAND ...	Page 1
---	-----------

MEMBER STATEMENTS

Statement of Senator Jack Reed	1
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	3

WITNESS STATEMENTS

Cotton, General Anthony J., USAF, Commander of United States Strategic Command	4
Whiting, General Stephen N., USSF, Commander of United States Space Command	14
Questions for the Record	54

MARCH 7, 2024

THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND AND UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND	65
---	----

MEMBER STATEMENTS

Statement of Senator Jack Reed	65
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	67

WITNESS STATEMENTS

Kurilla, General Michael E., USA Commander, United States Central Command	68
Langley, General Michael E., USMC Commander, United States Africa Command	81
Questions for the Record	123

MARCH 14, 2024

UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND	143
---	-----

MEMBER STATEMENTS

Statement of Senator Jack Reed	143
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	145

WITNESS STATEMENTS

Guillot, General Gregory M., USAF, Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command	146
Richardson, General Laura J., USA, Commander, United States Southern Command	155
Questions for the Record	225

MARCH 21, 2024	
UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA ..	Page 235
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	235
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	237
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Aquilino, Admiral John C., USN Commander, United States Indo-Pacific Command	238
LaCamera, General Paul J., USA Commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, United States Forces Korea	259
Questions for the Record	300
APRIL 9, 2024	
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET POSTURE	311
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	311
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	313
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Austin, The Honorable Lloyd J., III, Secretary of Defense	315
Brown, General Charles Q., Jr., USAF, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	327
Questions for the Record	378
APRIL 10, 2024	
UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND UNITED STATES CYBER COMMAND POSTURE	401
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	401
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	403
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Maier, The Honorable Christopher P., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict	404
Fenton, General Bryan P., USA, Commander, United States Special Oper- ations Command	406
Haugh, General Timothy D., USAF, Commander, United States Cyber Com- mand; Director, National Security Agency; Chief, Central Security Service ..	419
Questions for the Record	466

APRIL 11, 2024	
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION COMMAND	Page 481
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	481
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Cavoli, General Christopher G., USA Commander, United States European Command, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Supreme Allied Commander Europe	481
Van Ovest, General Jacqueline D., USAF Commander, United States Trans- portation Command	493
Questions for the Record	542
APRIL 16, 2024	
AIR FORCE POSTURE	555
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	555
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Kendall, The Honorable Frank, III, Secretary of The Air Force	555
Allvin, General David W., USAF, Chief of Staff of The Air Force	557
Saltzman, General B. Chance, USSF, Chief of Space Operations	559
Questions for the Record	602
APRIL 17, 2024	
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRA- TION ATOMIC ENERGY DEFENSE ACTIVITIES	619
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	619
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Granholm, The Honorable Jennifer M., Secretary of Energy	619
Hruby, The Honorable Jill M., Administrator of The National Nuclear Secu- rity Administration	621
Questions for the Record	662

APRIL 18, 2024	
ARMY POSTURE	Page 689
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	689
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	691
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Wormuth, The Honorable Christine E., Secretary of The Army	692
George, General Randy A., USA, Chief of Staff of The Army	694
Questions for the Record	737
MAY 16, 2024	
NAVY POSTURE	753
MEMBER STATEMENTS	
Statement of Senator Jack Reed	753
Statement of Senator Roger Wicker	757
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Del Toro, The Honorable Carlos, Secretary of The Navy	759
Franchetti, Admiral Lisa Marie, Chief of Naval Operations	780
Smith, General Eric, Commandant of The Marine Corps	791
Questions for the Record	847
Appendix	
Navy Reserve 2024 Training Requirements Summary	897

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND AND UNITED
STATES SPACE COMMAND**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony from General Anthony Cotton, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, or STRATCOM, and General Stephen Whiting, Commander of U.S. Space Command, or SPACECOM. Gentleman, thank you for your service to the Nation, and please extend our thanks to the men and women who serve with you.

As in the past we have asked the commanders of STRATCOM and SPACECOM to testify together. Until 2019, SPACECOM was a part of Strategic Command. As SPACECOM continues its standup as an independent command it is important to identify any gaps or seams that have emerged during the transition.

On the global stage, Russia continues to behave recklessly with regard to its nuclear weapons strategy. Recent press reports say that Russia is considering violating international space treaties and endangering the global use of space for vital communications and sensing. Further, Putin has sabotaged the strategic stability and arms control policies that both our nations have respected for decades. Over the past year, Russia has suspended its participation in the New START treaty and withdrawn its ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Russia continues to develop new third-strike nuclear weapons, ranging from multi-megaton underwater torpedoes to nuclear-powered cruise missiles.

At the same time, China is also advancing its missile capabilities. China is quickly expanding its land-based missile silos, building new air and sea nuclear delivery platforms, and completing its nuclear command, control, and communications, or NC3. These developments may have significant impacts on stability in the Indo-Pacific and America's extended deterrence commitment to our allies in the region.

Simply put, we are now in a trilateral nuclear competitive era.

General Cotton, I would ask for your thoughts on how your command is handling this challenge and how you plan to address your force structure to deter both Russia and China while minimizing the potential for escalation.

The United States is also well underway in its nuclear modernization cycle, a once-in-a-generation effort to renew the aging legs of our nuclear triad. As part of that effort, I understand the Department is encountering such large costs increases in the Sentinel ICBM replacement program that there has been a [unclear 0:02:28] breach, which means the program must undergo statutory reviews and an analysis of reasons for cost overruns. The fiscal year 2024 NDAA required an assessment of the operational impacts of these acquisition delays, and we would ask for an update on the situation.

General Whiting, the threats to the United States and allied space systems continue to increase. As we are seeing in Ukraine, dominance in the electromagnetic spectrum plays a vital role in modern warfare. We have seen large swaths of the battlefield in the Ukraine rendered inoperable due to GPS denial for precision weapons, as well as the disabling of commercial satellite systems at both military [unclear 0:03:11].

China, for its part, has invested heavily in jamming the electronic and kinetic technologies that could be used to disable our military and civilian satellites. We are in a race to dominate this field because any future conflict will involve a constant battle to control the spectrum and cripple the adversaries' communications and command and control. General Whiting, I would ask for your perspective on the roles and vulnerabilities of these space systems as well as lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine.

Space Command recently announced that it has reached full operational capability. However, in my view full operational capability does not necessarily mean full mission readiness. As a warfighting domain, space requires new battle management capabilities, especially the ability to detect a threat in space and to relay that information to a weapons system. This battle management directly affects our ability to protect troops on the ground, and SPACECOM must continue to integrate fully with the other combatant commanders. General, I hope you will update us on this concept and what the Committee can do to help bring it to fruition.

Finally, I would note that the missile defense mission was recently transferred from STRATCOM to SPACECOM. This mission set has never been more important for our troops around the world, as we have seen threats increasing in the Red Sea, Middle East, and Ukraine. I would like to know how you are integrating missile defense into your command and what capabilities you need to protect our warfighters.

Thank you again to our witnesses for appearing today. I look forward to your testimonies.

I would note for my colleagues that there will be a classified briefing immediately following this session in SVC-217, to continue our discussion.

Let me now recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for their service.

Last year's congressional Strategic Posture Commission issued a report that was disquieting. Its conclusion was that the United States must fundamentally update our nuclear and space programs if we have any hope of countering growing threats from Russia and China. Unfortunately, the current Administration has naively maintained the status quo.

I am choosing my words carefully in making this statement.

While the United States has stayed complacent, Russia and China have advanced by leaps and bounds in their nuclear and space programs.

As we enter the third year of Putin's war against Ukraine, Russia remains a major strategic threat to the United States. Moscow owns the world's largest, most modern nuclear arsenal, giving it a 10-to-11 advantage over the United States in tactical nuclear weapons.

Russia has also developed new weapons unlike anything in the U.S. inventory. It stocks nuclear-powered, trans-oceanic, autonomous torpedoes and intercontinental cruise missiles. Against such weapons, we are currently defenseless.

As bad as this sounds, China is rapidly becoming an even greater threat. Beijing is modernizing and expanding its nuclear forces at breakneck speed. It will likely outpace the United States in the early 2030's. Already it successfully deployed an operational strategic triad of nuclear missiles, bombers, and submarines.

Over the past 3 years, China has tripled the size of its nuclear arsenal and built an ICBM network larger than our own. The Chinese have flown a missile that can drop nuclear warheads from orbit anywhere on earth, with virtually no warning.

Both Russia and China are also openly developing and testing counter-space capabilities. Each country has used kinetic weapons to obliterate orbiting satellites. When this is done, the blasts scatter thousands of debris fragments, endanger hundreds of other satellites, and preview a frightening future. Unfortunately, these aggressive actions only scratch the surface of their real capabilities.

One would expect these threats to generate a sense of urgency in Washington. Today's nuclear and space dangers should prompt us to reassess our assumptions about the threat environment and realign our resources accordingly. This is the unanimous recommendation of the Bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission, the unanimous recommendation of this bipartisan commission.

Instead, we see more of the same. The current Administration consistently delays nuclear and space modernization programs. It chooses to dawdle instead of actively confront a pair of dire truths:

the United States' nuclear capabilities are falling behind, and the future of war will extend to space.

Collaboration with Congress and the White House could replace that inaction with progress. We can start reclaiming lost ground by following the recommendations of the Strategic Posture Commission, the unanimous recommendations of this bipartisan commission.

We must accelerate the National Nuclear Security Administration's restoration of our basic industrial capabilities. The current, slow pace is out of touch with the reality.

Likewise, we must make progress on the Sentinel ICBM and *Columbia* submarine programs. These programs require sustained investment and innovation. But the benefit is worth the price tag and elbow grease that it will require. The advances made by our adversaries demand both defensive and offensive military solutions.

I would like to hear from our witnesses about how this Committee can help create a sense of urgency when it comes to accelerating the modernization of our strategic arsenal and adapting our forces to the new threat environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

General Cotton, your comments, please.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL ANTHONY J. COTTON, USAF,
COMMANDER OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND**

General COTTON. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of this Committee. It is an honor to be here today alongside General Whiting and a privilege to represent the servicemembers and civilians of the United States Strategic Command.

This is my second year appearing before you as the STRATCOM Commander. I would like to thank this Committee and Congress for their support not only to national defense but to my portfolio. I have submitted my posture statement for the record.

The most important message I want to deliver today is that the forces under my command are ready to deter our adversaries and respond decisively should deterrence fail. No adversary should ever doubt our capability today. As a global warfighting command, STRATCOM sets conditions across the globe as the ultimate guarantor of national allied security. Our forces and capabilities underpin and enable all other Joint Forces operations.

We do this in the face of challenges unlike anything America has ever encountered. We are confronting not one but two nuclear peers, the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China (PRC). This reality, combined by missile developments in North Korea, Iran's nuclear ambitions, and the growing relationships amongst those nations add new layers of complexity to our strategic calculus. It also raises the possibility of simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed adversaries.

The PRC is surpassing the United States in its number of fixed intercontinental ballistic missile launchers, and projections indicate its nuclear arsenal would encompass approximately 1,000 warheads by 2030. As Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine enters

its third year, its reliance on nuclear forces increases as its conventional forces attrit.

Beyond Russia's traditional strategic triad it is expanding and modernizing nuclear options that are not covered by international arms treaties. Last Friday, President Putin stated that 95 percent of Russia's strategic nuclear forces have been modernized. In short, our competitors are improving their position against the United States and its allies in multiple domains at rates that are far exceeding the pace we have seen just a few years ago.

While our legacy systems continue to hold potential adversaries at risk, it is absolutely critical we continue at speed with the modernization of our nuclear triad, including land-based ICBMs, the B-21, the B-52, the *Columbia*-class submarine, the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile, and LRSO, as well as numerous related systems, while also focusing on the NC3 enterprise with its upgrades and cybersecurity.

I urge Congress to continue supporting these critical national security capabilities, their associated infrastructure, and the sustainment of legacy systems during the modernization period.

Let me be clear. While modernization will continue to be the priority, STRATCOM forces are ready to fight tonight, and my components will always be ready to fight tonight.

So I thank you, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you, Chairman.

[The prepared statement of General Anthony J. Cotton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ANTHONY J. COTTON

INTRODUCTION

United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) is a global warfighting combatant command (CCMD). Our mission is to deter strategic attack through a safe, secure, effective, and credible global combat capability and, when directed, prevail in conflict. Our people are foundational to the Command's mission and success, ensuring the safety and security of our Nation and our Allies, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I want to thank the President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for their continued leadership in support of USSTRATCOM's mission areas. I would like to thank Congress for its continued support in providing USSTRATCOM with the necessary resources to execute our mission and for commissioning the recently released bipartisan report on America's Strategic Posture, which provides valuable insight into our challenges and offers a number of recommendations to preserve existing advantages.

Today, the United States, its Allies, and partners continue to be confronted by two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries: the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation. We are also faced with the growing nuclear threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Islamic Republic of Iran's continued expansion of its nuclear program. What's more, our potential adversaries are increasing their level of coordination and cooperation with one another. This threat environment raises the possibility of near-simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed, opportunistic adversaries.

The United States addresses these challenges through integrated deterrence, campaigning, and actions that build enduring advantages—leveraging the capabilities of our Joint Force to ensure that the President has options to deter all potential adversaries. Integrated deterrence is the bedrock of our National Defense Strategy (NDS). As the NDS articulates, integrated deterrence spans all instruments of national power, all Allies and partners, all domains and capabilities, and is backstopped by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. USSTRATCOM's role, however, is not limited to nuclear plans and operations.

USSTRATCOM responsibilities span strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) enterprise operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) operations (JEMSO), global strike, and missile threat assessment. Executing these responsibilities entails close alignment and collabora-

tion with senior national and Department of Defense (DOD) leadership, CCMDs, defense agencies, and other elements of national power. Strategic deterrence is critical to the DOD's integrated deterrence approach.

OUR PEOPLE

To fulfill our strategic deterrence mission, USSTRATCOM relies on a team of military and civilian members who are steadfast in their dedication. People are the cornerstone of our organization, and I take pride in working alongside such a talented and dedicated group of professionals. I am committed to ensuring they have the support and resources needed to succeed, and I firmly believe that investing in our people is essential to our success. By providing comprehensive professional development opportunities, career-enhancing experiences, and targeted training programs to ensure our personnel are well-prepared to conquer the challenges ahead, we are fostering the growth of the next generation of strategic deterrence experts.

GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The peace dividend once envisioned at the end of the cold war has unfortunately failed to materialize in the long-term. Strategic competition is on the rise, including in the nuclear domain, as evidenced by Russia's comprehensive nuclear modernization efforts and the PRC's rapid and opaque nuclear weapons buildup. The emphasis on nuclear capabilities by potential adversaries, coupled with the incorporation of technologies like hypersonic weapons (HSW) and fractional orbital bombardment (FOB) capabilities, significantly escalates global security risks. As noted in the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, the PRC and Russia also likely possess capabilities relevant to chemical and biological warfare that pose a threat to U.S., Allied, and partner forces, military operations, and civilian populations.

Taken individually, these developments are concerning; they are only exacerbated by the increasing levels of cooperation between and among the PRC, Russian Federation, DPRK, and Islamic Republic of Iran, which creates the possibility for simultaneous crises and raises the risk of opportunistic aggression. For example, Russian and PRC bombers flew joint patrols over the western Pacific this past November and conducted a joint maritime patrol near the Aleutian Islands over the summer. The DPRK and Iran have also delivered arms to Russia to support its war against Ukraine. This increasing cooperation and the risk of simultaneous crisis or conflict place a premium on credible, robust, and flexible joint force response options that signal our readiness and commitment to potential adversaries, Allies, and partners.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The 2022 NDS identified the PRC as the Department's pacing challenge and our most consequential strategic competitor. PRC leadership has stated that the expansion of nuclear capabilities is necessary to achieve "great power status," and potentially perceives its nuclear arsenal as a key deterrent to U.S. intervention in the region. While the PRC's long-term nuclear strategy and requirements remain unclear, the trajectory of its efforts points toward a large nuclear and more diverse force with a high degree of survivability, reliability, and effectiveness.

The PRC currently has a nuclear triad consisting of bombers, submarines, and land-based missiles. Its H-6N bomber is equipped to carry air-launched ballistic and cruise missiles, and the PRC is actively developing a strategic stealth bomber, the H-20. The PRC also has six *Jin*-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) equipped with new third-generation JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), capable of striking the continental United States from PRC littoral waters. Additionally, the PRC has approximately 1,000 medium and intermediate-range dual-capable conventional or nuclear ballistic missiles capable of inflicting significant damage to U.S., Allied, or partner forces and Homelands in the Indo-Pacific.

As I reported to Congress in January 2023, the PRC's arsenal of land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers currently exceeds that of the United States. Today, the PRC likely has more than 500 operational nuclear warheads and, should it continue building weapons at its current pace, could have more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030. In 2022, it built three new ICBM fields, with at least 300 missile silos, each capable of housing the solid-propellant CSS-10 Mod 2 ICBM. The PRC also maintains road mobile CSS-20 ICBMs, each armed with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV), and is developing a new generation of mobile ICBMs. These developments, combined with the PRC's increasing counter-space and cyber capabilities, pose a complex, but not insurmountable challenge to U.S. strategic deterrence.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The 2022 NDS identified Russia as an acute threat. Its unprovoked war against Ukraine has caused the largest conflict on the European continent since World War II and undermines the rules-based international system. The invasion has also highlighted Russia's willingness to employ nuclear coercion and attempt to influence decisionmaking within the United States and our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies. Russia's violation of specific obligations within the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) further exacerbates this issue.

Russia is currently in possession of the largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal of any nation. In September 2023, it proclaimed the RS-28 SARMAT ICBM had been placed on combat duty. Additionally, Russia continues to field new *Severodvinsk*-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines, as well as *Dolgorukiy*-class SSBNs, armed with the SS-N-32 Bulava SLBM.

Beyond Russia's traditional strategic triad, it is expanding and modernizing its nuclear options. These include nuclear-capable hypersonic systems such as the Tsirkon land attack cruise missile and the Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile, the last of which Russia has employed frequently against Ukraine in a conventional role. These hypersonic systems add diversity and flexibility to Russia's nuclear arsenal and complement its stockpile of approximately 2,000 theater nuclear weapons that do not fall under New START limits.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The DPRK views its nuclear arsenal as a means to ensure regime survival and influence Republic of Korea and United States Forces in the area. The DPRK is developing and fielding mobile short-, intermediate-, and intercontinental-range nuclear capabilities that place the United States Homeland and regional Allies and partners at risk. DPRK leadership recently declared that the country's status as a nuclear weapons state "has now become irreversible," and it is possible the DPRK will resume nuclear testing in order to demonstrate its capabilities.

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to expand its nuclear program by increasing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and deploying additional advanced centrifuges, which has shortened the time Iran would need to acquire enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon. Iran already possesses the region's largest arsenal of conventional ballistic missiles, which threaten U.S. regional bases and are capable of reaching as far as Southern Europe. Iran also continues to proliferate advanced conventional weapons to non-state militia groups across the Middle East—which have been used in countless attacks against U.S. and partner personnel and interests across the region, undermining regional stability.

ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION: THE TRIAD AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

To address these threats, the United States is undertaking a multi-generational, decades-long modernization of our entire nuclear deterrent, including all three legs of the triad, as well as our command, control, and communications capabilities. The comprehensive modernization programs we are currently undertaking have not occurred on this scale since the 1980's. Throughout this period, we will retain credible forces to deter strategic attacks, assure our Allies and partners, and provide options to the President if necessary. USSTRATCOM remains vigilant and will continue to posture available forces throughout the triad's transition to ensure we will continue to be able to meet our requirements. I urge Congress to continue supporting these critical national security capabilities and associated infrastructure.

NUCLEAR COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS (NC3) ENTERPRISE
MODERNIZATION

The President's ability to command, control, and communicate (C3) with the Nation's nuclear forces is critical to the entire nuclear enterprise, and it must remain effective and resilient under all circumstances. Our NC3 Enterprise is a key component of strategic deterrence, and with congressional support, the DOD is focused on improving our NC3 capabilities while addressing potential threats. Our efforts are based on innovation and collaboration, partnering with various sectors—including government, industry, and academia—to incorporate advanced concepts into NC3 projects. This collaborative approach is vital for safely integrating new technologies into our NC3 architecture and for identifying and addressing potential strategic gaps.

To ensure a viable NC3 capability in support of Strategic Deterrence, there are numerous efforts underway in the space, aerial, and terrestrial layers. Regarding the space layer, the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) space constellation is fully deployed, and the command post terminals leveraging it are nearing fully fielded status. This modernization effort will permit the transition away from our legacy capability, provide enhanced missile warning, increase national-level conferencing connectivity and security, and improve Presidential decision dissemination to our nuclear forces.

We are also in the process of replacing aging aerial layer command and control nodes like the E-4B and E-6B in support of future senior leader communications and force direction

messaging. The E-4B Nightwatch aircraft currently serves as the National Airborne Operations Center and is an essential National asset. Its recapitalization program, the Survivable Airborne Operations Center, will serve as the next generation airborne command and control center platform for the President, Secretary of Defense, and Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The E-6B Mercury serves two roles. It is responsible for the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission, serving as an Emergency Action Message (EAM) relay to all legs of the nuclear triad. It also serves as an alternate USSTRATCOM Command Center (Looking Glass), providing EAM origination and ICBM secondary launch capability. The E-6B follow-on platform, the E-XX, will execute the EAM relay (TACAMO) mission only, and must be operational by the E-6B's projected end of service life in fiscal year 2038.

The terrestrial layer is undergoing modernization efforts that round out the Nation's ability to provide a more diverse communication architecture that provides additional resiliency to our nuclear force assets and ensures flexibility and survivability from emerging threats. In pursuit of this enhanced architecture, the Air Force and Navy are modernizing the Strategic Automated Command and Control System and Nova nuclear messaging transports to better integrate these complementary critical Service systems, providing high priority direction to all three legs of the triad. In addition, the Defense Information Systems Agency is funding and pursuing a modernized means of Senior Leader conferencing during national events.

These NC3 system upgrades will ensure an integrated, secure, and survivable strategic nuclear communication capability that meets stringent nuclear, cyber protection, and cryptographic certification requirements. Urgently needed, these recapitalization and improvement programs must continue without interruption for on-time fielding to meet operational requirements and to deter adversaries from seeking to gain strategic advantage from non-nuclear attacks on the Nation's NC3 architecture.

JOINT ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM OPERATIONS (JEMSO)

The electromagnetic spectrum is a critical maneuver space in modern warfare, and our reliance on it to conduct operations is paramount. As the EMS environment grows more contested and congested, it is vital to understand the threats we face and how they impact our ability to operate. The USSTRATCOM Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center (JEC) was established at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, with bipartisan congressional support, on July 26th, 2023. In addition, CCMDs created Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cells (JEMSOCs) in their headquarters to improve EMSO readiness and to address evolving adversary threats. The JEC trains and assesses the progress of these JEMSOCs, maintains governance over JEMSO training, and analyzes the operational impact of U.S. EMSO policy discussions related to spectrum management.

Through participation in joint exercises and wargames, the JEC improves joint force interoperability and coordination and provides superior military advice. The JEC identifies improvement areas by assessing current capabilities and appraising future force concepts, ultimately enhancing our superiority in the EMS environment. These initiatives are critical for assessing the Department's mission performance and ensuring readiness against diverse threats.

Key to maintaining this readiness is our capability to conduct training in realistic EMS environments. This is a significant challenge with the increased demand from non-DOD users. To address this, USSTRATCOM will continue to work closely with Joint Staff and DOD Chief

Information Officer (CIO) to ensure operational risks to the mission are understood when decisions are made on spectrum allocation.

LAND-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's land-based component, the Minuteman III (MMIII) ICBM system is our most responsive strategic deterrent option. It is a geographically dispersed, reliable, and highly responsive force with the most robust and ironclad NC3 system enabling direct communication with the President of the United States. Our ICBMs raise the bar for an adversary considering a counterforce strike against the United States; no adversary can be confident in its ability to destroy our ICBMs via limited attack or prior to their being launched.

The MMIII missile initially deployed over 50 years ago with a planned 10-year service life. Its supporting infrastructure of silos and Launch Facilities is even older. The missile's robust design, combined with judicious investments, and the dedication of our airmen, have permitted the MMIII to operate well beyond its original design life. It remains a formidable deterrent, but asset attrition, aging, parts obsolescence, and sustainment shortfalls present increasingly significant operational challenges. To address this, the Air Force has identified comprehensive capabilities to keep the MMIII weapon system viable until end of life; Centralized Asset Management (CAM) funding increases will ensure the MMIII weapon system meets USSTRATCOM alert requirements in the near term, and support equipment acquisition program investments will help reduce weapon system sustainment risks.

The LGM-35A Sentinel ICBM Program is intended to replace the MMIII weapon system with a modern land-based deterrent, and the program is synchronized with MMIII decommissioning to avoid operational shortfalls. Sentinel constitutes an incredibly complex mega-project to replace every facet of the MMIII weapon system. The program includes a secure and robust command, control, and communications capability, a new missile, and hundreds of infrastructure projects, including hardened facilities spread across thousands of miles in five states. The command and launch segment is the most complex segment of the Sentinel program. It includes 450 refurbished and modernized Launch Facilities, thousands of miles of modern fiber optic networks, the acquisition of permanent and temporary real estate easements with hundreds of landowners, and operational site activation efforts necessary to support the workforce responsible for converting the Launch Facilities.

The Sentinel program is unique in size and scope—with no recent comparisons in terms of magnitude. It is critical that the Air Force, with the support of Congress, continue investments to ensure sustainment of MMIII to manage end-of-life margin until it is fully replaced by a modern ICBM weapon system.

SEA-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's sea-based component, the *Ohio*-class SSBN fleet, paired with the Trident II D5 Strategic Weapon System (SWS), operates virtually undetected in the world's oceans, providing a resilient, reliable, survivable, and assured second-strike capability vital to the defense of the United States and our Allies and partners. Despite the fleet's accomplishments, and its ability to achieve the mission today, it faces continuing sustainment challenges that could impact its availability until fully replaced by the *Columbia*-class in 2042.

The *Columbia*-class SSBN is the Navy's top priority strategic deterrent program for USSTRATCOM. This new submarine must achieve its first strategic deterrent patrol by 2030 to avoid an unacceptable capability gap. To address this potential gap, the Navy is investing heavily in the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) in order to ensure delivery of *Columbia* hulls 2–12 meet required timelines. These efforts will help maintain SSBN availability until the *Columbia*-class submarines are all available.

The *Columbia* Program of Record (POR) delivers at least 12 SSBNs, which is the absolute minimum required number of SSBNs to meet today's at-sea deterrence requirements. The *Columbia*-class will feature improved tactical and sonar systems, electric drive propulsion, and advanced hull coating to improve acoustic performance and maintain U.S. undersea dominance. In addition, the longer life span of the reactor and reduced maintenance requirements will increase SSBN availability compared to the *Ohio*-class SSBNs.

Shore infrastructure readiness is fundamental to supporting SSBN operational readiness requirements. This includes Navy NC3 systems, facilities, and the SSBN maintenance facilities in Bangor, WA, and Kings Bay, GA. Provision of military construction funding, as well as operations and maintenance funding, facilitates the Navy's modernization of shore infrastructure supporting the nuclear deterrence mission. One immediate example of this modernization is the *Columbia*-class expansion for the Kings Bay Trident Refit Facility (TRF), which is on track to begin in fiscal year 2025. *Columbia*-class submarines require industrial processes that TRF facilities are not currently capable of supporting. The TRF expansion project will provide

the modernization and capacity required to support the *Columbia*-class SSBNs in Kings Bay.

The *Columbia*-class will continue to carry the Trident II missile, and the D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) program will upgrade the Trident II to maintain a modern, reliable, flexible, and effective missile with advanced technology capable of adapting to emerging threats for many years to come. D5LE2 is essential to support *Columbia*-class SSBNs and requires timely and appropriate funding to maintain a viable SSBN deterrent; underfunding D5LE2 would impact technology readiness and program milestones. The success of the *Columbia*-class depends on a capable and flexible missile to safeguard credibility in both present and future threat environments.

The Navy's commitment to sustaining and modernizing its SSBN fleet underscores its dedication to maintaining the sea-based portion of the triad. Although there are challenges and risks associated with these efforts, the Navy's efforts to address sustainment concerns and modernize its fleet will ensure the Nation's strategic deterrence capabilities will remain reliable, survivable, and resilient in the future.

Anti-Submarine Warfare

Adversaries can increasingly challenge our acoustic superiority and SSBN survivability through advancements in undersea quieting, acoustic arrays, and processing capabilities. Our submarines are formidable weapon systems, but we need to address potential adversaries' undersea advances to maintain an effective and viable SSBN fleet in the long-term.

The Navy's Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) provides vital information with respect to adversary submarine and surface ship operations, providing the theater anti-submarine warfare commander with battlespace awareness that is critical to defeat the threat to our own submarines. IUSS has been a crucial component of U.S. naval operations and its recapitalization is a national imperative.

Undersea dominance is critical to national security, and we must maintain our advantage through the evolving threat environment and *Ohio* to *Columbia* transition. In addition to IUSS, the U.S. Navy must continue its efforts in the Acoustic Superiority Program. Advanced emerging technologies in this program must be delivered. By doing so, we can maintain our tactical and strategic advantage in the undersea domain, thereby ensuring the safety and security of our Nation.

AIR-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's air-based component, our bomber fleet is the most flexible and visible leg; it represents a crucial component of our Nation's strategic deterrent and responsive assurance to United States Allies. Enabled by our tanker fleet, the United States is the only country with the ability and capacity to provide bombers to support U.S. operations and Allies and partners around the world.

The U.S. bomber force represents an incredibly versatile set of tools. Our bomber and tanker fleets support both nuclear and conventional operations, enabling the execution of strike options to support national objectives worldwide. The bomber fleet's dynamic force employment versatility makes it an indispensable triad component. I strongly encourage Congress to continue to support our budget requests for the bomber fleet, including its associated weapons and communication systems.

B-52H Modernization

The B-52 has served as the backbone of our bomber fleet for over 60 years, and with congressionally supported modernization and sustainment programs, it is set to remain viable and effective for another three decades. Achieving this milestone poses several maintenance and operational challenges, requiring dedicated technical solutions, resources, and the hard work of our remarkable airmen.

The B-52H requires critical upgrades, including the Commercial Engine Replacement Program, which replaces the outdated and inefficient engines with modern variants offering longer flight range, lower emissions, less tanker requirements, and improved supply chain management for the Air Force. The Radar Modernization Program will enable USSTRATCOM and Air Force Global Strike Command to effectively employ B-52 nuclear and conventional weapon capabilities, as well as enhance navigation and weather avoidance functions. Finally, the Advanced Extremely High Frequency integration will enable a survivable, two-way command and control communications system as well as provide a path for future growth and polar communications integration. These B-52H recapitalization and improvement programs are urgently needed and must continue without interruption to ensure on-time fielding of a modernized B-52J fleet to meet operational requirements.

B-2 Modernization

The B-2 fleet is a crucial delivery platform, as it is the only low-observable bomber in the world that can penetrate denied environments and deliver a wide range of munitions against high-value strategic targets. We must preserve this unique operational advantage as the Air Force transitions from the B-2 to the B-21 fleet.

To ensure a seamless and successful transition, Congress must continue to fully fund B-2 sustainment and modernization programs until the B-21 achieves full operational capability for both conventional and nuclear missions. In particular, B-2 modernization must include the Low Observable Signature and Supportability Modifications program, which will enhance its ability to penetrate anti-access area-denial (A2AD) combat environments. To enable reliable C2 pathways, the B-2 Advanced Communications Program will provide secure satellite connectivity beyond line-of-sight, ultra-high frequency line-of-sight, high-frequency anti-jam, and encrypted voice communications. This modernization will allow our aircrews to communicate securely with our Allies and partners.

By investing in these modernization efforts, the DOD can ensure the B-2 fleet remains a formidable force in the face of evolving threats. This will enhance the Air Force's operational capabilities and significantly boost national security.

B-21 Raider

The B-21, along with the B-52J, will be the mainstay of the triad's air leg, making it an essential part of the Nation's defense strategy. The Raider will provide long range, exceptional access, and diverse payload wherever necessary to help deter and win wars. The program is on track to meet operational requirements set by USSTRATCOM, with flight testing under way and the first operational aircraft scheduled for delivery in the late 2020's.

The Raider POR delivers a minimum of 100 aircraft. As the national security environment evolves, the Air Force may require additional B-21 aircraft to meet future global conventional and nuclear warfighting needs. It is crucial this advanced bomber program remains fully funded, stays on track, and delivers on time to prevent any potential shortfalls in the bomber strategic deterrent force.

Air-Launched Cruise Missile / Long-Range Standoff Missile and Nuclear Gravity Bombs

Today, the air-delivered weapons portfolio consists of the Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) and nuclear gravity bombs. This combination provides an appropriate mix of standoff and direct attack munitions to meet near-term operational requirements while the DOD and

National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) explore options for future capabilities. Longer-term, the ALCM will be replaced by the long-range standoff (LRSO) cruise missile as our Nation's only air-delivered nuclear standoff capability—offering the President more flexible and scalable options to penetrate and survive advanced air defense systems. The B61-12 will complete fielding in fiscal year 2026; along with the B61-13, it will extend the service life of the B61. The flexibility of these air-delivered systems is a key attribute in all USSTRATCOM operational plans. The on-time delivery of these weapons is the critical risk mitigation component for potential delays in the fielding of other modernization programs.

Tanker Support

The U.S. tanker fleet is the primary enabler of airborne strike platforms, providing global reach without relying on intermediate basing locations. A robust tanker fleet is essential to sustain USSTRATCOM missions, but the aging KC-135 is currently our only nuclear-certified refueling platform.

To address this, the Air Force is working to revitalize the tanker fleet through the rapid nuclear certification of the KC-46 and the acceleration of the Next Generation Air-refueling System program. These initiatives are vital to continued long-range air operations.

We must modernize and acquire more tankers to enable simultaneous global operations across the spectrum of conflict involving multiple CCMDs. Full congressional and Service commitment to tanker sustainment and modernization efforts will ensure the United States maintains a global strategic advantage, even in simultaneous conflicts.

ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION: INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SECURITY

We cannot accomplish our mission without the industry, infrastructure, and security that supports the triad and our core functions. These key enablers ensure that our weapons and weapons platforms are designed and manufactured to fight, and win, today and in the future.

DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

A healthy defense industrial base (DIB) that can provide advanced technology, capability, and capacity is fundamental to our ability to compete strategically. The strength of our defense capabilities is directly linked to the talents of the American workforce and the robustness and innovation of our industrial base. Building a strong and resilient workforce and supporting infrastructure to execute PORs on-time, while modernizing and sustaining current forces, is one of the most important issues we face today.

It is imperative to develop the DIB and workforce capable of creating the infrastructure necessary to support all our modernization programs, particularly the Sentinel ICBM program, the *Columbia*-class SSBN program, and future follow-on programs for the Trident II D5 SLBM. This includes ensuring the right throughput for trade schools and producing skilled technical labor, such as technicians proficient in concrete work, welding, and rebar fabrication. The success of the major levels of effort in ballistic missile programs in the 1960's, like the Polaris missile program and the Minuteman project, driven by an energized whole-of-government approach, serves as a historical precedent for the current national imperative.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) and the Navy have dedicated considerable study efforts toward maximizing efficiency and identifying substantial SIB programmatic gaps; these studies have resulted in real efforts to assess shortfalls and address growing industrial base demand. Continued congressional support is critical to overhauling the SIB to advance the Navy's shipbuilding efforts. Execution of the 1+2 (1 *Columbia*-class SSBN + 2 *Virginia* SSNs per year) submarine build plan is a national imperative. Currently, the shipbuilding industry only delivers one *Virginia*-class submarine every 10 months instead of the targeted 6 months. Achieving required production levels will shape our Nation's undersea dominance and sea-based strategic deterrence well into the 2080's. Continued support for the DIB and SIB is key to sustaining current capabilities and ensuring we remain at the forefront of defense technology.

NUCLEAR SECURITY ENTERPRISE (NSE) AND WEAPONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The Nation's nuclear weapon stockpile is currently safe, secure, effective, and credible. The NNSA workforce achieved significant milestones in fiscal year 2023 with initial fielding of the B61-12 gravity bomb and the W88 Alt 370 warhead. Progress also continues toward achieving the first production of a war reserve plutonium pit in 2024. These accomplishments notwithstanding, work remains on our aging nuclear stockpile and its supporting enterprise as our nuclear competitors accelerate fielding of advanced capabilities.

While I am confident that we can meet objectives today, performance degradation and increasing uncertainty reduces the operational flexibility I have in providing options to the President. As the Nuclear Posture Review makes clear, a resilient and adaptive nuclear security enterprise is key to managing geopolitical as well as operational, technical, and programmatic risks. Our success depends on executing stockpile and infrastructure PORs to maintain the current stockpile, modernize weapons where practicable, develop and field modern replacements when required, and enhance the NSE with additional residual capacity to enable a responsive and resilient weapons program.

As our weapons stockpile ages beyond its planned service life, the margins in our fielded weapons decrease. The confidence in our deterrent over time has been sustained by the exceptional performance and knowledge provided through the stockpile surveillance program, which gives us insights into the design margins built into these systems. This is a testament to the work of past designers, engineers, and production staff, but we cannot rely on this approach indefinitely. We need to find alternative methods to become more predictive in our surveillance programs to ensure the continued safety and effectiveness of our aging strategic stockpile.

Modernizing a new or significantly updated weapon in today's enterprise takes a decade or more. As we look ahead, considerable work needs to be done to modernize weapons across all three legs of the triad. The first wave of modernization is the current POR that includes the W80-4 for the LRSO, the W87-1/Mk21A for the Sentinel, and the W93/Mk7 for the SSBNs. Subsequent nuclear weapons stockpile modernization will follow, with programs required through the 2040's and beyond.

It is important to note that we do not have residual NSE capacity to manage emerging risks. For example, we have little capacity to respond to unforeseen issues in our aging stockpile without impacting the POR or planned future modernization programs. We must not lose sight of the larger need for modern weapons development and fielding for the warfighter. Only the NNSA can provide this capability.

As in past years, our priority remains the establishment of a credible plutonium pit manufacturing capability. However, modernizing the stockpile requires more than pit production. To improve future readiness and implement the flexibility to respond to the changing geopolitical environment, we must also establish necessary capacities and capabilities to manufacture and produce uranium, tritium, high explosives, lithium, and radiation-hardened electronics.

I strongly endorse the efforts of NNSA and Service partners to ensure a modern stockpile, responsive infrastructure, and a robust science and technology base for our strategic deterrence force. As a critical partner to integrated deterrence, I strongly endorse the Services and NNSA's efforts to recover lost schedules, create margin, reduce USSTRATCOM's mission risk, and decrease the Nation's strategic risk.

NUCLEAR SECURITY

Our defense-in-depth strategy for the safety and security of U.S. nuclear weapons begins with each weapon and extends outward to protect systems, bases, structures, and personnel. Any failure in their protection can raise questions about the credibility of our national deterrent. As we continue to assess and analyze threats to fielded forces and strategic capabilities, we will shape and advocate for programs to close security gaps and maintain our stringent security standards to deter, detect, delay, deny, and defeat threats.

MH-139A Grey Wolf Helicopter

The Joint Force achieved a significant ICBM security milestone with the contract award for the MH-139A Grey Wolf. This helicopter increases the overall protection of our nuclear arsenal by providing an enhanced rapid response against threats to our land-based ICBM infrastructure. When compared to the legacy UH-1N, the MH-139A provides our forces enhanced speed, range, endurance, payload, and survivability. These attributes ensure our strategic advantage by protecting assets vital to national security. We look forward to achieving operational capability and employing these highly capable platforms.

Weapon Generation Facility

As we modernize nuclear weapons and platforms, the Air Force is replacing aging weapon storage areas with weapons generation facilities (WGFs). These WGFs are vital to security, sustainment, and fielding of the Sentinel, B-21, and LRSO triad modernization programs, and their associated weapons. The Air Force will conduct weapon maintenance, storage operations, and weapons generation activities in a single reinforced WGF at each strategic base. The WGFs enhance weapon security by consolidating maintenance and sustainment activities into one common facility, and are a key part of the nuclear modernization effort that must deliver on time to meet weapon and platform POR delivery schedules.

Uncrewed Systems

The proliferation of uncrewed systems with increasing technological sophistication poses a challenge to the Department and our Nation's nuclear enterprise. We are in a rapidly accelerating technological race with our adversaries. USSTRATCOM executed assessments in 2022 and 2023 to validate the effectiveness of our counter-uncrewed aircraft systems as a step toward refining requirements, tactics, techniques, and procedures to advance future capabilities. Investing smartly and leveraging partnerships with academia and industry are crucial to secure our technological advantage and protect our ability to preserve strategic deterrence. I urge Congress to continue supporting these areas so we can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing technological landscape and compete into the future.

INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE

Although the Missile Defense mission was recently transferred from USSTRATCOM to USSPACECOM, the protection of our fielded forces from air and missile threats remains a critical responsibility of USSTRATCOM. Moreover, integrated air and missile defense is an enduring component of integrated deterrence. The missile defense enterprise continues to evolve in a dynamic, increasingly complex and challenging threat environment. USSTRATCOM's ability to deter and respond to strategic attack requires response to adversary cruise, ballistic, hypersonic missile, and other delivery systems. The breathtaking pace of development, testing, and fielding of these weapon systems demonstrates adversaries' investment and commitment to advanced capabilities.

USSTRATCOM continues to work with CCMDs, Services, and Agencies to posture U.S. Forces while working to field responsive, persistent, resilient, and cost-effective

sensor capabilities able to detect, characterize, track, and engage current and projected threats. USSTRATCOM also supports improvements in early warning, identification, tracking, discrimination, and attribution for the range of air and missile threats to the Homeland and our strategic forces.

HYPERSONIC WEAPONS

USSTRATCOM provides nuclear and conventional options to support deterrence objectives and global strike responsibilities. USSTRATCOM relies on Conventional-Nuclear Integration planning, which includes planning for employing conventional HSWs capable of holding time-sensitive, high-value targets at risk. These weapons could allow mission planners to tailor specific effects to better complement the planning and use of nuclear forces, while enhancing Presidential decision space. HSWs could provide potential flexible strike options to influence adversary decisionmaking and potentially restore deterrence before reaching the nuclear threshold.

The Services continue to develop and plan for operational fielding of hypersonic weapon systems to support multiple CCMDs. The Army and Navy are developing a common all-up round weapon to deploy in the near-and far-term on mobile transporter erector launcher batteries, *Zumwalt*-class destroyers, and *Virginia*-class submarines, respectively. The Air Force is completing the Air-launched Rapid Response Weapon flight test program and working on high Mach and hypersonic cruise missiles. USSTRATCOM will continue working with partners to develop responsive, affordable strike systems for national security needs in support of our deterrence and global strike responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

USSTRATCOM remains steadfast in its mission. We are focused on advancing our capabilities while maintaining a credible strategic deterrent today. To ensure we can deliver, we are diligently modernizing our capabilities and adopting a dynamic, integrated approach to strategic deterrence. I am proud to lead a team of dedicated soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, guardians, and civilians committed to our mission. We are eager to bolster integrated deterrence as we continue our work with Congress, the Department of Defense, the interagency, industry, academia, and our Allies and partners.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Cotton.
General Whiting, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL STEPHEN N. WHITING, USSF, COMMANDER OF UNITED STATES SPACE COMMAND

General WHITING. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I am pleased to be joined beside my longtime friend, General Tony Cotton. I am honored to represent the 18,000 joint military and civilian professionals of United States Space Command and our five service components. Indeed, our people are the most valuable asset of national space power.

U.S. Space Command, working with allies and partners, has a moral responsibility to the Joint Force, the Nation, and our allies to provide space capabilities through all levels of conflict. Since Desert Storm, the Joint Force has become reliant on these systems, and force sized according to the assumption of always having access to space capabilities. This is why U.S. Space Command must protect and defend our space systems to ensure they are available in the face of the growing threats arrayed against us.

Inherent in this responsibility is our ability to protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attack. Our principal strategic competitors, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, now hold at risk United States and allied space capabilities because they know our Joint Force relies on space to fight the way we want—precisely, lethally, effectively, and efficiently. To put it

plainly, the PRC's and Russia's actions have transformed space into a contested, warfighting domain.

Additionally, PRC military operations, in particular, have become increasingly enabled by space at all levels of warfare, and the People's Liberation Army is improving their terrestrial forces' lethality and effectiveness by leveraging space capabilities. As of January 2024, the PRC's intelligence satellite fleet contained more than 359 systems, more than tripling its on-orbit collection presence since 2018. With their space and counterspace systems they have dramatically increased their ability to monitor, track, and target U.S. and allied forces, both terrestrially and on orbit.

Russia also continues to develop, test, and demonstrate their counterspace capabilities, despite not having achieved their war aims from their invasion of Ukraine. This ongoing ground war has revealed military reliance on space and space-enabled capabilities. To be sure, Russia's war in Ukraine has established space as an indelible enabler of terrestrial warfare.

Today United States Space Command seeks to expand competitive advantage over PRC and Russia by leveraging every available asset of the interagency, the rest of the Joint Force, our allies, and our partners in U.S. commercial industry and academia. The United States remains the best military space power in the world, yet our current architecture is optimized for operations in a benign space environment. To ensure success in the contested space environment we now find ourselves in, it is vital that U.S. Space Command is delivered improved capabilities and capacities, fully tested, and with trained personnel by 2027. While a conflict in space is not inevitable, it would certainly be devastating and disrupt our use of space for decades, so we must be ready if deterrence fails.

Simply put, the PRC is moving breathtakingly fast in space. America must rapidly increase the timeliness, quality, and quantity of our critical national space and missile defense systems to match China's speed and maintain our advantage. With the U.S. Space Force as well as the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines, and other combatant commands and other agencies, U.S. Space Command has determined priority military capabilities required by 2027 to dominate in space.

Specifically, U.S. Space Command's top five priority requirements that are key to delivering on our unified command plan responsibilities are (1) resilient and timely operational command and control; (2) integrated space fires and protection; (3) modernized, agile electronic warfare architectures; (4) enhanced battle space awareness for space warfare; and (5) cyber defense of space systems. Absent commitment to long-term investment in these integrated requirements, we risk ceding advantage to our principal strategic competitors in the space domain.

With delivery of increased capability and capacity assured, U.S. Space Command will attain the required enduring advantage over any adversary determined to conduct war in outer space, thus ensuring defense of our Homeland, the protection of the Joint Force, and our allies.

I am grateful for Congress' support to U.S. Space Command and investments to advance America's leadership in space. With your

continued backing, United States Space Command will ensure space remains sustainable, safe, stable, and secure for all.

Chairman, I have submitted my posture statement for the record, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Stephen N. Whiting follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL STEPHEN N. WHITING

INTRODUCTION

For millennia space has been a mystery that inspired dreamers to imagine what lay beyond our terrestrial environment and how it would 1 day impact our pursuits and prosperity upon Earth. Bold visionaries still have sufficient room to dream, but enough mysteries have been solved so that virtually every human being on Earth now relies upon and benefits from capabilities and resources obtained in or generated from space. U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) and our network of national and international teammates protect vital American interests in space against our strategic competitors with malign intent to hold our critical space-based capabilities at risk. Additionally, freedom of action in space is fundamental to all Joint military operations as outlined in the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and National Military Strategy. The space domain's tremendous scientific and commercial promise demands the United States continued global leadership. To ensure we fulfill our role in these national security imperatives, USSPACECOM is focused on four main lines of effort: posturing and preparing to prevail; understanding and offsetting threats; expanding and strengthening key relationships; and expanding a competitive warfighting advantage.

In terms of the space domain, we are standing in a period of history that is marked by challenges and opportunities much like the Interwar Period between World Wars in the twentieth century. Just one hundred years ago, technology advancements made the air domain essential for overarching strategic advantage. Human's ability to conquer the skies created entirely new security challenges that demanded air superiority relative to strategic competitors. Today, this Command faces strategic competitors who aim to deny space's inherent benefits from us, our Allies, and Partners. Space, unlike the skies over land and sea, has no physical limit and presents an expanding security challenge that is now central to all-domain security activities. Although Earth's orbits remain the primary focus of today's space security concerns, we are expanding space domain awareness capabilities to monitor for potential threats beyond the geosynchronous orbit.

There is an urgency for our Command to advocate for delivery of new space capabilities and capacity to retain an enduring competitive advantage. To ensure the United States—and by extension, our Allies, Partners, and the rest of humanity—continues to derive prosperity and security from space, the Command postures and prepares to maximize combat readiness, offset competitor threats to the space domain, strengthen our relationships with Allies, Partners, international organizations, and industry to deliver on new space capabilities.

There is also a vulnerability window communicated by our competitors and highlighted as we watch conflict unfold in Ukraine and Israel where missile defense and space capabilities have been tested by the quantity and quality of missile and counterspace systems. To be postured to meet this threat, USSPACECOM must sustain enduring advantage over any determined adversary threatening our national security in space. Insufficient focus and a lack of imagination to appreciate how devastating a future conflict involving space will be is a significant risk to all.

POSTURING AND PREPARING TO PREVAIL

USSPACECOM remains focused on all our USC Title 10 and Unified Command Plan (UCP) missions, in keeping with a clear legal basis for this military organization to defend and secure the space domain against continuing and immediate threats to this Nation, our Allies and Partners. This Command upholds a moral obligation to support the rest of the Joint Force by executing our specific mission responsibilities, whether in, from, or to space, reflecting the complex realities of modern conflict. We validate our readiness to conduct our UCP missions through deliberate certifications and mission assessments. To accomplish this, USSPACECOM will continue Joint training exercises, further enable integration of our multi-mission sensors with commercial and non-traditional sensors, educate Joint Warfighters in the application of comprehensive spacepower, and facilitate diversity of thought

by leveraging our Joint workforce to increase our lethality as Joint-minded space professionals.

A highly trained and cohesive workforce of dedicated uniformed and civilian warfighters enables all that we do, and thus it is essential to begin with acknowledging the incredible group of professionals composing this organization. It is an honor to lead the 1,700 Joint Force professionals assigned to the USSPACECOM headquarters and the nearly 18,000 Joint Force warfighters postured worldwide to support our efforts. This team, in partnership with the rest of the broader national security space enterprise, is responsible for conducting dynamic, responsible, and integrated space operations and provides missile defense support to deter, and if necessary, prevail in conflict.

While USSPACECOM has a unique and vital relationship with the United States Space Force, given that both of our organizations are focused on the space domain, we also enjoy tremendous support from the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, as well as the other Combatant Commands and Defense Support Agencies. The synergy of Joint Force solutions is key to developing and employing combat-ready forces and presenting integrated deterrence options to national leadership. This synergy also underpins development of space warfighting requirements that inform holistic and critical capabilities.

Similarly, strategic deterrence depends on Combatant Commands and components communication and synchronization to achieve Joint Force unified action across multi-domains. The Nexus of U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. Strategic Command, and USSPACECOM supports mutually supported/supporting relationships between combatant commanders required for Joint, all-domain dominance. The space and cyber domains, now more than ever before, are increasingly central to any multi-domain national security approach and require new thinking and collaboration beyond precedent.

USSPACECOM is focused on employing our combat-ready forces and capabilities to accomplish our missions and responsibilities as assigned in the Unified Command Plan: space operations, global sensor management, global satellite communications management, operational planning and support to trans-regional missile defense, and our role as the space Joint Force provider. Excellence in these core areas will deter aggression, ensure continued access to space, deny adversary freedom of action in space, and protect the Joint Force from adversary space-enabled attacks. To increase resiliency, redundancy, and interoperability, we are building a coalition of Allies and Partners to maintain collective advantage over strategic competitors.

UNDERSTANDING AND OFFSETING THE THREAT

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation continue to field systems and engage in behavior that threaten U.S., Allied, and Partner access to space and space-based capabilities. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have demonstrated terrestrial-based, electronic warfare capabilities that threaten friendly space-based communications and navigation capabilities. These states' persistent actions demonstrate they are committed to denying American and Allied forces the benefits of our space assets. This is why USSPACECOM must ensure that we can protect and defend our space architectures and protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attacks.

People's Republic of China: Pacing Strategic Competitor

The PRC poses the most comprehensive and considerable challenge to U.S. national security. Beijing has made clear it seeks to become the preeminent power in East Asia and a major power on the world stage, armed with a world-class military to be able to secure its sovereign interests and decide regional affairs to the PRC's advantage. By 2030, the PRC will, by many estimates, achieve world-class status in all but a few space technology areas. The PRC seeks to match or surpass the United States by 2045. The PRC is growing its military space and counterspace capabilities at breathtaking pace to deny American and Allied space capabilities when they so choose, while extending its ability to conduct long-range fires improving the precision and reach, thus the lethality, of its terrestrial forces. The modernized People's Liberation Army (PLA) monitors military forces worldwide, including U.S. forces. The PLA is focused on offsetting U.S. military advantages and rapidly advancing and integrating its forces across all domains to support its comprehensive approach to joint warfare. The PRC is using its growing military strength to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnerships while seeking to coerce their neighbors in the Indo-Pacific region.

PRC Space Capabilities: Challenge to Space Superiority

The PRC are making advances in areas such as satellite meteorology, human spaceflight, and robotic space exploration, some of which have dual-use capability. The PRC is also aggressively pursuing advances in military areas that are concerning. As of January 2024, the PRC's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) satellite fleet contained more than 359 systems, more than tripling its on-orbit collection presence since 2018. The PRC has also dramatically increased its ability to monitor, track, and target US and Allied forces, both terrestrially and on orbit. Substantial improvement in PRC domestic space launch capabilities, including nascent progress on reusable rockets and mass production of sophisticated space systems, will lower its cost of entry to space. PRC has a continued pattern of uncontrolled reentries of space systems, despite their contributions to international guidelines regarding responsible satellite disposal.

People's Liberation Army Counterspace Capabilities: Threats to Space Architecture

The PLA understands counterspace operations to nullify U.S., Allied, and Partner satellites and systems must be part of their broader strategy. The PRC openly acknowledges applying commercial and civilian aerospace technology for military purposes. For example, the corporate mandate of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Center declares the intent to ensure "military-civilian integration development" to strengthen the PRC military and "secure peace with aerospace technology" in accordance with PRC's stated strategic ambitions. The PRC prioritizes space and building international partnerships that advance PRC goals, including through their Belt and Road Initiative, to develop its space intelligence and military capabilities.

The PRC's counterspace weapons programs seek to provide options for destructive and nondestructive disruption of our systems in all orbits through proliferation of jammers and the PRC's rapid fielding of new ground-and space-based antisatellite weapons. Beijing has deployed several satellites, at least some of which could function as a weapon, that could pose significant risk to our own in geosynchronous orbit. The PRC is further developing and testing hypersonic glide vehicles along with advanced space weaponry. These capabilities are intended to overcome U.S. traditional missile warning and ballistic missile defense systems.

PRC International Influence: Building Spacepower

The PRC seeks to expand its influence over nascent space nations beyond East Asia. Beijing is currently expanding its engagements with national space programs in Algeria, Venezuela, and South Africa through signing data sharing agreements, providing satellite manufacturing services, installing satellite ground stations, and seeking cooperation on the International Lunar Research Station. The PRC's space intentions and capabilities are often obscured through its focus on dual-use technologies, academic programs that use ambiguous research tracks and efforts, and overlapping space activities in exploration and commerce that can also enable the PLA's military programs and effectiveness.

Russian Federation: Acute Threat

Russia's struggles following their invasion of Ukraine should not create a false sense of confidence that Moscow is fading in the space domain. Russia will remain a formidable and less predictable challenge to the United States in key areas over the next decade, while still facing many challenges. Their losses in the Ukraine conflict will take years to rebuild in terms of terrestrial offensive capabilities which will likely encourage Russia to become more reliant on nuclear, cyber, and space capabilities, including disruptive technologies and actions they believe hold the promise to provide asymmetric pathways to achieve their strategic goals.

Russian Space Capabilities: Challenge to Space Superiority

International sanctions and export controls have impacted Russian space aspirations. As a result, Moscow will likely prioritize integrating space services they deem critical to their national security. They will continue to maintain their ISR fleet of over 87 satellites providing electro-optical imagery, missile warning, and signals intelligence to provide warning of threats to the Russian homeland. Their recent launches of Arctic satellites able to monitor the Northern Sea Route provide robust all-weather and round-the-clock, weather radar remote sensing, essential for command and control (C2) of military and paramilitary activities, a clear national security requirement for Russia. These capabilities can also support worldwide military and paramilitary deployments. They are updating and improving space launch capabilities to enhance reliability and otherwise find ways to offset the burdens imposed by sanctions and export controls levied by the international community. Despite im-

pacting limited supply chain and partnerships, Russia is finding ways to circumvent sanctions to maintain their capacity to be aggressive and disruptive in space.

Russian Counterspace Capabilities: Threats to Space Architecture

Russia's counterspace capabilities represent real threats to the space domain, our national security, and this Command's ability to respond decisively to protect and defend our interests and those of our Allies and Partners. Despite their struggles in Ukraine and economic sanctions, Russia continues to pursue a suite of counterspace weaponry, from electromagnetic warfare systems, including directed energy weapons and satellite communications jammers, offensive cyberspace capabilities, and on-orbit and ground-based anti-satellite systems that exist for one clear purpose. These weapons are intended to disrupt, threaten, and destroy space targets or otherwise deny freedom of action in space. Russia views its counterspace capabilities as a means to deter aggression from adversaries reliant on space.

Russian International Influence: Building Spacepower

Russia is collaborating with Iran and various African nations and establishing ties to Belarus' nascent space program. Russia and the PRC are moving forward in their work on Beijing's International Lunar Research Station and have reiterated their plans for Lunar exploration and research. Russia attempted and failed in their Luna-25 automated interplanetary station mission which crashed into the Lunar South Pole in August 2023. Russia will continue collaborating with the PRC, Iran, and other strategic competitors in space and that collaboration might provide effective means to compete, challenge, or threaten the United States and its Allies and Partners.

Islamic Republic of Iran: Threatening International Order

Iran threatens U.S. interests in the space domain. Possessing the largest ballistic missile inventory in the Middle East, Iran's strategy of improving the accuracy, lethality, and reliability of these missiles provides a dual purpose that includes potentially extending threats into space itself. Their strategy includes the long-standing desire to erode U.S. influence in the Middle East and threaten regional stability and order. Without monitoring and appropriate action, future Iranian space capabilities present emerging security concerns if they continue to develop space systems that possess capabilities that expand their offensive capabilities or otherwise challenge the safety and access to space.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Challenge to Space Superiority

North Korea continues to develop space and ballistic missile programs. In November 2023, they successfully launched a satellite into orbit. Although all nations have a right to peaceful operations in space, the launch involved ballistic missile technology, which is a clear violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. Pyongyang's continued intercontinental ballistic missile launches point to a dual-use capability. Long-range missile development threatens the United States and our Allies, and space system developments utilizing ballistic missile technology violate United Nations resolutions on such practices. Despite their frequent missile and satellite program failures, North Korea has demonstrated the ability to sustain a high number of missile launches, and has fielded capable cyber and electronic warfare weapons that present disruptive potential to the space domain.

Given the accelerating pace of threats to the space domain, it is critical that USSPACECOM be an intelligence-led organization to fully understand our changing operating environment. Our intelligence personnel and capabilities are integrated across our headquarters and our subordinate units, at echelon, and they ensure we are fully integrated with all facets of the broader Intelligence Community to avoid operational surprise and improve all our strategies, plans, and operations. Space intelligence enables this Command to take the initiative when necessary and exploit potential adversary vulnerabilities. Yet USSPACECOM's military capability and capacity alone are challenged to counter growing threats to the space domain.

To counter this increased security threat and enable integrated deterrence so that we can continue to support all-domain operations in, from, and through space, we also need to continue strengthening our relationships with existing Allies and attract new Partners to defend our freedom of action in space and for the advancement of all humanity as we continue to be an increasingly space-dependent civilization.

EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Space is rapidly becoming more contested and congested due to the overlap of the threats described above, a quickly expanding commercial space sector, and growing

governmental and civil use of space, all made possible by the decreasing cost to build satellites and access space. Given these complexities, our Nation cannot secure the space domain in isolation. Space is a team sport, and no one nation, Command, Service, or Department can do alone all that is required to meet our objectives there. Rather, collaboration with like-minded Allies, interagency Partners, and commercial stakeholders is not only necessary but one of our key asymmetric advantages.

USSPACECOM will prioritize our operations, activities, and investments to deter and, if necessary, defeat threats against our Nation and Allies today, while outpacing growing threats that challenge the space domain tomorrow. Our recent work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command on the draft Regional Partnerships Strategy is one example of cooperation among the Joint Force and with Allies and Partners to link cooperation in space with regional and strategic national objectives. USSPACECOM also continues to take advantage of National Guard relationships through the State Partnership Program (SSP), leveraging relationships with nearly 100 nations. Future SPP space security cooperation plans include a multinational space exercise with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Space Center and other European Allies and Partners.

USSPACECOM has expanded the number of our formal Allies and Partner Space Situational Awareness (SSA) agreements to 31 nations, two intergovernmental organizations, seven academic institutions, and over 130 commercial satellite owner-operators and service providers. The Command also signed governmental SSA data sharing agreements with Poland, Peru, and Qatar in fiscal year 2023. USSPACECOM signed 10 sharing agreements with commercial aerospace companies registered in the United States, Brazil, France, India, and Poland in the same time period. This key work will ensure we remain the partner of choice for conveying vital space information, leading to greater domain awareness and transparency, and furthering spaceflight safety. By providing advanced information and services to space-faring Partners, we display U.S. leadership in the space domain, promote transparency in the responsible and peaceful use of space, and support the eventual transition of civil and commercial spaceflight safety services to the Department of Commerce (DOC).

The collaboration highlighted above enables more effective integrated deterrence through all-domain operations. Our Combined Space Operations enterprise currently includes Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Combined Space Operations improve coordination of space defenses and enhance individual and collective space capabilities. Through Operation OLYMPIC DEFENDER, our standing named operation in which we operate in space alongside our Australian, British, and Canadian Allies, we improve mission assurance and enhance our collective resilience. We are continually honing this cooperative and collaborative edge through training, exercises, simulations, and modeling to increase our collective security goals.

USSPACECOM's Exercise GLOBAL SENTINEL (GS) campaign series continues to be the gold standard to exercise and expand key partnerships. GS24 included representatives from 25 nations collaborating in one central location for 2 weeks in February 2024. The GS24 capstone modeling and simulation event employed a multinational concept of operations focused on space domain awareness, supporting the protection of capabilities, and promoting shared multinational operational space security interests. Since its inception in 2014, GS has evolved from a small-scale tabletop exercise with seven nations into an ongoing annual series. This year's series included multiple live events during the year, wargames focused on current operations, and the modeling and simulation capstone exercise. USSPACECOM continues to increase interoperability with our Allies and Partners through security cooperation, information sharing, exercises, and knowledge curation on space security activities.

Integrating Commercial, Inter-Agency, and Academic Partners

To remain on the cutting edge of capability development, application, and shared understanding of space as they relate to national security interests, USSPACECOM partners with a growing team of commercial, interagency, and academic partners. While we have accomplished much with these partnerships, we see untapped opportunities to continue developing and delivering with these partners more robust and varied options to national leadership to deter aggression and ensure stability.

USSPACECOM's Commercial Integration Center (CIC) includes ten commercial mission partners who provide our Combined Space Operations Center information to improve our ability to collectively defend satellite constellations in collaborative partnerships. Information sharing is not only a security requirement across the Department of Defense (DOD), Allies, and Partners, but also so that all enterprises

from national to commercial can safely operate in the increasingly congested space domain. The way forward for USSPACECOM's CIC includes growing the number of commercial mission partners to participate in the mutual exchange of information on threats to the space domain and shared insights into the operations of member constellations, leading to enhanced safety and security as we conduct space operations.

USSPACECOM's Joint Commercial Operations (JCO) effort now includes eight commercial mission Partners in the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific. Altogether, they provide Space Domain Awareness information to the Joint Force, Allies, and Partner nations' warfighters. In October 2023, JCO provided early unclassified reporting on the separation of additional objects from the newly launched, Russian COSMOS 2570 satellite. JCO coordinated with commercial sensors ahead of this launch to track the orbital insertion. On October 30, 2023, JCO's Public Satellite Research and Analysis team was the first to alert the rest of the JCO to a possible separation event from COSMOS 2570. Afterward, the separating object appeared in the public satellite catalog as OBJECT C. In November 2023, JCO detected an object in the very early stages of separating from OBJECT C. They were able to track and analyze this newly separating object from commercial observations and publish it in a notice to space operators, which later was cataloged as OBJECT D. We must continue to build upon this fusion of commercial and military information to increase our understanding of actions in space.

USSPACECOM is also working closely with the DOC, whose personnel are now observing the U.S. Space Force's Space Delta 2 to learn how we perform Space Situational Awareness operations. This is a vital partnership as the DOC prepares to assume from the DOD the Space Situational Awareness and Space Traffic Management missions in support of commercial and civil customers. USSPACECOM is committed to facilitating the seamless transfer of these missions to the DOC in the near future because it will allow us to focus on the military-unique aspects of Space Domain Awareness, and progress has been made toward finalizing necessary memorandums of agreement for the transfer of data, roles, and responsibilities between the organizations.

Tri-Seal Strategic Framework

On July 12, 2023, USSPACECOM co-signed a Commercial Space Protection Tri-Seal Strategic Framework with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) to better protect commercial remote space sensing assets and information vital to national intelligence. This key partnership will offset the efforts of our principal strategic competitors seeking to disrupt and challenge our ability to leverage space using commercial capabilities.

To mitigate such aggression and disruption in space, this Command leads the coordinated effort to share threat information with NRO-contracted commercial imagery providers and the NRO Operations Center for space events, counterspace threats, and indications and warning. The Tri-Seal Strategic Framework presents this organization and the DOD with superior information sharing and collective defensive capability with commercial space companies that have existing relationships with this Command, the NRO and NGA. With increased space activities, new and emergent space-faring nations, and space having become a contested, warfighting domain, our hybrid enterprise of governmental and commercial space systems and stakeholders represents the correct strategy of sharing information and improving our ability to defend commercial space for collective national security, scientific, and commercial interests.

NASA and Human Space Flight Support Improvements: Partners in Space

USSPACECOM is the lead military support agency to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In this capacity, we provide human space flight support and global airlift coordination. Our terrestrial rescue and recovery forces, provided by our Air Force Service Component, 1st Air Force, have supported every NASA crewed space flight since the Command's reestablishment.

Leveraging the collective strength of commercial, interagency, and academic enterprises has been critical to USSPACECOM since its establishment four and a half years ago. It will remain foundational to our success moving forward and its continued growth and development remains a key focus area for our command.

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Our principal space competitors—the PRC and Russia, along with other aggressive nation states and proxies—seek to hold at risk free access to space for the United States, our Allies, and our Partners. Therefore, we must develop and field capabilities to mitigate threats posed by space-enabled attack and by counterspace

capabilities, and we must do so in a way that promotes integrated deterrence in accordance with the National Defense Strategy.

USSPACECOM has identified five priority requirements that are key to delivering our Unified Command Plan responsibilities: (1) resilient and timely operational C2; (2) integrated space fires and protection; (3) modernized agile electronic warfare architectures; (4) enhanced battlespace awareness for space warfare; and (5) cyber defense of space systems. Additional important objectives include investment in persistent and resilient intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; communications and data transport capacity; enhanced global sensor management tools to include integrated tasking and data retrieval; resilient satellite C2 architecture at the tactical edge; and, improved operational intelligence. Absent commitment to long-term investment in these integrated requirements, we risk ceding advantage to our principal strategic competitors in the space domain.

These five priority requirements address how this Command continues to build and maintain a competitive advantage. These new capabilities must deliver in a timely manner that encompasses all testing and training requirements so that USSPACECOM possesses improved capabilities. The prioritization of increased funding for the Space Force and other Services to deliver the space capabilities we need to support the Joint Force from space in the face of the growing threats now arrayed against us, and to protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attack, is paramount to USSPACECOM's 2027 delivery deadline. This will enable the Command to be ready for anticipated space security challenges and place new, critical systems into operations to provide policymakers and national leadership the necessary options for challenges and crises that may threaten long-term peace and prosperity.

Resilient, Timely Space Command & Control

Resilient, timely operational C2 is key to deterring and defeating hostile action in the space and the terrestrial domains. Space C2 enables us to protect our space capabilities from the threats we now face and protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attacks by an adversary. Rapid and robust communication between space activities, space assets, and partner Combatant Commands enables decisive action. The increasingly dynamic space environment requires a resilient C2 architecture to synchronize space forces and effects for space domain operations as well as in support of traditional terrestrial areas of operations. Congress's continued investment in this Command, the Services' space C2 programs, as well as the Consolidated Space Operations Facility, addresses that need and will remain critical moving forward.

Integrated Space Fires and Protection Capabilities

The services provided by space-based assets have become foundational to modern life and the way the Joint Force operates. These capabilities face rapidly increasing risk from our principal competitors. Although conflict is not inevitable and while we remain staunchly committed to peaceful competition and deterring conflict, it is prudent and necessary to expand our ability to protect and defend critical space assets. Integrated fires, across all domains, synchronized in timing represent an increasingly foundational capability for USSPACECOM's pivotal role in national security. Investment in this area must be wide reaching and interweave both defensive systems and the capability of commercial partners to achieve mass and scale, and we must deliver and present these capabilities on a meaningful timeline—by 2027.

Modernized, Agile Electronic Warfare Architectures

A modern and agile electronic warfare architecture is vital to protect U.S., Allied, and commercial assets from interference or outright attack while preventing an adversary's hostile use of space. Investments in space electromagnetic warfare will enable the Joint Force to protect space-based critical communications and intelligence capabilities while presenting Joint Force commanders a wide array of deterrence options within the space domain. Congress's continued support of a modern suite of electromagnetic spectrum capabilities is vital to the protection of key U.S., Allied, and Partner interests.

Enhanced Battlespace Awareness for Space Warfare

USSPACECOM increasingly relies on a near-real time, comprehensive understanding of the congested and complex space operational environment. Space Domain Awareness data, operational C2 automation, and incorporation of artificial intelligence/machine learning capabilities will allow us to better understand and outpace the threat in our unique area of responsibility. This critical task requires more accurate, robust, resilient, and timely Space Domain Awareness and operational intelligence data from all interoperable sensors. This will produce highly accurate,

rapidly available detection, tracking, and characterization of space objects, regardless of their origin. Legacy Space Domain Awareness systems are disaggregated and lack the agility to meet the need for increasingly dynamic tasking. Congressional funding of programs to enhance battlespace awareness for contested space operations is crucial to ensuring the Command can best protect and defend our vital space assets.

Space Systems Cyber Defense

Digital superiority is key to building and maintaining our competitive advantage for the space domain. The PRC, Russia, and other cyber actors work tirelessly to infiltrate our defense industrial base, academic research, mission equipment, and military networks. These strategic competitors and actors seek to monitor and exfiltrate data, and reduce, degrade, and deny our ability to command, control, and communicate with on-orbit space assets and supporting ground systems. The compromise or loss of U.S., Allied, or Partner space systems would degrade our ability to conduct operations in space and support operations in the terrestrial domain. Much of the digital infrastructure for these space mission systems requires modernization. Given the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of our adversaries' offensive cyber capabilities, we must rapidly develop, deploy, and maintain proactive cyber defense capabilities to effectively respond to and deter adversarial malicious cyber actions while also outpacing them in the cyber domain. We will continue to collaborate with the U.S. Space Force on their plans to strengthen cyber requirements and cyber defenses of our vital space systems, as well as working with the other Services, U.S. Cyber Command, Combat Support Agencies, and other government partners to deploy and integrate defensive cyber systems and tactics to maintain safe, secure, and reliable network operations. Increased funding for cyber experts, cybersecurity systems, and persistent defensive cyber capabilities is critical to maintaining dominance in the space and cyber domains.

Planning and Operational Support to Trans-Regional Missile Defense

USSPACECOM was tasked with trans-regional missile defense planning and operational support in April 2023 via the updated Unified Command Plan. The transfer was the culmination of a comprehensive study on the roles, responsibilities, and authorities associated with the missile defense enterprise and represents an alignment to the 2022 Missile Defense Review. The Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense is well integrated into USSPACECOM's formation and will help ensure the Nation approaches trans-regional missile defense in the most effective, collaborative manner. Moving forward, development and inclusion of multi-use or expanded sensors will increase resiliency of this critical network, and USSPACECOM is working with the Missile Defense Agency and the Services to bring this to fruition.

Rapid Reconstitution and Resilient Space Architecture

The trajectory of our strategic competitors' actions necessitate we build capacity and resiliency to defend our critical space systems to preserve freedom of action in space. A key portion of this resiliency will be the ability to rapidly reconstitute key components when necessary. We continue to examine the resiliency of the space enterprise. We will identify and articulate strengths and weaknesses of our current architecture, challenges to interoperability, and limitations of current policy. We are examining end-user interfaces, terrestrial systems, and communications links to orbital assets. In collaboration with the Services, other Combatant Commands, and our Allies and Partners, USSPACECOM is developing the requirements for a modern, integrated space architecture capable of operating in an increasingly contested space environment.

USSPACECOM's exercises and wargames challenge participants to develop new ways of thinking about space operations and addressing future crises. Our space exercise GLOBAL SENTINEL-24 involved 25 national participants, plus three observer nations and one multi-national organization. Another USSPACECOM exercise, NIMBLE TITAN, enhances trans-regional missile defense and stimulates international cooperation while strengthening integrated deterrence. Twenty-five member states and three international organizations will participate in the capstone NIMBLE TITAN exercise for 2024.

Our operational C2 requirements begin with our ground segment, ensuring critical operational nodes have reliable and adequate redundant capabilities, including back-up facilities or contingency operations sites and a mobile augmentation capability. New space systems and programs should pursue spiral software upgrade methodology to better protect our link segment and ensure new capabilities and vulnerability mitigation can be implemented in a rapid and continuous fashion. Finally, satellite development must continue including autonomous defensive capabilities,

such as auto-maneuver, system load shed protections, and on-board electromagnetic pulse detection and protection capabilities.

Dynamic Space Operations

On-orbit refueling, in-space assembly, modular hardware change-out, and urgent orbital resupply would enable dynamic space operations and change how this Command achieves and maintains space superiority. Legacy space systems, constrained by the technological limitations of their time, were launched to space with only the fuel and payloads they would have for their lifetimes; thus, they have minimal operational maneuverability, flexibility, or inherent defensive capability. Modern systems, beginning today, must provide greater flexibility through maneuver, upgradability, or re-supply. Dynamic space platforms purpose-built to support space maneuver will provide far greater capability and capacity to deter, surprise, maintain initiative, and conduct other operations required today and in the near future. The PRC is moving forward in this area. The urgency with which we must approach, and appropriately fund, this critical endeavor cannot be overstated.

SHAPING THE FUTURE FOR VICTORY

Through our assigned professionals and network of key stakeholders, USSPACECOM will continue to fulfill our vital role to protect and defend an essential domain for maintaining national and global security, while continuing to support the Joint Force, the Nation, and our Allies and Partners with space capabilities. All humankind benefits from space-enabled capabilities and resources. As we receive the new capabilities funded by Congress, USSPACECOM will continue to ensure integrated deterrence alongside our teammates in the Joint Force and our expanding team of Allies and Partners, and, when directed, decisively defeat any aggression that threatens our national security interests in space. A keystone of our national security strategy now rests 100 kilometers above Earth, underpinned by the assumption that we will maintain free access to and freedom of action in a secure and stable space domain. Our national security and our way of life depend on our continued leadership and enduring advantage in this critical area of responsibility. But to be clear, given the threats now arrayed against us in space, we will not sustain the freedom of access and action we require in space unless we are prepared to defend those freedoms.

The delivery of essential space capabilities and capacities will provide this Command with the ability to attain an enduring advantage over any otherwise determined adversary aggressive enough to threaten the stability, safety, sustainability, and security of space. We cannot attain an enduring advantage without the rest of the Joint Force, interagency stakeholders, our Allies and Partners, along with commercial and academic development and collaboration. We cannot attain an enduring advantage without recognizing the threatening aspirations our principal strategic competitors have to hold at risk our space interests, to include denying us the freedom to access and operate in the space domain. Finally, we cannot attain an enduring advantage without continued dedication, support, and initiative from our brave military and civilian workforce, their families, and the policymakers representing our Nation along with those of our Allies and Partners. USSPACECOM deeply appreciates Congress's continued support to our vital national security mission.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Whiting.

General Cotton, what force structure changes do you anticipate in order to maintain our deterrence now that we have a trilateral nuclear competition with Russia and China? Can you comment on that, please?

General COTTON. Chairman, that is the dilemma that I walked into when I took command of STRATCOM. As I said in the last posture hearing and even at my confirmation, that was one that I was going to jump on as soon as I took command and took the flag.

What we have done is, along with the comments of the Ranking Member and what we are seeing in the Strategic Posture Commission results, we have done work internal to STRATCOM to see what is going to be the requirements in regard to what we need as a fighting force.

The NPR actually gives me the opportunity to do just that. So I am staying within the confines of the Administration. When the

NPR says what we want to have is a triad, I absolutely agree with that notion that we must maintain a triad. I absolutely agree that there is now time for us to look to see what do we do with the program of record that we currently have to ensure that I can cover not only one nuclear adversary but two.

So within all legs of the triad we are having that conversation right now, and there are actually studies that are going on in which my teammates are part of at STRATCOM within the Department of Defense that goes after looking at the recommendations that the Strategic Posture Commission, that validates many of the notions that STRATCOM came up with even before the release of the Posture Commission.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Whiting, you reached full operational capability in December, which is welcome news. Congratulations. However, the question is adequate readiness posture to support your operational capabilities. They are two different topics. Are there particular areas that the Committee should be aware of where readiness must be enhanced?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. Yes, my predecessor, General Jim Dickinson declared full operational capability, as you noted, and that was really to say that our headquarters now can function as the other combatant commands and execute our primary responsibilities as laid out in Title 10 and in the Unified Command Plan.

But as I noted in the opening statement, our forces today are optimized for a benign space environment. The systems were either built, or the requirements were largely laid down during a time when we didn't face the threats we now see. So now we really have to focus on making sure we have the systems to protect and defend our existing architectures, even as we make our current architectures more resilient, and that we have the systems to protect the Joint Force from the space-enabling capabilities we now see the PRC developing, for example. Then we have to have the testing capabilities to assure us those new systems will work, and the training capabilities so our personnel have the reps and sets, if you will, to be ready to go.

So that is really where we need to focus is on continuing to deliver capability to allow us to operate in the contested domain we now find ourselves in.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Cotton, the Sentinel program is encountering difficulties. The *Columbia* program is slowing down rather than speeding up. We have, I think, some good news with the B-21. But the basic mission is to maintain a triad, not something less.

Can you comment, particularly with respect to the Sentinel program, in terms of what we have to do at this juncture? I know they are still evaluating it.

General COTTON. Chairman, thank you for the question. In regard to Sentinel and where it stands with Nunn-McCurdy, I think I will answer it this way. There is no change in the requirements that I currently on the modernization of all three legs of the triad. That absolutely has to be done. I think what is really important for folks to understand is I think I am probably the only combatant command that can't have a gap in my capabilities, because a gap

in my capabilities, credibility as well as safe, secure, and effective weapons systems, is key and foundational to deterrence.

So as you talk about all three legs going into potential delays we must ensure that we never have a gap in the capabilities amongst those three legs of the triad, and that is what I look and study every single day to ensure that we don't create a gap in that mission set, whether it is land, sea, or the air leg.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Cotton. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Well, let's just followup on that with regard to the triad, General Cotton, and I appreciate you meeting with us earlier to discuss this.

So we have got the land-based and the air-based. Let's talk about sea-based, and your testimony points out that it involves the *Ohio*-class SSBN fleet, right, and the Trident II D5 strategic weapon system, SWS. Are we where we need to be on that?

General COTTON. So all three legs of the triad are past system lives. The good news is the men and women that are maintaining those systems are doing an incredible job to do that. The problem we face, and the problem that I have to encounter every single day with legacy systems is to ensure that I have the required numbers of SSBNs that are available as well as the required number of weapons that are available for the SSBN fleet.

As we make the transition to the *Columbia*-class, as I mentioned to the Chairman, what is going to be incredibly important, Senator, is that we ensure that there is no gap between the transition of the *Ohio*-class weapon system to the *Columbia*-class weapon system.

Senator WICKER. Well, yes, and so at least with regard to this there is no feeling in your mind that we can divest so we can later invest. That is nonsense when it comes to what you are talking about.

General COTTON. That is correct. That is why I make that statement on ensuring that I don't create a gap as we do the transition from legacy to a modernized system. I will always have to be able to cover down a requirement with the legacy systems—

Senator WICKER. On page 11 of your testimony, "Despite the fleet's accomplishments and its ability to achieve the mission today it faces continuous sustainment challenges that could impact its availability until fully replaced by the *Columbia*-class in 2042." Are we asking for enough resources for you to get where you need to get on time?

General COTTON. I don't know that resources is necessarily the issue here. I think what I really see is the ability for the industrial base to be able to produce and not drive the gaps. So as we look to modernize systems—

Senator WICKER. To the extent that we are proposing to appropriate some \$3.4 billion extra for submarine industrial base, that will be helpful, will it not?

General COTTON. It will be helpful, absolutely, sir, on the modernization.

Now, to your point, we also need to ensure that the legacy systems have the sustainability that is available to them so I can maintain the legacy systems as well until the new systems arrive.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Thank you very much. Serious challenges in your bailiwick, I would say.

General Whiting, you talk about a vulnerability window on page 3 of your testimony. "There is a vulnerability window communicated by our competitors and highlighted as we watch conflict unfold in Ukraine and Israel." What are we learning there, and state for our audience what the vulnerability window is.

General WHITING. Ranking Member, the vulnerability window is the fact that our competitors, PRC and Russia, have invested in counterspace capabilities, having studied us for decades, to hold at risk our ability to fight the way we would like. Now we have to make our current space capabilities, that provide satellite communications, positioning navigation and timing, missile warning, those kinds of functions, we have to make them more resilient against those threats and provide protect-and-defend capability to help protect them.

Those investments have been made, but we need to make sure those programs deliver and that we continue to invest to assure that we can support the Joint Force with those kind of capabilities in the face of these threats.

Senator WICKER. Until they are delivered there is a window of vulnerability.

General WHITING. That is correct, Ranking Member.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Are the requestors asking for enough resources to address this vulnerability window?

General WHITING. Senator, I think we have laid out all of the requirements that we need, and we know the programs that we need, and now we need to make sure those are delivering on time and pulling them as much to the left as we can.

Senator WICKER. They need to be pulled to the left.

General WHITING. Yes, sir. I would like to have all the capability I could—

Senator WICKER. Explain to people who aren't accustomed to Washington-ese what "pulling it to the left" means?

General WHITING. Senator, that means to deliver it even earlier than we expect.

Senator WICKER. That is a very important need, is it not?

General WHITING. Sir, I would like to have as much capability as I could right now. Yes, sir.

Senator WICKER. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

General Cotton, in your posture statement you mention that continued congressional support is critical to overhauling the sub industrial base to advance the Navy's shipbuilding efforts, and you also noted that the execution of 1+2 submarine build plan is a national imperative, following up on Senator Wicker's questions. I completely agree with this, especially given the additional commitments we have now taken on with AUKUS Pillar 1. How critical are the submarine industrial base investments like those that we included in the supplemental to ensuring that the *Columbia*-class submarines are delivered on time?

General COTTON. Thank you for the question, Senator. Kaine, and I would like to say thank you to—I know there was a SASC hearing even yesterday in regards, and many of the Members that are before us today were part of that. So thank you for the support in addressing the industrial base problem, and using the Northeast, it is a wicket problem.

I do not have capacity to lose one leg of the triad, and the SSBN and the SLBN weapon system is critical to the triad and my operational plans and the forces that I must present to the commander in chief, if warranted. Critical.

So as I would state for the land-based leg as well as the air leg, absolutely critical that we continue to press and ensure, just like my colleague said, you know, if we can get things earlier that would be incredibly advantageous to us as a fighting force.

Senator KAINE. We did have a hearing yesterday on manpower issues generally, and when you were asked the question by Senator Wicker about whether you needed more resources and you said it is not a resource problem my colleague here said, "It is a welder problem." I mean, there is a manpower problem, and we are experiencing it, Australia is experiencing it, the U.K. is experiencing it. So we are going to have to be very, very creative in addressing this manpower issue if we are going to maintain the pace that you need to keep the triad intact and effective.

You talked, General Cotton, in your testimony here about the four allies, principally Russia and the PRC, but also in the nuclear space, Iran and North Korea, and then you said, "and the growing relationships between these four nations." Do you see those relationships growing in ways that really impact the STRATCOM domain, or are there growing activities in concert more in other military demands?

General COTTON. Senator, no. I see it in my domain as well because remember, part of my portfolio is strategic deterrence. That includes nuclear deterrence. But even in the nuclear deterrence space, let's just have a conversation in regard to the relationship that we see. That transactional relationship between Russia and the DPRK has manifested itself in different ways here over the past 8 months.

So we are looking at that differently on what that relationship is actually—you know, what does DPRK gain with that new relationship that they have with Russia, as an example.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. General Whiting, in your written testimony you highlighted collaboration with allies, interagency partners, and commercial stakeholders as a key asymmetric advantage that we have in space. I was at Wallops Island recently and I had a great visit with NASA, the NRO, and the Navy, and a private commercial provider, Rocket Lab, to discuss government capabilities in this area.

How are you thinking about the importance of collaboration with the commercial space industry?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. I think U.S. commercial space industry is not just an advantage in space. It is an advantage for this Nation, period, and it is an advantage that is widening over our competitors. So we absolutely need to continue to partner with U.S. commercial space industry to lever-

age the cost curves that they are on, to leverage the speed at which they are operating, to take advantage of as much of that capability as we can.

The Space Command is partnered with the Space Force as they look at new ways of contracting with commercial industry such as the Commercial Augmentation Space Reserve that they are looking to start next year, and we are very excited about those opportunities.

Senator Kaine. I will just offer this question for the record, but if in the course of us working on the NDAA this year there are any policies that you think we should embrace in the NDAA that would enhance our ability to collaborate in the ways you described we would love to hear that from you.

With that I will hand it back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Kaine. Senator Fisher, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Last October the bipartisan, bicameral congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States released their final report on America's strategic posture. Its findings were sobering. We face two major nuclear adversaries for the first time in history, and we are woefully underprepared to address this future threat environment.

In their report, the commissioners also unanimously endorsed 81 recommendations. If we can act upon most of these the United States should retain the capability and the capacity to maintain a safe, reliable, effective, and credible nuclear deterrent throughout the next several decades. Over the coming months I am going to be working with my colleagues on this Committee to include many of these recommendations in fiscal year 2025 NDAA.

General Cotton, I appreciate our earlier conversations about the Strategic Posture Commission's report, and your very careful review and consideration of their findings and recommendations. Do you agree with the commissioners' statement that, quote, "The nuclear force modernization programs of record is absolutely essential, although not sufficient to meet the new threats posed by Russia and China, and that the elements of the programs of record should be completed on time, expedited wherever possible, and expanded, as needed"?

General COTTON. I do, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Can you please provide the Committee with your views on which of those commissioners' recommendations you think are the most important or that we should be prioritizing?

General COTTON. Thank you for the question, Senator Fischer. You know, I was probably one of the first to receive the outbrief from Honorable Crendon and Senator Kyl when it came to the results of the Commission, and it validated many of the things that we were looking inhouse and Strategic Command in regard to what do we do with the current arsenal and the stockpile.

I have memorized what I would consider pages 48 and 49 of the Commission, which has the 81 recommendations. Of those, I have prioritized what I think should be the things that we get after first. I do believe that we need to take serious consideration in seeing what uploading and re-MIRV-ing the ICBM looks like and what does it take to potentially do that. I do believe that we need to have

a conversation in regard to how do we have—because part of that report also says the importance of having a credible and effective conventional force.

Part of that is looking at and ensuring that we have the right long-range standoff conventional weapons as well, that can be placed on a bomber, as an example. Then the look at what does all legs of the triad look like in regard to capacity, and how can you expand capacity, and how do you build the modernized force that has modularity in where we can always keep pace, as opposed to the current system that we have, that it is really hard to do that.

Senator FISCHER. You know, Senator King and I often refer to NC3 as the fourth leg of our nuclear triad, and the President's ability to command, control, and communicate with our nuclear forces, that is essential in maintaining that credible nuclear deterrent that we must have. If NC3 fails then the deterrent fails.

We have previously discussed, General, the importance of moving forward quickly with NC3 modernization and building out that roadmap with a clear and achievable, near-and long-term goals, and I appreciate you briefing our subcommittee on that earlier this week about your plan. But in this setting, can you please share with the Committee how STRATCOM is working with the services, with the Under Secretaries of Acquisition and Sustainment and Research and Engineering to integrate new technologies and new systems into that NC3 architecture?

General COTTON. Senator, I would love to. One of the things that was first on the agenda for us was to ensure that as we articulate the modernization of the NC3 force that we look at it in different bins. The first thing we must do, to your point, is ensure that the NC3 system that is currently available to the President of the United States and to decisionmakers of the United States has the ability to fight through. So we want to make sure that we look at systems today and ensure that we are taking care of systems today.

The other piece that we wanted to make sure that we did is look at the midterm, and to your point we have collaborated—and thank you for hosting us to present that, you and Senator King, for allowing us present that to the subcommittee—and show the relationship that I have with ANS, with our acquisition and sustainment, Dr. LaPlante. The increased relationship that I have with R&E, Dr. Heidi Shyu, that was actually missing prior, and then the relationship that I have with our CIO, Mr. John Sherman. Because of that we are able to coalesce and be able to come up with a plan that is executable. We were able to brief that to the Deputy Secretary of Defense last summer, in which the service components were also in the room, and now they have measured milestones to grade themselves against, where that was missing in the past.

We still have a lot of work to go, Senator, but I am pleased with the work that we have done so far.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fisher. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When we think about what is going on here in this room, this hearing is undoubtedly being watched in real time in Moscow and Beijing. General Cotton, the focus of this hearing will naturally be on gaps and work that

is under progress and what the problems are, but I want you to restate what you stated in your opening testimony for the benefit of our audience far away. You are ready to fight tonight with an awesome response to anyone who attacks this country. Is that correct?

General COTTON. The men and women that represent United States Strategic Command are ready to defend if a strategic deterrence failure happens, tonight. We are ready today.

Senator KING. The capacity of the triad right now is at an actionable level. I don't want anybody to get the impression that we are somehow crippled in terms of our nuclear deterrent. You have the forces you need to defend the country and also to impose unthinkable costs on a potential adversary. Isn't that correct?

General COTTON. I do.

Senator KING. Thank you. One of the problems on the budget that we have here, that has always surprised me, we don't have a capital budget. Our budget of the U.S. Government is a cash-flow budget, and really the recapitalization of the nuclear triad is a capital investment. We are talking 40-and 50-year assets, and so one of the problems we are facing in our budget is it all comes out—it looks like it is in the defense budget, but I call it the “pig in the python.” There is this bulge of nuclear modernization that really should be considered capital investment.

So I think that is important for people to realize when you look at the defense budget there is a piece of it that is really something that probably should have been done over the past 30 years that we are trying to do in a hurry. Is that your reading, General?

General COTTON. It is, sir. You know, the way I like to describe it is I am responsible for maintaining, and the components under me are responsible for maintaining national systems on behalf of the President of the United States.

Senator KING. Thank you. General Whiting, we have the best space capability, and have for many, many years. That is the good news. The bad news is the dependency that we have on space, which makes us asymmetrically vulnerable in terms of the relationship with these potential adversaries.

What are we doing to think about alternatives to space? For example, I understand recently they are now teaching celestial navigation at Annapolis again. We need to be thinking about how do we reduce our reliance on space assets, given the development of anti-space capabilities of our adversaries. Talk to me about how we mitigate this risk.

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. We have gone to space because of the advantages it brings us. It allows us to operate globally, untethered to terrestrial network.

Senator KING. We were unopposed for years.

General WHITING. Yes, sir, and that gives us a unique advantage. But to your point—and I know all the services are thinking about this—what do we do when our primary capability may not be available? Now in Space Command it is our job to make sure that that doesn't happen, but no doubt the services have to train what their secondary plans are, and all of them have those plans in place, and to our point are training those to their people.

Several of services, such as the Army, the Navy, and the Marines, also have relatively small but dedicated cadres of space per-

sonnel to help their commanders understand the benefits and the vulnerabilities of space so they can understand when those times might be that they would have to go to those secondary or tertiary plans.

Senator KING. Well, now I am going to talk about those gaps that I mentioned at the beginning, that I don't want to overemphasize. But you have partial responsibility for missile defense. It bothers me that we have been very slow on the issue of directed energy. We are using \$5 million missiles to knock down \$200,000 or \$300,000 drones. This should be a task for directed energy. I hope that is part of missile defense, missile awareness, and all branches, not just you necessarily, but all the branches should be working on two things: missile defense and hypersonic defense. Those are strategic game-changers that I think we have been slow to develop.

Is directed energy going to be part of the future of missile defense?

General WHITING. Sir, just 2 weeks ago I was in Huntsville, meeting with the Missile Defense Agency, and we talked about directed energy, and I know that is something they are looking at, and I agree with you, Senator. I think it needs to be part of our future.

Senator KING. I want more than looking at. I want development, and soon. I think we should be having a capability in the Red Sea right now. This is an opportunity to use that capacity.

Finally I just want to associate myself with my co-chair, Senator Fischer, on NC3. That is part of the triad. I congratulate you on the work that you are doing, but urge you to accelerate and continue. Because the whole idea there, the cornerstone of the defense of this country is deterrence, and should the adversary detect a weakness in our deterrence—and NC3 is the glue that holds it all together—we are vulnerable. So as I say, I congratulate you, but want to prod you to keep going earnestly, and accelerate the progress on that issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. General Cotton and General Whiting, welcome. Thank you for your testimony this morning, and I extend my thanks to all the men and women who serve under your commands.

General Cotton, Since Xi Jinping took power a little over a decade ago China's nuclear arsenal has increased by more than 100 percent. By 2035, the Department anticipates that China's nuclear arsenal will have increased by 500 percent. How would you characterize the threat posed to the United States by China's rapidly growing nuclear arsenal?

General COTTON. As my predecessor said—and I love using his terminology because it is—the breakout that we saw and the advancements and how quickly the advancement that we are seeing in China to rapidly create a viable triad is breathtaking.

Senator COTTON. Unprecedented, the pace at which they are expanding?

General COTTON. It is.

Senator COTTON. Okay, and your statement says that they have a triad today. Is that correct?

General COTTON. That is correct, Senator.

Senator COTTON. It may not be the most cutting edge versions of it, the bombers may require standoff weapons, but they are working on stealth bombers. Is that correct?

General COTTON. That is correct.

Senator COTTON. Do you think that a nation that multiplies its nuclear arsenal as rapidly as China does, especially when governed by communists, is doing so with peaceful intent?

General COTTON. I think the minimum deterrent strategy that we used to hear that China links themselves with as far as their strategic policy, I find hard to believe that that can still be a policy with the way that they are building out their arsenal.

Senator COTTON. For years China had pursued so-called minimum deterrence, but they also are well-known for a policy called "hide and bide"—hide your strength and bide your time. Do you think it is fair to say that China is heeding the "hide and bide" strategy now?

General COTTON. Senator, they are showing us their capability and shown us how fast they can grow.

Senator COTTON. They also have had a long declared, at least formal, policy of "no first use." Does it make sense to expand your nuclear program by 500 percent and retain a "no first use" policy?

General COTTON. I will go back to using that as the opening for a minimum deterrent strategy. That probably is in alignment. But what we are seeing, probably not so much.

Senator COTTON. Pretty big investment of national resources to expand your nuclear weapons by so much if you are planning to keep a "no first use" policy, wouldn't you say?

General COTTON. Even though we haven't heard them say that, you are absolutely correct.

Senator COTTON. No shock everyone to hear that Chinese communists have a history of lying, not just about their nuclear weapons. The Tibetans would probably have something to say about that.

Let's look at what we are doing to counteract this threat. Well first, actually, let's stay on the threat.

How does China's nuclear arsenal compare to ours today?

General COTTON. Today we are still superior in there, but like I said, I think the reality is we are going to have to continue to modernize our current systems. We are superior to them today.

Senator COTTON. Today, yes. If China continues on the pace in which the Department projects, by 2035 will they have achieved parity with the United States?

General COTTON. In the realm of their land-based systems, yes.

Senator COTTON. Okay, and what if you combined the total forces of China and Russia by 2035. Would those two countries combined have nuclear overmatch against the United States on the current pace?

General COTTON. Well, the weapons count would be larger than our weapons count.

Senator COTTON. Okay. What we are doing. Is the B-21 moving quickly enough to meet your future deterrence requirements?

General COTTON. The limited production rate of the B-21 is the only thing that I wish we could do a little quicker. The fact that that is an incredible sixth-generation platform, all indications are that that weapon system is moving along at a great pace as far as delivery. The ability for production and the number of products, as a warfighter obviously I would love to have more——

Senator COTTON. It would be nice to have more than 100.

General COTTON. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Final topic. Let's look at a, I guess you would call it a first-generation aircraft, the B-52. I think it is 79 years old now.

General COTTON. Seventy.

Senator COTTON. Seventy. All right. Almost as old as some Senators. But, you know, we often hear criticism and like, "Well, we are flying aircraft that are older than General Cotton. We are flying aircraft that started when these pilots' grandparents were flying it." I kind of subscribe to if it ain't broke, don't fix it philosophy. It can't go into denied environment, but once air defenses have been reduced, and with extended-range standoff weapons it is highly effective.

Why is it critical that the Air Force also re-engine the B-52 for your deterrence needs?

General COTTON. Senator Cotton, thank you for that question. Surface is absolutely an imperative as part of the nuclear modernization. As you mentioned, yes, it gets picked on quite a bit on its age, but as we look at what the capacity and what the capability is of that weapon system, that platform, it is amazing. What that will be able to do for us—and I said earlier—we need to think about the ability for it carry LRSO. It is the platform that will LRSO. It is the platform that has a lot of mass as far as capability. I want it to be able to have a long-range strike standoff capability even greater than it has today.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. It is old, but if it is well maintained and modernized, it seems to me that it is still a vital part of our triad.

General COTTON. You are absolutely correct, Senator.

Senator COTTON. A lot of your troopers would probably love to drive a Chevy Belair or a Ford Thunderbird from the 1950's, as well.

General COTTON. Well, I call it a restomod, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So Strategic Command is responsible for strategic deterrence including our nuclear weapons. We were already planning to spend \$2 trillion to modernize and maintain those weapons over the next 30 years. Now we are learning that the cost for those programs is going to be even higher than we anticipated.

General Cotton, I know that you are not responsible for managing these programs, but we turn to your command for your best military advice on what these programs will mean for our national security. General Cotton, do you agree that decisions about how to

build our nuclear posture should be based on the most accurate information we have at the time?

General COTTON. Senator, can you rephrase—I don’t quite understand what you are saying.

Senator WARREN. I know. It sounds so easy. The point is should we base our decisions based on the most accurate information we have got when we are making the decision.

General COTTON. Absolutely.

Senator WARREN. Okay, good, because DOD did not do that for the Sentinel program, which will replace all land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Air Force has already concluded that the basic assumptions for the program’s cost estimates, quote, “weren’t particularly valid.”

When I requested that DOD contract with a respected group of outside experts in 2021, to determine the technical feasibility of extending the Minuteman III missile program instead of buying expensive new weapons, I was told that they didn’t have contract authority to do so. That was not true. They just didn’t want an honest assessment of the real risks of Sentinel.

Since then the cost of the program has soared. We initially thought the price for Sentinel would be about \$95 billion. Now the Air Force reports that it will be \$132 billion, nearly 40 percent more. By law, that kind of increase triggers a mandatory review of the program’s viability.

Now I am glad that this review is happening, but we need independent experts, people who will ask hard questions. We need to ask about the Sentinel program, taking a look as well. General Cotton, would you oppose an outside review of the Sentinel program if it helps enhance our national security?

General COTTON. Senator Warren, I agree with the previous assessments that were done with the last three Administrations in regard to where we are on the replacement of the Minuteman program. As I said earlier, in my opening comments, what I cannot endure as a combatant commander that has to provide COAs to the commander in chief is I cannot endure having a gap or a drop in the reliability of a current platform that we currently have that is part of the triad.

Senator WARREN. I appreciate that. What I am talking about here is I want to make sure that what we are going to be replacing it with has been fully vetted and is the right direction for us to go.

You know, even before this latest cost breach there were bright, blinking warnings that this program was not on track. The Air Force’s aggressive schedule meant they were relying on immature technology, which the GAO warned at the time created additional risks of cost increases and schedule delays.

Now best practices for budgeting these types of complex programs is to develop what is called an integrated master schedule, an analysis that is going to break down the project into steps, resources, and budget needed to complete it, sort of Budgeting 101. Sentinel did not have that.

General Cotton, you have warned that the complexity of the Sentinel program—I am quoting you here—“will challenge Air Force and industry partners in ways not seen for a generation.” So let me ask, do you think it is important to have basic program manage-

ment guardrails in place to help us prevent delays and cost overruns?"

General COTTON. Senator, the rest of the statement was—you are absolutely right because I have said it numerous times, that that is going to be a mega project that we haven't seen since actually the onset of the Minuteman III in placement in the early 1960's.

You know, I am a taxpayer as well, and I want to ensure that, one, I have a weapons system that can deliver the capabilities that I need to deliver. I also need to make sure that we don't create a larger gap in having assessments that would drive us to now question one leg of the triad in regard of how it can produce or have forces go to it.

Senator WARREN. I appreciate that, General, but we have got to have a plan here that is actually going to work. We can't just keep burning money and saying at some point we hope we are going to be able to deliver this thing. I am very concerned that Pentagon officials are already saying—they are already saying—quote, they "will make the trades it takes to keep the Sentinel program funded, analysis be damned."

I will be watching closely to see if the DOD takes this review that is required now by law because of the cost overruns, I will be looking to see if they take this review seriously or if it is just another paperwork exercise to justify throwing more money at more expensive nuclear programs.

Thank you, General.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, let me just say to both of you thank you for your service to our country and to your teams as well. Today we are talking about some of the most strategic weapons systems that our country has, and while our conventional forces are absolutely critical, our conventional forces are only effective because we have the nuclear deterrence in our strategic weapons systems to support them.

General Whiting, China and Russia both understand how vital our space capabilities are to the Joint Force, and they have been developing capabilities to counter our space assets for years. Are we currently postured to win a conflict that begins in or extends into space? I mean, when we take a look at this right now—and I really appreciated Senator King's comments with regard to the fact that we are ready to fight tonight—but can we win that battle, and what about 5 and 10 years from now on the current trajectories?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. Today I am completely clear in saying we do have the world's best military space capabilities. I will use the same word that General Cotton used when we look at what China and Russia are doing, particularly building with their counterspace weapons. They are moving breathtakingly fast.

We must ensure that the investments that have been made—and we thank the Congress for those investments—those programs continue to execute and that we continue to invest to make sure that we keep pace with that breathtaking pace.

Senator ROUNDS. Part of that, I suspect, you had provided, and you will provide, an unfunded priorities list that will likely be sent to Congress over the next month or so. If we were to fully fund that UPL, that unfunded priorities list, how would that impact your readiness in the near term?

General WHITING. Yes, sir. The priorities that I expect will be on our unfunded priorities list are about improving our posture for the contested domain and to move at the pace, and ahead of the pace that Russia and China are moving. So that will give us the capacity and the capabilities that we believe we need in 3, 5, and 10 years.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. General Cotton, I understand that by law the Department of Defense services cannot invest funds into a program that is going to be retired within 5 years. This is known as a sunset provision. Do you have any concerns about your legacy systems potentially being divested too early? The service secretaries can offer a waiver but are not required to, and your replacement programs will not start to come online until the 2030's, if they are on time. If this policy is not changed, how will it impact strategic deterrence?

General COTTON. Senator Rounds, thank you for that question, and you are referring to Title 10 U.S. Code 2244A—

Senator ROUNDS. I imagine that you were waiting for that one, or something.

General COTTON.—that talks about equipment scheduled for retirement and dispersal. You are absolutely right because we have been talking about it all morning. You know, you always have plans that show overlap between legacy systems and new, modernized systems, and as I stated earlier, when it comes to strategic deterrence, credibility is foundational to that. Credibility is ensuring that the transition from legacy system, that there is no gap between a transition between a legacy system and a modernized system.

Senator ROUNDS. We are talking about modernizing significant parts of the triad right now, and there is going to be a time period in which we are going to have to have both systems, the legacy system and the new system, operating, and it may be for more than 5 years. Correct?

General COTTON. That is correct, sir. So right now that law would stipulate that you wouldn't modernize components of the legacy system if you are within 5 years of what you initially saw as a transition to the new system, and that could be troublesome.

Senator ROUNDS. The Sentinel program is critical to our deterrent capability. Correct?

General COTTON. A modernized replacement to the Minuteman III system is actually foundational to the triad.

Senator ROUNDS. Can we afford to delay the implementation of the Sentinel program?

General COTTON. We are late to need on all three legs of the triad.

Senator ROUNDS. What do you mean by being late to need?

General COTTON. I would much rather—and I think all my colleagues would agree—I would much rather not have to have a tran-

sition of legacy systems to modernized systems that already passed their service dates.

Senator ROUNDS. So I want to just get back in, and I know my time is running out, but I am going to ask this. I don't think that you necessarily had the opportunity to completely respond to the last comments with regard to the Sentinel program and the reason why it needs to move forward. Even if the cost goes up and the review is completed, this not something that we can simply sit back and take our time on.

Could you respond, please, if the Chairman would allow that?

Chairman REED. Please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

General COTTON. We cannot, Senator Rounds. The analysis and assessments have been done. We need to make the decision in regard to what we want to do as far as the modernization of a very important leg of the triad, and that is the land leg and the ICBM leg of the system.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is for, well, both of you, both of the witnesses. The 2024 NDAA directs the DOD to develop a plan for the missile defense of Hawaii and military construction projects that will enable the timely deployment of missile defense capabilities across all locations in the INDOPACOM. I believe the President signed the NDAA in December, so you have some 90 days or so to complete and provide this plan. How is that plan coming along? For either one of you.

General WHITING. Senator, I will take that question. Since last year we took on unified command plan responsibility for transregional missile defense, operation support, and planning. Ma'am, at this time I am not familiar with where that plan is, and if I could take that question for the record I could get back to you with specifics on where that is.

Senator HIRONO. I have been very concerned, over time, about the missile defense of Hawaii, so I would also like you to contemplate whether we need to mitigate any potential risks from our near-peer competitors, as you both have discussed, before we have this missile defense plan in place. Because as you know, we had a major mishap in Hawaii, which led to my ongoing concerns about missile defense of Hawaii.

For General Whiting, the 2024 NDAA required a study on the consolidation or transfer of the space functions of the National Guard, which must include a cost-benefit analysis for each of the potential futures of these units. The options are the creation of a Space National Guard, keeping the status quo, or transferring the space functions into the Space Force.

General Whiting, what is the current role of the National Guard in space, and how would you transfer the space functions into the Space Force, and what would you need if that is the finding of the study?

The reason for the study was that there was some decision made as to what would happen to National Guard space, well, you could call it space units. There were some decisions made without this

kind of plan or study, a cost-benefit analysis, that would lead to the three options that I mentioned. So what is being contemplated for the National Guard Space Force?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. From a Space Command perspective, we very much appreciate the great support we get from a number of states that their Guard units have space missions, and it is vital to us that however those options are resolved that we don't have an interruption to those missions.

I would have to defer to the United States Space Force for the specifics of what options are being analyzed and where they are headed, but it is vital to us that we not have any interruption to those missions.

Senator HIRONO. As you are probably aware, we do have a space function in the National Guard in Hawaii. These are very skilled people. So I think we need to make sure that whatever decisions are made based on an assessment that takes all of these issues into consideration.

For General Whiting, previously, space was only used by the government, but it has become the domain for new waves of commercial satellites for broadband communications and remote sensing. General Whiting, are DOD and U.S. Space Command specifically and appropriately leveraging commercial space capabilities?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. I think U.S. commercial space industry is one of our absolute national advantages, and we have leveraged that in the past. I think we can find even better and more innovative ways to leverage it going forward. U.S. commercial space industry is moving incredibly fast. They are widening their lead in commercial space services over other countries. We want to make sure that we are partnered with them as tightly as possible.

Senator HIRONO. What protections exist for the commercial satellites against physical or cyber attacks?

General WHITING. Yes, ma'am. As part of my unified command plan responsibilities I do have responsibility to protect and defend commercial assets, as directed. So as we work with these commercial companies we already have information-sharing agreements with the companies that we are already contracted with for capability. They actually sit with us at one of our operation centers in California, at the highest levels of intelligence, to know what those threats are, and we share that information. Then we want to work with them as well to help them harden their cyber infrastructure so that they are not denied through the cyber domain, because that would impact our ability to leverage their services.

Senator HIRONO. I think that aspect of protections and the cyber domain, I have talked with private entities where they need to be sure that they are up on what kind of protections they need to put in place as they work with you, to make sure that we are all on the same page in terms of cybersecurity issues. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono. Senator Cramer, please.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Generals, for your service. Thank you for being here, and thank you to all of the troops under your command.

I want to get right to it because I need a little more context on a couple of previous points. I am going to start with you, General Cotton. In response to sort of a general question from Senator Fischer you said something to the effect of adequate standoff capability. Could you drill down on that a little bit? In other words, are we short in that capacity, particularly in the conventional weapons, and if so, do you have a solution in mind?

General COTTON. Senator Cramer, thank you for the question. So I can get a little more detailed in what I meant by that. I think, as we look at who our adversaries are, I think we would all agree that having standoff fires and long-range strike capability will be beneficial for us against the adversary.

What I mean by that, more specifically—and this is not a parochial statement; it is just a matter of fact—is that I think the utilization of bombers, and being able to have a bomber carry a long-range strike weapon, because range is dependent on size because it is fuel capacity of the weapon, would be very beneficial for us, as a Nation, to be able to have that type of capability for our bomber force, not just weapons that could be used for a myriad of weapon systems but one that could be specifically used in a conventional sense for the bomber that gives it incredible standoff and incredible range.

What that does for us, that actually makes it so it doesn't have to hit a tanker as often, as well, and actually keep the air crew and the platform out of harm's way.

Senator CRAMER. Well said. Thank you for that.

Then in response to something that Senator King used, in his usual great illustrations, of a pig in a python, I believe it what it was, referencing the lack of capital budgeting in our system, the transparency of budgets is something that has always frustrated me on this Committee, particularly as it relates to my favorite service, the Air Force. Thank you very much.

You referenced the role of your command as a national role. Understandably, you are a united command. Can you flesh that out a little bit for me as well, because I have long been concerned that we are not adequately, I don't want to say appropriating, but appropriating credit where credit is due and then cost where cost is due?

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator Cramer. I think, you know, there are a lot of times where there can be confusion, even within a component, service component, that they are advocating for a weapons system or a platform that is utilized in their operational domain. It absolutely is. But when it comes to strategic deterrence weapons and strategic deterrence platforms I think that those are national systems.

What I mean by that is that we are doing the care and feeding on behalf of the systems that ultimately belong—and I have got it, all weapons systems belong to the President of the United States. But in particular, when we talk about strategic deterrent weapons that it is much more than the *Columbia* being part of the United States Navy or the bomber, ICBM, becoming a part of the United States Air Force. I think there is probably room for conversation on how do we make that so we can now have these conversations on funding.

Senator CRAMER. That was therapeutic for me because if silos within the same services are confused I feel better about my confusion now. But thank you for that clarification.

You know, I can't look at both of you without noticing, General Cotton, that there is a lack of space folk in your sort of leadership chart. Can you speak to that a little bit, as I looked at the two of you side by side, and realizing the history of both commands.

General COTTON. Well, I will start off real quickly. As the UCP changed we lost our space billets, if you will, and the majority of our airmen who were space-specific. I will tell you that my colleague here, General Whiting, does have a joint force team that assists us.

What I am missing, though, is a space component officer, you know, like a one-star general that is a component linkage to the space component. My components are I have a direct linkage with the air component, and Air Force Global Strike Command, and I have a direct linkage with the navy component, with the Joint Force Maritime Command. I do not have a direct linkage.

We are in works, though. I am in works with General Saltzman, for example, to fill that billet, because you are also part of the NC3 meeting that we had here recently, and what we really want to do is, you saw a lot of that was the space layer, and I want to be able to have an expert and one that is at a general officer level to be able to articulate the requirements, especially when it comes to NC3, if you will, on the space layer.

Senator CRAMER. Well, and General Whiting, I talked about the vulnerability of SATCOM, for example, to space warfare. Generally, I am over time, but if you could elaborate a little bit to General Cotton's point, if you would.

General WHITING. Senator, yes, it is important that we ensure that Strategic Command has all the insights they need as they rely on the space layer for early warning and for protected communications. As General Cotton noted, today U.S. Space Command provides a joint integrated space team in his headquarters. They sit in Omaha to assist with that planning and make sure that he has insight into what we are doing so that we can best coordinate our plans together.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cramer. While I recognize Senator Kelly I want to apologize because I did not realize you were in the room prior to recognizing Senator Hirono. Senator Kelly.

Senator KELLY. Okay, Mr. Chairman. I was actually about 10 feet away, so I wasn't actually at my seat.

I want to followup on what Senator Cramer was asking about, standoff capability, General Cotton. So 2 years since Russia invaded Ukraine we have been forced to rethink our nuclear posture and how our own deterrence works with growing nuclear capability of our adversaries. Russia has recently rejected a proposal to reopen bilateral nuclear arms control talks. Their behavior, their rhetoric, along with Chinese aggression, North Korea's regular testing of ballistic missiles and those kinds of capabilities, Iran increasing its supply of enriched uranium, I mean this underscores the importance of having a strong deterrence ourselves.

The LRSO, the long-range standoff missile system that is developed in Tucson, Arizona, at Raytheon, this is going to be a critical feature of our future deterrence. The ability to forward deploy this missile on U.S. bombers is a powerful message to our allies.

So General, beyond what Senator Cramer was asking just about standoff more broadly, can you expand on the importance of the LRSO to our overall deterrence, and give any updates you have on its fielding.

General COTTON. Senator Kelly, thank you for the question. You know, when we talk about the air leg of the triad, the air leg of the triad is composed of two mission-essential tasks that the bombers are supposed to do in regard to what my mission set is. That is gravity bomb deployment and release and the ability to have a long-range standoff strike weapon. LRSO is absolutely critical for my mission set as a long-range standoff nuclear weapon. It will replace the ALCM that we currently carry.

From the reports that I am receiving from the component is that Raytheon is doing a great job in manufacturing that weapon for us. Once again, just like everything else, you know, if I get it sooner than later, Senator, that is good for us.

Senator KELLY. Is the IOC of this weapon, is it public or is it something we would have to talk about downstairs?

General COTTON. I would rather have that conversation with you downstairs, and then we can talk about that, if it is okay with you, sir.

Senator KELLY. Beyond LRSO, what else do you think we could be doing to deter our adversaries that we are currently not doing?

General COTTON. Well, there was an earlier conversation on what do we look at as far as posture and sizing of the current triad, and what does that look like. It is in alignment with the study results of the Posture Commission. It is also in alignment that the work, that to be frank, that the Pentagon is doing in response to the Posture Commission, and it is work that we are doing in STRATCOM. I can elaborate in incredible detail in the secure session, to let you know the work that we are doing in that regard.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Thank you, General.

General Whiting, a different subject here. The Space Priorities Framework aims to secure our space industrial base, including improving supply chains for crucial satellite components like traveling-wave tubes and traveling-wave tube amplifiers. In the United States here we have faced some challenges in this area with limited domestic capabilities and also competition from China that is often heavily subsidized. This situation leads to supply chain risks for essential national security and commercial satellites.

I have got an amendment to the Defense Bill to support the development of a competitive U.S. source for these components, and I am going to keep working on that this year.

General, do you believe it is important for the Department of Defense to have reliable U.S. source for these critical satellite components to ensure quality, timely delivery, and fair pricing, and what other risks do you see from having inadequate domestic supply chains for key satellite components?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. Yes, I do think it is important that we have robust supply chains from trust-

ed sources in the United States. If we don't have that I think the risk is that this widening lead that our commercial space industry has created for us, that might be stymied, and then that would give our competitors a chance to catch up. So we want to ensure that doesn't happen.

Senator KELLY. Yes. Traveling-wave tubes and wave tube amplifiers are kind of obscure components. Most folks have not actually heard of them. But they are important to us maintaining our edge in space technology. So thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, thanks to both of you for being here. Thank you for what you do.

General Whiting, can you talk about how much dependence our defense capabilities or our offensive capabilities are on our satellite systems?

General WHITING. Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines are terrestrial forces, if you will, are sized with the implicit assumption they will have access to space capabilities. Because of that we have been able to reduce the number of forces that we have, and we can now prosecute targets with much fewer assets than we would have decades ago.

If we don't have access to those space capabilities, if those forces do not have access to those space capabilities we don't have the force structure that we would need to fight without them. So that is why we have to protect and defend these space capabilities against the threats we now see arrayed against us.

Senator SCOTT. How many different satellite systems are we dependent on?

General WHITING. Senator, I don't have a number but I can talk to you just quickly about the capabilities. It is our satellite communications, it is our global positioning system, it is our intelligence systems, it is our weather systems, it is our missile warning systems. There are a host of different capabilities we provide from space.

Senator SCOTT. So if our adversary was able to demolish 10 of them, would it create much debris?

General WHITING. Almost certainly, yes, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. If that debris was floating out there, how much of our satellites would be at risk because of just the debris hitting them?

General WHITING. Senator, that is a concern, and it is why we monitor the 45,000 trackable objects on orbit, to watch for potential conjunctions. But we don't want to proliferate debris on orbit, which would increase the risk to our systems.

Senator SCOTT. So if you were an adversary, wouldn't that be the cheapest thing to do? If you wanted to cripple our ability, would the cheapest thing to do is go blow up 10 or 12 of these large satellites that are out there?

General WHITING. Sir, I don't know the cost of that, but it would certainly be incredibly reckless because it would pollute the very domain they are probably trying to operate in themselves, because it is indiscriminate. It impacts potentially our satellites, their sat-

ellites, other countries' satellites, and it would be incredibly reckless behavior.

Senator SCOTT. Let's take Russia's forces. So if you look at our forces as compared to Russia's forces, how dependent are they on the satellite systems as compared to us?

General WHITING. Senator, they are less dependent for the reason that they are a continental power and they expect to be able to run fiber and to do microwave shots and those kinds of thing, and they don't have the same global type of military that we do, so they are less dependent.

Senator SCOTT. How about China?

General WHITING. Sir, they have replicated, in many ways, what we have done in space, because as they tried to push us out from the first island chain and the second island chain in the Pacific they have gone to space for the advantages it brings. So in many ways they are working to replicate the dependency that we have.

Senator SCOTT. So if they were able to, you know, hamper our abilities or our satellite system—let's take China—and they were only focused on Taiwan or Japan or, well, for sure Korea, right? They need their satellite system to do anything with regard to Korea, right?

General WHITING. Senator, I think China, they are getting to the point where all of their forces are becoming space enabled, and so I think in any conflict they would be reliant on space capabilities.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. But if only the power they wanted to project was Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and that is all they cared about, then they probably wouldn't need their space capabilities as much, would they?

General WHITING. Senator, I think they would need those space capabilities because they are looking beyond those countries and looking at the U.S., and looking at where the U.S. would be flowing forces from, and that has required them to go to space.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. How about Iran. They don't need it, right?

General WHITING. Iran is not a space-enabled military.

Senator SCOTT. Do they even have the ability to have any impact on us in space today?

General WHITING. They have not demonstrated that capability, but certainly we are watching their space program and their ballistic missile program very carefully, and can only think about what they might be thinking about in the future.

Senator SCOTT. What about North Korea?

General WHITING. North Korea has demonstrated an electromagnetic warfare capability that could have impact against our space systems, and then we are also very carefully watching their space systems. Of course, they should not be launching into space because of the U.N. resolutions that say they can't use ballistic missile technology for that. Again, we are having to keep an eye on what they might be thinking of in the future.

Senator SCOTT. Our troops in Korea, they need access to space capabilities. In North Korea they probably don't.

General WHITING. North Korea is not a space-enabled military today.

Senator SCOTT. But our troops in South Korea would need it.

General WHITING. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, and of course Ranking Member Wicker, for holding this hearing, and I would like to thank General Cotton and General Whiting for testifying today and for your great service to our country.

I am going to continue on this electromagnetic spectrum, on the operations we have, because General Cotton, in your nomination hearing, you indicated that electromagnetic spectrum operations are a top priority. So your forces have done amazing work at the Joint Center for Electromagnetic Readiness at Nellis Air Force Base in my home State of Nevada. We are very proud of Nellis.

But even with the efforts made so far I am sure that there is probably more work to be done. So what actions do you need to take to ensure that the United States can deter, if needed, and defeat threats across the electromagnetic spectrum, and how can we help with that?

General COTTON. Senator Rosen, thank you for the question, and thanks for acknowledging the incredible that team is doing. I would like to highlight some of that work that that team is doing, and that includes specifically the support to the Yukon commander and what we are seeing in the Ukrainian efforts, as well as the support to Israel in the fight that we are seeing there. So that team is coming out of the blocks, doing incredible work, so thank you for acknowledging them.

As you know, on the 26th of July last year is when we stood up the JEC, and that is when I was given the responsibility on EMSO. As you have heard throughout the testimony today, electromagnetic spectrum is incredibly important for us. It is a domain that was uncontested for us over the past 30 years. Now that we have a fight, a potential fight with adversaries that, one, understand that that is a domain that we rely on, and two, have the capability to do something to counter having dominance in that domain and spectrum, it is incredibly important.

As the lead combatant command to ensure that we have the proper training, the proper live, virtual, and collaborative training techniques because as you know, some of what we want to be able to test and train to can't be done in the live environment. So we continue to work on how do we—I call them reps and sets to our men and women in the armed forces—how do we give them the reps and sets in a virtual environment that shows all range of how they can contest that environment.

Senator ROSEN. My team is going to followup with you on that as we work on next year's NDAA, thinking about what we need to do here. Incredibly important what we do at Nellis.

I am going to move on to reps and sets, and of course that is modeling and simulation. We have that for space too, right? So General Whiting, I am going to keep on Nellis here for a bit. As you know, Space Delta 1 trains weapons officers, again Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. These weapons officers graduate from the pinnacle of training offered by the Space Force to prepare guardians for what they may need, and more.

So building on what you may need, what you have now, the ability to model and simulate, how does this prepare your forces and what can we continue to do to give you that simulation you need, because you may not be able to go up there.

General WHITING. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for the question. I know exactly the great work that happens at Nellis as I was stationed there a decade ago as the Vice Commander of the Air Force Warfare Center, a vital capability.

Modeling and simulation are absolutely foundational for us in space because, as you allude to, it is expensive for us to get there and so we can't just launch all sorts of things just to do training, although there is an aspect of that we need to do. But modeling and simulation allow us to do multiple iterations of various activities and to simulate the threats that we now see arrayed against us so that these weapons officers have the skills that when they go back to their operational squadrons they can share that among the crew force.

So that modeling and simulation is absolutely critical to us, and we want to continue to grow that capability for all space forces, because that will support Space Command as we move forward.

Senator ROSEN. Perfect. Look, we will work with you on that, moving forward. But speaking of space I am going to continue with you General Whiting. Considering the reported collaboration between Iran and Russia is space activities that could potentially challenge our U.S. interests and security, can you elaborate a little bit on what is happening in Iran, given Iran's progress on their ballistic missiles and space programs. How might additional sharing between the United States and our partners in the Middle East—we know there are increasing challenges going on there, the emerging threats, and particularly the Iranian threat. Can you speak to that?

General WHITING. Yes, Senator. Our relationships across the globe with our allies and partners is truly one of our asymmetric advantages. We have signed a number of space situational awareness sharing agreements, as you allude to, with over 30 countries. Three of those are in the Middle East, and we have ongoing discussions to expand that.

But as we partner more closely with those countries in the Middle East it helps us to have a better understanding of what is going on in space, so that when we see potential bad actors acting we can call out that behavior. It also builds a set of partnerships to deny those partnerships to countries like Russia and Iran. So those are very important for us, that we continue to grow them, Senator.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So I believe this is if not certainly one of the most important committees in the Senate, for a variety of reasons. Certainly our role in advocating for the national defense is important. But I also think, you know, going back home and talking to constituents and having those conversations about what are the threats, hearing from them, but also explaining the things that we learn up here. So my two questions are related to that, that would be more sort of conversational about

maybe a question I would get from somebody home that I would like both of you to address.

First, and we heard earlier, you know, as far as nuclear modernization, the price tag of \$2 trillion potentially over 30 years, a number something like that. Could both of you sort of address—you know, I think the perception is that the United States has, right now, all the nuclear weapons we need to blow up the world into oblivion a thousand times over, right? So if you were trying to explain the importance of this modernization effort how would each one of you describe that to folks back home, why it is important, and specifically why it is important.

General COTTON. Senator Schmitt, I will start off, and first of all I want to say thank you because the men and women of Tinker Air Force Base and the work that they are doing in regard to just the bomber campus that is being built out there for one leg of the triad is incredibly important.

Going back to your comment, I think the way we should be able to frame it is, one, it is not a one-for-one. So it is not one of these conversations where we are talking about how you have to have a one-for-one or overmatch or those type of things. As we already know, the Russians have more weapons than we have today, but we absolutely hold them at risk.

So the way I would describe it to people is you need to understand, you know, it is a proposition in regard to a cost analysis. I want to be able to deter because my adversary understands that the risk of the taking action would fail upon arrival for them to be able to meet their ultimate needs. So it is a cost-benefit analysis model, if you will, and that is what strategic deterrence truly is, and the way we use that cost-benefit analysis is three legs of the triad.

Senator SCHMITT. But as far as the modernization itself, how would you describe why that is important, if the perception is that we have everything we need to deter, because we can wipe out a country off the face of the earth?

General COTTON. Because we must have the ability to have weapons systems and platforms, a training environment, et cetera, that the adversary—because for deterrence the adversary always gets a vote—for the adversary to understand that the cost-benefit of them taking action won't outweigh and that the modernized systems can hold them at risk.

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. For space the challenge is that the American people can't look up and see the space systems, so they don't even realize the way it is enabling the modern way of life. I think it is important that we remind the American people of all the great advantages space gives us, that we are never lost anymore because of GPS, that we can synchronize global stock markets and point of sale and precision farming. If we lost all of that really our modern way of life would be at risk, and that is why we have to protect and defend those capabilities and make those investments.

So I think it is incumbent on all of us to help the American people understand how space truly is a part of their life, even if they can't see it.

Senator SCHMITT. For each one of you then, in your domains here, if you could identify one thing in an unclassified setting, of course, here, one thing that really keeps you up at night about China's capabilities, if you wanted to explain that threat to folks back home who maybe don't understand the specifics, what would that be?

General COTTON. For is their capacity, capability to build out their weapons systems and their arsenal. It is that simple, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. So the pace at which they are——

General COTTON. The pace at which they can, or the levers that they drive or do not drive on whether they go idle or they accelerate. They control that throttle.

General WHITING. Senator, my answer is very similar. What is most concerning is the way China has clinically studied us and our dependency on space and figured out exactly what they think our architecture looks like and now are rapidly building systems to hold that architecture at risk.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

Senator KING. Mr. Chairman, I would suggest the simplest answer is we want our adversaries to be scared so they don't try anything.

Senator SCHMITT. No, I agree with that. I just want to make sure that, because we talk about the modernization, right, like how does that fit into that discussion.

Senator KING. We want them to stay scared.

Chairman REED. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you General Cotton, General Whiting, to both of you for being here this morning and for your service.

Senator Kelly asked what we could be doing to deter our adversaries, what else we could be doing to deter our adversaries. General Cotton, I appreciated the time we spent yesterday. One of the things we talked about was just how critical passing the supplemental bill and getting a budget process that is regular, that can be depended on, is to ensuring that you can accomplish your mission. Is that correct?

General COTTON. Senator Shaheen, yes, it was great speaking with you yesterday, and you are right. I think I would even capture, you know, CRs, continuing resolutions for us, especially in my platform where everything that I own is being modernized. I think folks are quick to not realize that there are New START programs that are embedded in these large programs that folks will think are already underway.

I had just mentioned it to Senator Schmitt, for example, they are building a new bomber campus for sustainment not only of the B-52 but the B-21, moving forward. A continuing resolution could actually perturb that. If you perturb anything within a larger program it actually subsequently can affect the program overall, and then we have the conversations of a program slipping.

So yes, a stable budget, on-time budgets are incredibly critical for us as we are baking this modernization, not only across my portfolio but across the entire Department of Defense portfolios.

Senator SHAHEEN. Can you speak to what is in the National Security Supplemental Bill that we passed out of the Senate that is critical to our defense industrial base and why that matters as you are looking at rebuilding, ensuring that the nuclear triad remains credible?

General COTTON. Yes, Senator. As we had the conversation, embedded in that, even though the majority of that is not necessarily part of my portfolio, but it does touch on the industrial base, the defense industrial base, which touches all of our portfolios, if you will, in regard of how do we strengthen that. Because I think that is foundational for our Nation. It is more than even a Department of Defense issue.

Senator SHAHEEN. One of the things that I think you alluded to was the sort of end game that we are at with Russia in terms of bilateral negotiations on any sort of a New START treaty or an effort to reduce nuclear weapons. But can you talk about Putin's recent rhetoric around using nuclear weapons and how concerned you are about that?

General COTTON. Yes. Thank you, Senator. You know, the conversation we had is I absolutely am a proponent of treaties, but everyone has to play, and you have to follow the rules. So yes, what I would love to see is China step up and want to have a negotiation with us. Would I love to see Russia come back? Absolutely. But I am also a realist, to understand that that may or may not happen, so as a combatant commander my job is to understand how do I build a force that I can present to the President if that doesn't happen.

But to your point on what we are seeing in the rhetoric, I think what we are seeing is the President of the Russian Federation sees that he can use that as a coercion tool to threaten in regard to what he has as far as a nuclear force.

Senator SHAHEEN. General Whiting, Starlink and other commercial satellite ventures have been a complement to our operations in space, but of course there have been some issues around how those are being used, and we have to ensure that we have the appropriate mechanisms in place to guarantee access.

So how should we be thinking about that, and what are you doing to mitigate the risk that we might have by relying on a commercial source for some of those services?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. I would point to two aspects, I think, which help mitigate that risk. Number one is in all of my experience I have only known that every company we have contracted with for satellite communications and other space services, they have always fulfilled their contractual obligations to us. I would expect that going forward, and so we want to make sure we are writing those contracts smartly on what we need and ensure that we are getting that.

The second, Senator, I would point to the fact, for example, in satellite communications we want a hybrid architecture where there are some constellations we need purpose-built for the government, exclusive use of the government. For example, in our work in support of General Cotton, as we provide nuclear command and control, protected communications to assure the President, the Secretary of Defense, and General Cotton always can communicate to

their forces, we want that to be a government-owned constellation. But then there are other communication requirements that we absolutely can go to commercial for.

So I think it is understanding what those highest priority, unique military requirements are and then satisfying those through our own systems, and then using commercial to the max extent we can, that is how we can help mitigate risk.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I have some other questions, but I will save those for the closed session.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman. Again, thank you both for being here today.

General Whiting, your predecessor, General Dickinson, told this Committee last March that SPACECOM is creating concepts to further integrate space, cyber, special operations to generate asymmetrical advantages around the globe. In a press release from your recent visit to U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command it mentions that Army space professionals are operating across multiple domains, including cyber and space, to support warfighters, especially forward deployed special operations forces. Can you briefly talk about the nexus between space, cyber, and SOF?

General WHITING. Yes, Senator. Thank you for the question. We do see it as a unique opportunity to bring together these three capabilities to help us all three achieve our missions. For example, there are times that using space we can create accesses for cyber forces who then can support special operations forces, or special operations forces, through their unique ability to gain access to certain geographic locations, can help us in our space mission by executing functions that support us.

So I have spoken to the Commander of Special Operations Command about that. As you noted, I have spoken to our Army component about that. We also leverage the fact that our Navy and Marine Corps components are also cyber components, so that gives us a unique pairing there as well.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. So it sounds like it is a two-way street, right? I mean, just as much as space enables SOF and the entire Joint Force, the physical access that SOF provides also enables critical space operations. Is that correct?

General WHITING. Senator, that is absolutely correct.

Senator BUDD. Given proposed cuts to Army SOF there will be reduced capacity to fill combatant commander requirements. So I know that the demand for SOF is up, and that likely will increase across geographical combatant commands. So do you anticipate any impacts on your command's operation should those cuts to SOF move forward over the next few years?

General WHITING. No, Senator, I don't.

Senator BUDD. So it is a two-way street, but you don't see that it will impact you if there are SOF cuts.

General WHITING. Sir, I have not been briefed on any of the work we have been doing with Special Operations Command that will specifically impact us.

Senator BUDD. Switching gears a bit, General Whiting, last year I asked your predecessor how he would characterize the current resiliency of our satellite constellations, particularly given that con-

stellations are also being deployed with a minimum number of satellites available, or necessary. How would you answer that same question today, particularly given recent revealed advance threats?

General WHITING. Senator, thank you for the question. I would today our constellations are optimized for a benign environment, and as we see these threats now growing we have to now protect and defend those constellations until we develop the next generation of resilient constellations. That work is ongoing to deploy those next generation of resilient capabilities, but we are still going to have to protect and defend our current ones for years to come, and so that is why we have to also focus on this protect-and-defend capabilities.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. General Cotton, I think we can all agree that Sentinel's delay has greatly emphasized the need to ensure Minuteman's continued operational readiness. As such, how important is it to conduct regular test launches of Minuteman to demonstrate that the United States nuclear deterrent is safe, secure, reliable, and effective?

General COTTON. Senator, thank you for the question. I think the answer is I want to be able to have an ability to surveil all three legs, to include the Minuteman, as well as my bomber forces and my SLBM force as well.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. General Whiting again, you have spoken publicly about the need to maximize partnerships with allies, partners, our interagency teammates, commercial industry, and even academia. So why is this partnering so crucial to our national security space capabilities?

General WHITING. Senator, all the things we have to do in space is so much that no one department, service, command, even country can do all the things we need to do. It is an asymmetric advantage of ours to leverage all of these stakeholders to get unit of effort to achieve our goals. So that is why we want to partner as widely as we can with like-minded countries and organizations because it maximizes our ability to execute our mission.

Senator BUDD. Thank you very much.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Budd. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Cotton, in your written testimony you acknowledge the importance of the Air Force's refueling tanking fleet, accomplishing STRATCOM's global strike missions so we don't have to rely on intermediate basing installations. You also highlight the Air Force's upcoming refueler tanker acquisitions being critical to enable simultaneous global operations, including those involving multiple combatant commands.

So my question for you, sir, is how does a robust refueling tanker fleet sustain STRATCOM missions, if you could elaborate on that, and also elaborate on how the Air Force's acquisition of the new KC-46 tankers will expand your global reach and expand your current capabilities.

General COTTON. Senator Peters, thank you for the question. You know, something that makes us incredibly unique as a fighting force is we have the ability to fly the entire globe. Even at its onset, the tanker and the bomber were both complementary acquisitions. It gives us incredible reach. That being said, that is why

it is such a unique relationship between the tanker force and our bomber force on my air leg, and absolutely critical to my mission set with regard to ensuring that we have sustainable and enough tankers to be able to make that a requirement that can be enduring.

So I pay attention to what the availability is of the tanker force. We have a great relationship with USTRANSCOM, and General Jackie Van Ovost is a dear friend as well, to ensure that there is no disconnect in the requirements.

But you are right, that can be stretched with the requirements that the tanker force has on non-weapons system movement, munitions, missions that don't include bombers but includes providing forces forward, et cetera, et cetera. So we always have to make sure that we pay attention and see that those acquisitions, not only the nuclear triad but those acquisition programs are on time and are in healthy, as well.

Senator PETERS. I suspect the new KC-46 will probably be around a long time. That mission is not going to go anywhere soon, and I have told folks this could be a 50-year mission for this aircraft. Then I was reminded the B-52s are likely to be well in excess of 50 years. Is that an accurate statement in regard to the KC-46?

General COTTON. Well, I don't know how long the tanker community plans on having the KC-46, but if we use legacy as a measure, the KC-135 has been around a long time, as well.

Senator PETERS. It is. Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. General Cotton, as you likely know, Northern Strike in Michigan is the DOD's largest annual joint Reserve component readiness exercise that takes place in the country. Over 7,000 servicemembers from over 25 states and several international partners converge at the National All-Domain Warfighting Center, which is also known as NADWC, for critical training focused on future multi-domain conflict.

It is one of my top priorities to ensure that Northern Strike continues to receive robust funding to support realistic Joint Force training with our global allies and partners. Part of this realistic preparation for a future conflict requires training for our armed forces to fight and win in the electromagnetic spectrum.

What role do you see state-of-the-art training centers like NADWC will play in preparing for this very unique electromagnetic challenge that will likely get only more significant?

General COTTON. Thank you for the question, Senator. I think what is going to be key is ensuring that the participants of those exercises are given the true challenges that they could potentially face, and then they can drive the techniques, tactics, and procedures, because some of it is as simple as that, to be able to counter that threat.

I think having live, virtual, and constructive opportunities on training venues are going to be incredibly important, as well, understanding that probably having a live training venue might not be feasible but having a virtual one is. So continued support in having push for that type of training venue would be incredibly important.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Before recognizing Senator Mullin let me remind everyone that we will convene immediately after this open session in a closed session in SVC-217, and I will, at this time, pass the gavel to Senator Shaheen, who will preside here and there.

Senator Mullin, please.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today.

First off I want to thank Senator Cotton for emphasizing the importance of modernization of the B-52 fleet and keeping it in the air, especially since all that work is being done in Oklahoma, right at Tinker Air Force Base. Tinker will also be the maintenance center for the new B-21s, and they are rapidly building up the capacities and capabilities today to take on that new mission. We are very proud of that.

General Cotton, a question for you. Oklahoma is very proud to invest in the investments we have made to support the bomber modernization and the maintenance at Tinker Air Force Base. Can you speak to the benefit this brings to the leg of the triad?

General COTTON. Absolutely, Senator. It is absolutely foundational. Tinker and the teammates that are there, Tinker Air Force Base to support that mission leg on behalf of men and women of Air Force Global Strike Command, that provides that leg to me, is absolutely critical. The fact that we are expanding and building a bomber campus, if you will, in preparation of B-21 is going to be extremely important, but even more so the production of the B-52J, as we go through the commercial engine replacement program for that jet.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you. In addition to the nuclear deterrent, STRATCOM is also tasked with electronic warfare. What is the next technological frontier for protecting our electronic communications and weapons systems?

General COTTON. Well, sir, obviously it is protection systems, and my colleague to the left also plays an important role in that. But more so one of the things that we are finding, and it was noted through both Northern Edge 21 and Northern Edge 23 exercises that it really having adequate training so the men and women that are put in those situations understand that there are techniques, tactics, and procedures that can avoid being susceptible to the interference that you might see in that spectrum domain.

I had mentioned earlier, but the realities of us recognizing that that domain is going to be contestant with the peers that we have, the near peer adversaries that we have now and being able to identify and find ways to ensure that we can fight in that domain at our choosing is going to be incredibly important.

Senator MULLIN. General Whiting, do you want to speak about that too?

General WHITING. Yes. Thank you, Senator. The electromagnetic spectrum is vital to us. It is the only way to get information back from space. That is our satellite communications, our missile warning, our positioning navigation and timing, so we absolutely have to ensure that we can operate there free of hindrance, or at least be able to operate through any hindrance that we see.

We definitely want to look to technologies that can help us reduce that susceptibility to jamming, for example. I think things like laser communications can help with that, and I would like to see those investments continue, moving forward.

Senator MULLIN. Currently we have a company in our state who is working on quantum-and physics-based communications techniques. Is that a help, a big role for you guys?

General WHITING. Senator, I think it could be. I think that is one of those new technologies that would give us a way, perhaps, to defeat traditional jamming techniques. I certainly would encourage the research lab and the science and technology community to continue to work on that and for companies to bring mature capabilities forward in that area.

Senator MULLIN. Is our defense industry capable to make those changes? When we are working on a system that they say is 3 years, 4 years out, in some cases most of time it is 7, are they able to pivot when new technology comes on? Because obviously this is a growing space and a growing concern. So there are new finds, new technology that is coming on constantly. Are we able to pivot—and I will hold that for both of you all—in defense to say yes, we want to start moving this direction?

General COTTON. For us, as we are looking at modernization programs across the portfolio what we are seeing that is different in the way we want to do business, Senator, is through modularity. So having the opportunity for modularity is going to be critical for us and crucial for us, because then we can outpace and stay ahead of the adversary.

General WHITING. Senator, I would just add that we want to work with the companies that have existed for a long time and help them to see the requirements and make the pivot. But also we want to make sure we have a relationship with new startup companies that may not be burdened by the way things have happened in the past and can now move right to the future. We want to make sure they have an opportunity to compete for our requirements, and we can help move them through that “valley of death,” they call it to bring successful programs forward.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you guys. I will see you here in just a minute in the SCIF. I yield back.

Senator SHAHEEN. [Presiding.] Thank you. Senator King, did you have a second round that you wanted to do?

Okay. We are going to adjourn for 15 minutes so that Senators can vote, and go into closed session in the SVC. So at this point we will close the open session.

[Whereupon, at 11:31 a.m., the hearing was recessed, to be continued in closed session.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

1. Senator GILLIBRAND. General Whiting, New York Air National Guard's 222d Command & Control Squadron is a proud State Partnership Program (SPP) partner with Brazil. Your written testimony talked about the importance of the National Guard State Partnership Program and plans for future SPP security cooperation. If the current space-related Air National Guard units are moved into a single compo-

nent of the Space Force, how will that impact Space Command's ability to leverage the SPP program for space security cooperation?

General WHITING. USSPACECOM has substantially benefited from the enduring relationships that State Partnership Program states maintain with their international counterparts, especially within the space domain. Were the current space-related Air National Guard units to be moved into a single component of the USSF, it will not change the State of New York's SPP relationship with Brazil. USSPACECOM would work with the USSF and other Military Services to ensure subject matter experts are available to support space-related SPP engagements and security cooperation activities with Brazil and other countries in the SPP.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

MISSILE DEFENSE

2. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, the 2022 Unified Command Plan transferred integrated missile defense responsibilities from STRATCOM to SPACECOM and SPACECOM has undergone several reorganizations in the last 2 years. Now that SPACECOM has responsibility for integrated missile defense capabilities, do you anticipate needing any new technologies?

General WHITING. The Unified Command Plan Transregional Missile Defense (TRMD) mission encompasses 23 Missile Defense roles, responsibilities, and authorities (RRAs) that focus primarily on TRMD Combined and Joint coordination, capability assessments, and continuity of TRMD operations. USSPACECOM and our functional component for integrated missile defense (the Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense), are currently working an RRA assessment and Concept of Operations development. We continue to pace the threat and as new technologies become known or available, we collaborate with the Services and the Missile Defense Agency to assess if these new developments can improve our systems.

SUBMARINE PRODUCTION

3. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, there are many concerns about the *Columbia*-class submarine program, including risk of cost growth in the program, potential industrial-base challenges of building both *Columbia*-class submarines and *Virginia*-class attack submarines at the same time, and design delays that could jeopardize the goal of deploying the first *Columbia*-class submarine in 2031. General Cotton, how are you working with the Navy and the submarine industrial base to help ensure the development and production of the *Columbia*-class submarine, and what do you see as the biggest challenge to production?

General COTTON. The submarine industrial base remains a top concern to the Navy and United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). USSTRATCOM tracks program status very closely and helps influence priority decisionmaking through established formal processes with our Navy partners. The industrial base must be able to simultaneously sustain existing nuclear triad and conventional forces and deliver the future modernization programs throughout the spectrum of conflict. I am deeply appreciative of the investment from Congress which will enable recapitalization and rebuilding the Nation's shipyards.

4. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, are you concerned about meeting the timeline for the first *Columbia*-class submarine deploying in 2030?

General COTTON. Yes. I am expecting the first hull will likely deliver approximately 12—16 months late; however, the Navy has robust mitigation plans in place to ensure USSTRATCOM requirements are met during the *Ohio* to *Columbia* transition. USSTRATCOM will continue to assess modernization delays impacting requirements and consider all transition mitigation options to reduce my operational risk.

SPACECOM RELATIONSHIP AND COORDINATION WITH INDOPACOM

5. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, in November 2022, U.S. Space Forces, Indo-Pacific was activated to integrate space with the airborne capabilities of Pacific Air Force. Your command is the only combatant command that physically touches every geographic command and your capabilities rely on systems from every service. How is the relationship between U.S. Space Forces and INDOPACOM?

General WHITING. The USSF's component to USINDOPACOM (U.S. Space Forces, Indo-Pacific [USSPACEFOR-INDOPAC]) has no formal relationship to USSPACECOM. While I cannot speak for the USSF or Commander,

USINDOPACOM, my observation as Commander, USSPACECOM, is that the relationship between USSPACEFOR-INDOPAC and the USINDOPACOM staff is strong. Additionally, when considering the broader space relationships in the region, I also assess that the integration of USSPACECOM's Joint Integrated Space Team, as my liaison element to HQ USINDOPACOM, complements the USSPACEFOR-INDOPAC and USINDOPACOM partnership, improving the overall integration and effectiveness of space capabilities.

6. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, is there still a plan to have a Space Force component at every overseas combatant command and is there a notional timeline?

General WHITING. As Commander, USSPACECOM, I cannot speak for the USSF on its plans for allocating forces to the Combatant Commands. To the best of my knowledge, the Chief of Space Operations continues to plan for a USSF component supporting each of the Combatant Commands. I would also like to add that from my observations, when working in tandem with the USSPACECOM Joint Integrated Space Teams, my liaison elements to the other Combatant Commands, Combatant Command-aligned USSF components have been instrumental in improving the integration of space capabilities into other Combatant Commands. This improves the overall combat effectiveness of the Joint Force, and thus, I would encourage the USSF to continue fielding components to the Combatant Commands.

7. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, how do you balance the competing requirements of each combatant command?

General WHITING. In accordance with the priorities described in the National Defense Strategy and other strategic guidance documents, USSPACECOM balances competing space-related requirements of each Combatant Command by leveraging our Joint Integrated Space Teams, our liaison element to each of the Combatant Commands, to integrate into their Headquarters processes so that we fully understand what they need, when they need it, and how USSPACECOM capabilities need to be integrated into their operations. We then use this knowledge to continually prioritize our space capabilities to meet the other Combatant Commands' space-related requirements, while adhering to policy and codified roles, responsibilities, and authorities.

INCLUSION OF COMMERCIAL SATELLITES AND THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

8. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, previously space was only used by the government but has become the domain for a new wave of commercial satellites for broadband communications and remote sensing. Are Department of Defense and SPACECOM specifically and appropriately leveraging commercial space capabilities?

General WHITING. USSPACECOM and the DOD are using commercial space capabilities appropriately today. The USSPACECOM staff ensures appropriate use through its implementation of our Commercial Integration Strategy, which is guided by DOD's Commercial Space Integration Strategy, and which is aligned with USSF's Commercial Integration Strategy. Both USSPACECOM and the Department specifically leverage commercial space capabilities to provide needed capabilities and innovations to meet specific mission requirements. The USSPACECOM staff will continue to work within the Department to identify innovative technological capabilities, mission needs, and threats, to maintain appropriate use of commercial space capabilities matched to specific warfighting requirements.

9. Senator HIRONO. General Whiting, what protections exist for the commercial satellites against physical or cyber-attacks?

General WHITING. The USSPACECOM staff has built and maintains relationships with industry partners so that USSPACECOM can provide those industry partners with situational awareness and threat data to mitigate against the threat of physical, electronic warfare, or cyber attack. We actively integrate industry partners in a collaborative government and commercial mission-based partnership; this collaboration occurs principally through the Commercial Integration Cell (CIC) inside USSPACECOM's Combined Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Space Force Base.

In the CIC, we share appropriate information at the classified level with specific commercial partners, who then can use this information to better defend themselves against the wide variety of threats to which they may be vulnerable. Additionally, we integrate industry partner assets into our prioritized Critical Asset List, the list of friendly space assets that we are postured to defend when so directed. At a more strategic level, the DOD and U.S. Government as a whole increase the protection

of commercial space operations by establishing partnerships with allies, partners, and other interested entities that agree to adhere to DOD's tenets of responsible behavior in space.

Additionally, we coordinate with the National Security Agency (NSA), whose Cybersecurity Collaboration Center (CCC) works with industry and the U.S. Interagency, including with the CIC and other commercial partners, to provide relevant threat information to the U.S. Defense Industrial Base, operationalize NSA's unique insights on nation-State cyber threats, jointly create mitigation guidance for cybersecurity challenges, and secure emerging technologies. The NSA CCC also offers a variety of no-cost cybersecurity services to industry partners that help to drive down risk, identify and fix technical issues, and stay ahead of adversary activities.

NUCLEAR WEAPON PRODUCTION AND THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

10. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, the nuclear weapon productions schedules are highly dependent on the availability of suitable facilities, but many are outdated or obsolete. How are the Department of Defense and SPACECOM addressing the issues with production infrastructure and the defense industrial base?

General COTTON. Today's infrastructure will be challenged to meet the Program of Record (POR) and lacks residual capacity and capabilities to respond to the evolving geopolitical environment and/or technical issues in the stockpile. While I support National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) prioritization of plutonium pit production and uranium manufacturing within the infrastructure POR, we cannot lose sight of the fact there are other shortfalls across the enterprise that must also be addressed to deliver the needed POR. Delivering these capabilities and capacities will be expensive, but the investments are necessary to sustain a credible deterrent for the Nation.

Defer to Department of Energy (DOE)/NNSA for specifics on nuclear weapons production facilities issues.

11. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, are there any opportunities for non-traditional companies to help contribute to the production and infrastructure shortfalls?

General COTTON. I believe we need to consider a "business model" for the enterprise and stockpile designs that emphasizes continuous improvement of weapons over their lifetime to ensure we can pace adversary threats and evolve weapon capabilities to achieve objectives. Going forward, placing a consistent demand signal on industry and the nuclear enterprise will lead to constant production, which will in turn prevent us from having to relearn these processes every 40 years.

Defer to DOE/NNSA for specifics on nuclear weapons production and facilities issues.

12. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, how are you working with civilian companies to develop the ability for their capabilities to integrate with existing Department of Defense systems?

General COTTON. In my role as the Combatant Commander, I ensure the operational requirements are clearly stated for both nuclear weapons and delivery platforms to enable the fielding of an integrated system to achieve national-level deterrent objectives. Although USSTRATCOM does not coordinate directly with civilian companies to develop capabilities, USSTRATCOM has always worked with NNSA through the Nuclear Weapons Council on nuclear weapon requirements. Furthermore, in accordance with the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, USSTRATCOM has now taken an active role in the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Capabilities and Integration Development System by providing nuclear weapon performance requirements for validation by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, in order to provide a common basis to guide the development of modernization and sustainment programs for NNSA weapons and DOD delivery platforms.

Defer to DOE/NNSA and Services for specifics on how these performance requirements are integrated into acquisition and development decisions for nuclear weapons and delivery platform programs.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS KING

EXPEDITIONARY SHELTERS

13. Senator KING. General Cotton, Compotech, a Maine company, is an incredibly important contributor to the defense industrial base. One of their key products, MINATORS, is a re-deployable, enduring hard shelter that offers the comfort and features of a permanent structure with the capability to deploy rapidly in the

world's harshest environments while meeting all requirement to operate as a sensitive compartmented information facility. MINATORS can be assembled without tools or material handling equipment by 3–6 individuals in 30–90 minutes and offer multiple mission-specific configurations, including act forward command and control node. Could STRATCOM benefit from an expeditionary, affordable, all weather, TS/SCI-certified structure such as MINATORS?

General COTTON. While USSTRATCOM has the required facilities needed to meet continuity of operations requirements via alternate command center sites and other assets, it is possible the Services could best benefit from creative solutions, such as MINATORS, to better facilitate operations in austere environments. Tools like this could offer a range of capabilities to enhance a Service's or Command's ability to respond to emerging threats and support U.S. strategic objectives around the world. Defer to the Services.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

14. Senator KING. General Cotton, Bangor, Maine is home to the 101st Air Refueling Wing (ARW), the Mainiacs. This Air National Guard base is strategically located and has seen a significant increase in transient flights, providing support to military aircraft not based in Maine but transitioning through Bangor. Its critical position as the northeastern-most air refueling base in the continental United States means that Bangor will be of strategic importance for the foreseeable future. What role has the 101st ARW—and Bangor, Maine—served in the 801X execution/nuclear deterrence mission?

General COTTON. USSTRATCOM relies on a number of Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard (ANG) tanker units, including the 101st ARW, to enable its global mission of strategic deterrence and assurance of allies and partners. The unique attributes of our tankers stationed at Bangor ANG base make them exceptionally well suited to support USSTRATCOM air operations, including bomber forces to the U.S. European Command and U.S. Central Command areas of responsibility. Without these tanker units, USSTRATCOM bomber missions would be significantly more challenging to execute.

15. Senator KING. General Cotton, what have been the results of the 101st ARW's inspection reports, including the Nuclear Operational Readiness Inspection (NORI)?
General COTTON. [Deleted.]

ON-ORBIT REFUELING

16. Senator KING. General Whiting, in a recent Air University paper—"Dynamic Space Operations: The New Sustained Maneuver Imperative"—Lt. General John E. Shaw (ret), former Deputy Commander of U.S. Space Command stated, "Perhaps the most obvious—and, in the near-term, most viable—approach is on-orbit servicing to replace consumables such as fuel as they are depleted—on-orbit servicing could employ space maneuver itself to be more analogous to aerial refueling or under way replenishment at sea—moving to the place of need in the space domain to keep the serviced spacecraft closer to their missions and objectives." What efforts does SPACECOM have toward operational deployment of on-orbit refueling capabilities and the usage of U.S. Government-accepted refueling port standards? What is your view on commercial industry's role in this effort?

General WHITING. The USSPACECOM staff is actively working with the USSF, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, NASA, and various commercial entities on the development and deployment of on-orbit refueling capabilities. Part of this collaborative effort is the advocacy for the wide-spread adoption of common refueling technologies. USSPACECOM supports the USSF's inclusion of Rapidly Attachable Fluid Transfer and Passive Refueling Module in its Demonstration Refueling Architecture. The USSPACECOM staff is also aware of commercial space efforts to develop refueling standards and we hope that industry partners will rapidly develop and iterate on on-orbit servicing technologies to identify the most effective and efficient methods possible. We will continue to communicate and advocate for USSPACECOM's unique requirements related to on-orbit refueling so that industry partners incorporate those requirements into their on-orbit servicing efforts.

COMMERCIAL REFUELING LESSONS FOR MILITARY APPLICATION

17. Senator KING. General Whiting, as Gen. Shaw states, the future of in-space refueling is analogous to aerial refueling today. Currently, commercial airlines choose to refuel on the ground because the costs of aerial refueling is prohibitive to commercial operations. However, the U.S. Air Force has leveraged commercial aircraft platforms to deliver military refueling aircraft like the KC-135 and the KC-

46. Do you believe that SPACECOM should advocate for a similar approach on in-space refueling? What investments do you expect commercial industry to make and what investments should the Department of Defense make to develop and operate these capabilities?

General WHITING. Yes, the USSPACECOM staff will continue to advocate for capabilities like on-orbit refueling, which enable sustained space maneuver, and we are hopeful commercial partners' current investments will continue. Whether a robust commercial market emerges for in-space refueling remains to be seen, however. Additionally, DOD investment will also be needed to satisfy USSPACECOM's unique military requirements, which range from maneuver to protection, and we will continue to advocate for funding with the USSF and others to accelerate development and fielding of on-orbit servicing capabilities, including those satisfying military-unique requirements.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

DATALINKS

18. Senator COTTON. General Whiting, based on the SPACECOM's key programs list for 2024, joint space communication layer programs seem to be very important. Do you have the authority you need to use on-orbit systems implementing tactical datalinks, known as Link-16, in congested parts of the spectrum?

General WHITING. When delivered, USSPACECOM has the authorities in place to employ space-based Link-16 capabilities consistent with my responsibilities under the Unified Command Plan as the Global Satellite Communications Operations Manager. Regarding spectrum congestion, the USSPACECOM staff will continue to work within the DOD and via interagency processes to address U.S. Government spectrum regulations, as well as those of other countries, to ensure USSPACECOM can exercise authorities to deliver needed effects to the Warfighter, while remaining aligned with U.S. laws and international agreements.

19. Senator COTTON. General Whiting, are there policy changes you need to rapidly certify and use these systems operationally?

General WHITING. The Military Services present certified and ready forces to Combatant Commands, such as USSPACECOM, who then direct the operational use of those Joint Forces. We therefore do not require any policy changes to ensure we can employ such systems once they are ready for use, but I will defer to the USSF to highlight any policy changes they may require to certify that these new systems are ready for operations.

20. Senator COTTON. General Whiting, are the fielded space-based datalinks available for use by tactical platforms like fighters and frigates?

General WHITING. Today, tactical platforms use space-based tactical data links, such as those provided by the Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) satellite constellation. The DOD has conducted limited space-based Link-16 testing with tactical aircraft and maritime platforms, but the Military Services have not yet fielded this capability and it is not yet available for operational use. When operational use is achieved, the Department plans to incorporate Link-16 capability into tactical platforms, such as fighter aircraft, aircraft carriers, other surface combatants, and submarines.

21. Senator COTTON. General Whiting, if not, what authorities or resources do you need to make these space-based datalinks available?

General WHITING. Some datalinks, such as those transmitted over the MUOS satellite constellation, are available today and do not require new authorities or spectrum resources to utilize. The Space Development Agency is actively developing and demonstrating space-based Link-16 specific capabilities through its Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture. Continued congressional support and stable funding for this program is critical for this space-based Link-16 capability to be fully realized and rapidly provided to warfighters.

Additionally, the DOD does not have the spectrum authority needed to test and operate space-based Link-16. The DOD is currently limited to testing and operating the Link-16 systems it has on orbit to international waters and over some parts of Australia via International Telecommunication Union waivers granted by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). This authorization is set to expire at the end of 2024.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires all Link-16 equipped systems to complete Electromagnetic Compatibility Features (EMCF) validation before any testing over the United States. The NTIA has the authority to allow testing, but it has deferred to the FAA. This FAA requirement for full EMCF validation by the DOD, often a multi-year process, ahead of testing has greatly slowed the fielding of all Link-16 equipped weapon systems. The requirement to complete EMCF validation before conducting on-orbit testing over the United States has delayed fielding of these tactical space-based systems by at least a year. With no authorities to test and operationalize space-based Link-16, development of Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures has been restricted and available DOD combat power has been reduced. The FAA has previously granted a Temporary Frequency Assignment for the purpose of testing terrestrial Link-16 systems without EMCF validation-space-based Link-16 systems should be afforded similar opportunities for domestic testing.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MICHAEL ROUNDS

NUCLEAR-CAPABLE SEA-LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILE

22. Senator ROUNDS. General Cotton, how would having a nuclear-capable sea-launched cruise missile such as the SLCM-N improve our ability to deter an adversary in a regional conflict?

General COTTON. A low-yield, non-ballistic nuclear capability to deter, assure, and respond without visible generation offers additional options and supports an integrated deterrence approach; SLCM-N meets this requirement. This capability will offer the President additional response choices in a regional conflict, does not require host nation support, and provides additional diversity in platforms, range, and survivability. It will enhance extended deterrence by messaging to adversaries that coercion of the United States, Allies, and partners is untenable at any level of conflict while, at the same time, strengthening assurance of our Allies and partners.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE—DUEL THREAT GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

23. Senator ROUNDS. General Cotton, one of the Strategic Posture Commission's central recommendations is that we must simultaneously prepare to deter Russia and China. Do you agree that we have to posture our nuclear deterrence toward both Russia and China and can no longer treat China as a "lesser included case"?

General COTTON. Yes. Today the United States and its Allies and partners are confronted by two major nuclear powers—Russia and China—as well as the growing nuclear threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Further, these nations are increasing their level of coordination and cooperation with one another. This threat environment raises the possibility of near-simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed, opportunistic adversaries. USSTRATCOM and the DOD continue to study, evaluate, and implement integrated deterrence approaches to address this unprecedented challenge.

24. Senator ROUNDS. General Cotton, are you confident in the range of options the U.S. and NATO possess today for deterring Russian nuclear use in Europe?

General COTTON. Our strategic triad deters large-scale attacks and bolsters regional deterrence in the European theater supplemented with capabilities, such as dual capable fighter aircraft. However, a low-yield, non-ballistic, stand-off nuclear capability would significantly enhance our ability to assure our Allies and deter Russian nuclear use in Europe. U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization planners will continue to work closely together to address potential scenarios throughout the spectrum of conflict.

COMMERCIAL CAPABILITIES SUPPORTING SPACECOM

25. Senator ROUNDS. General Whiting, given the increased threats in space, the capability to detect, track and easily visualize potential threats is a foundational building block for space operations, including command and control. Do you support continuing to leverage existing commercial capabilities to support SPACECOM's command and control operations?

General WHITING. USSPACECOM continues to leverage existing capabilities, including commercial capabilities, to execute command and control (C2) operations. Reliance on commercial applications for some aspects of C2 will continue for the foreseeable future. Additionally, we continue to research new commercial C2 capabilities while simultaneously improving our DOD C2 systems, to maximize our multi-mission sensors, both those available today and those onboarding in the fu-

ture. We continue to work toward faster integration of commercial data into our C2 systems.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ALASKA STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE FOR BOMBERS

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cotton, in July 2023, a Bomber Task Force conducted training missions out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) with the expressed purpose of getting those crews familiar with operating in Alaska. Last month, B-21 Raider Bombers were approved to start low-rate initial production. Both JBER and Eielson Air Force Base can handle all bombers in the fleet, including the new B-21. KC-135s are based in Alaska to handle aerial refueling needs. What advantages does operating B-21s out of Alaska provide you as the STRATCOM Commander as you seek to deter adversaries, including the PRC which is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal?

General COTTON. The B-21 offers a highly flexible, technically advanced deterrent against our adversaries, including China. Operating B-21s and other bombers out of Alaska helps neutralize China's anti-access, counter-intervention strategy and enhances our deterrence posture by increasing the range, flexibility, survivability and resilience of our air-leg as well as complicating adversary planning.

It would enhance a flexible deterrence strategy and force posture that continues to convey to our adversaries, including China, that the United States will not be deterred from defending every inch of its territory as well as that of our Allies and partners. In short, B-21 and other bombers operating out of Alaska would demonstrate our ability, stake, and will to conduct long-range strike operations at the time and place of our choosing.

Bombers operating out of Alaska would augment both nuclear and conventional operations, and improve Joint Force integration and partner interoperability to better enable the execution of strike options to support national objectives worldwide.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cotton, do you see value in Bomber Task Force-type rotations through Alaska outside of scheduled exercises like Northern Edge and Red Flag?

General COTTON. Yes. Our bomber teams actively train and operate out of non-traditional forward locations away from their home or main operating bases. Strategic force agility and resilience demonstrates strategic unpredictability and enhances effective deterrence. Bomber Task Force missions transiting through or staging out of Alaska yield added combat readiness value through routine integrated joint-combined air and maritime homeland defense operations.

APPROPRIATIONS

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cotton and General Whiting, how important is the funding included in the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental to your command's ability to accomplish its mission?

General COTTON. One of my top concerns is ensuring the defense industrial base has sufficient capacity and capability to simultaneously sustain the existing nuclear triad and conventional forces while delivering future modernization programs throughout the spectrum of conflict. While not specific to the USSTRATCOM headquarters mission, I greatly appreciate the \$3.3 billion Congress allocated for the submarine industrial base that adds funds for advanced procurement of the *Columbia*-class submarine and the *Virginia*-class submarine.

General WHITING. The Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental included investments for USINDOPACOM, which directly support USSPACECOM's Unified Command Plan missions. Further details can be provided at a higher classification. USSPACECOM recognizes the importance of investments in the USINDOPACOM, USCENTCOM, and USEUCOM areas of responsibility, and USSPACECOM will continue to provide space-enabling support to these Geographic Combatant Commands while leveraging their capabilities to fulfill our missions.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cotton and General Whiting, how would a full-year Continuing Resolution impact your command's ability to accomplish its mission?

General COTTON. Continuing resolutions (CRs) are extremely disruptive and corrosive to the nuclear modernization effort. The greatest risk of deterrence failure and threat to strategic stability is a lack of consistent, stable funding necessary every year throughout the next decade at least. We must be able to continue to in-

vest in modernizing our strategic forces by recapitalizing the triad, NC3, weapons complex, and supporting infrastructure in order to maintain a viable, flexible, and full-spectrum deterrent force.

More specifically, a full-year CR would negatively impact USSTRATCOM's Components and the Services' ability to execute the majority of their Procurement and Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation budget allocations due to embedded new starts (unless exceptions were previously authorized).

General WHITING. A year-long continuing resolution (CR) would degrade the Joint Force's readiness, hinder acceleration of critical space programs, and curb modernization in the face of a motivated and accelerating threat. Any loss or delay in capability delivery due to a CR would adversely impact USSPACECOM's ability to execute Presidentially assigned missions and affect the Command's ability to provide space-enabling support to other Combatant Commands. A full-year CR would cause additional, unnecessary risk in multiple space mission areas.

SUBMARINE INDUSTRIAL BASE

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cotton, as you mentioned in your prepared statement, there are gaps in the Trident Refit Facility's ability to carry out certain industrial processes needed to produce the next generation of SSBNs. This is one example of the industrial base challenged impacting both our submarine production and nuclear triad modernization. Is the Trident Refit Facility adequately resourced and staffed to avoid being a bottleneck in *Columbia*-class production?

General COTTON. Trident Refit Facility (TRF) Kings Bay (KB) and TRF Bangor currently support the repair and maintenance of *Ohio*-class submarines. The TRF KB expansion is on track to begin in fiscal year 2025 to support *Columbia*-class submarines. The TRF Bangor projects, which are in the early planning and design process, are on schedule to execute in fiscal year 2027. Continued congressional support is critical to bringing the facilities online to support *Columbia*.

Defer to the Navy for resourcing and staffing specifics.

NORTHERN LATITUDES DOMAIN AWARENESS

31. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, in your testimony you wrote about Russian space capability investments in the Arctic and northern latitudes. What demand signal has SPACECOM created for the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community to increase our GPS and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities for the northern latitudes?

General WHITING. [Deleted.]

32. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, are the services providing you with adequate equipment and personnel to meet your domain awareness requirements for the northern latitudes?

General WHITING. USSPACECOM staff strongly endorses the USSF's efforts to innovate both space and ground architectures that support multi-domain operations. The USSF has requested and begun fielding additional space assets capable of monitoring and deterring threats across the globe.

The USSF currently plans to present the Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR), which has both Missile Defense and Space Domain Awareness capabilities, to USSPACECOM in fiscal year 2025. With the Upgraded Early Warning Radar at Clear Space Force Station and COBRA DANE also operational, these USSF assets will improve Space

Domain Awareness in the Arctic region while also tracking hypersonic and ballistic missile threats to the Homeland.

When on orbit around 2030, the USSF's Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared satellites will provide additional space-based sensor coverage in the northern latitudes that is planned to effectively identify and track hypersonic and ballistic missile threats to the Homeland.

SPACECOM DETECTION AND TRACKING CAPABILITIES

33. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, in your Strategic Vision released earlier this month, you highlighted that your Warfighting Command achieved full operational capability in December 2023, to include now taking on the missile defense mission from STRATCOM. In order for SPACECOM to accomplish this mission, you must maintain multi-domain awareness with both space- and earth-based sensors. How will the Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) at Clear Space Force Station improve your domain awareness when it reaches initial operating capability later this year?

General WHITING. When at initial operating capability, LRDR will significantly improve USSPACECOM's Space Domain Awareness by providing precision tracking information on space objects. The president has assigned Commander, USSPACECOM the role of Global Sensor Manager via the Unified Command Plan; in this role, we will leverage the LRDR's data to enhance Space Domain Awareness when it is not engaged in missile defense operations.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, how are space-based assets complementing the ground-based systems in Alaska to make sure we can effectively employ the 40 missile interceptors at Ft. Greely?

General WHITING. Space-based assets complement ground-based sensors by providing initial early warning of the launch of threat missiles, and providing information needed to characterize the nature of an attack before threat missiles enter ground-based sensor coverage. Space-based sensors also complement specific ground-based systems by cueing those radars with threat track information to decrease the time needed for those ground-based radars to acquire and track threat missiles. Different sensor assets operate in different portions of the electromagnetic spectrum; this fusion of inputs creates the needed fidelity to detect, track, and discriminate threats. This synergy enables the Ground Based Midcourse Defense system to effectively employ missile interceptors.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, can you explain how ground and space-based sensors must be modernized in Alaska to effectively identify, track, and engage cruise, hypersonic, and ballistic missile threats?

General WHITING. DOD must modernize its ground-and space-based sensors both to improve sustainment costs and to contend with increasing detection and tracking challenges posed by advanced threats. Modernization of legacy ground-based radars will decrease long-term maintenance costs associated with aging equipment and parts obsolescence. DOD sensors require modernization to hardware and software to ensure readiness to identify and track adversary capabilities that include larger threat missile salvos, higher threat missile velocity, increased maneuverability, smaller/dimmer targets, and, in the near future, to detect and track systems in non-traditional orbital regimes such as Very Low Earth Orbit and Cislunar/beyond Geosynchronous Earth Orbit.

36. Senator SULLIVAN. General Whiting, can the sensor network in and above Alaska effectively identify, track, and engage cruise, hypersonic, and ballistic missile threats?

General WHITING. While there are many factors involved, in general, USSPACECOM can identify and track hypersonic and ballistic missile threats using sensors in and above Alaska and elsewhere. Our capability is not infallible, and some advanced threats still present a challenge. Commander, NORAD-USNORTHCOM is the supported commander for Homeland Defense and is best positioned to provide you an assessment from the engagement perspective for the Homeland Defense mission. I also defer to the USAF, as the lead Service for cruise missile defense of the Homeland, to provide their perspective. To increase the DOD's capability against advanced threats, USSPACECOM recently submitted an Integrated Priority List to the Joint Staff that includes missile defeat effects that will enhance our ability to defeat ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missile threats, as well as air-launched or ground-launched, direct ascent threats.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

SPACECOM BUDGET

37. Senator BUDD. General Whiting, SPACECOM's fiscal year 2024 budget request increased 13 percent over fiscal year 2023 levels. How much of this increase is growth in investments in space capabilities versus shifting budget responsibility across the Department as SPACECOM matures?

General WHITING. None of the increase to USSPACECOM's headquarters budget in fiscal year 2024 was for growth in space capabilities. Part of USSPACECOM's budget increase supported the transfer of Joint Functional Component Command-Integrated Missile Defense from USSTRATCOM to USSPACECOM, which aligns with USSPACECOM's newly assigned Unified Command Plan mission for Transregional Missile Defense operations and support. Another portion of the headquarters budget increase addressed procurement for the fit out of the Consolidated Space Operations Facility, a fully funded Military Construction project on Schriever

Space Force Base that, when completed, will host USSPACECOM's National Space Defense Center, our Nation's operations center for protecting and defending the space domain. Finally, additional increased fiscal year 2024 funding was for civilian pay to enable USSPACECOM to reach its civilian manpower full-end strength that supports Full Operational Capability.

SOF/SPACE/CYBER TRIAD

38. Senator BUDD. General Whiting, in response to a question during the posture hearing about the nexus between space, cyber, and special operations forces (SOF), you stated, "we do see it as a unique opportunity to bring together these three capabilities to help us all three achieve our missions. For example, there are times that using space we can create accesses for cyber forces who then can support special operations forces, or special operations forces through their unique ability to gain access to certain geographic locations, can help us in our space mission by executing functions that support us." You also confirmed that the physical access SOF provides enables critical space operations. What impacts, if any, will planned reductions to Army SOF capacity have on SPACECOM's operations and, if you or your staff haven't studied the issue, will you commit to analyzing any impacts and providing an update to my office?

General WHITING. Consistent with my previous testimony, I do not see any current impacts. Should an issue arise in the future, I commit to analyzing those impacts and providing updates to your office.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**THE POSTURE OF UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
AND UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:59 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony from General Michael Eric Kurilla, Commander of United States Central Command, and General Michael Langley, Commander of United States Africa Command.

Thank you both for your service, and I am grateful to the men and women serving under your command, and please convey that to them. The CENTCOM area of responsibility has always been fraught with complexity, but I am concerned that we have faced with a uniquely dangerous moment.

With Israel and Hamas engaged in a violent conflict in Gaza, Iran is seeking to exploit the chaos as an opportunity to force the United States out of the region. Iran appears to have calculated that the best strategy to achieve this is by directing its proxy forces to attack American, Israeli, and allied interests in the Middle East.

To date, the Iranian linked Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched more than 50 drone and missile attacks against United States and international vessels in the Red Sea, including a strike yesterday on Liberian commercial ship that killed three innocent civilians.

The Houthis have disrupted nearly 15 percent of global commercial trade, driving up cost and inflation around the world. Similarly, Iranian linked Shia militias in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan have conducted more than 175 attacks against United States and coali-

tion forces, including a drone attack that killed three Americans in Jordan. In response, the American led coalition has carried out hundreds of airstrikes against Iranian proxies across the region, significantly degrading their capabilities.

The United States should continue to take appropriate military actions, but I must underscore there is no ultimate military solution to our conflict with Iran. Direct war with Iran would have devastating second and third order consequences and would likely engulf the entire region in war.

President Biden has balanced these considerations by synchronizing military operations with strong diplomacy, economic sanctions, and tools of statecraft. I am encouraged that Iranian linked militia attacks against United States Forces in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan have paused for a significant period of time.

We have to remember that Hamas ignited this regional conflict exactly 5 months ago, on October 7th, when it murdered, kidnaped, and committed unspeakable atrocities against thousands of innocent Israelis. Israel launched its own campaign to defend itself and degrade and defeat Hamas, and the United States deployed troops and assets to the region to support our ally and prevent a wider regional war.

Five months into this campaign, Hamas has been degraded, but the Palestinian people in Gaza are suffering extreme force. Unless there is a pause in the fighting, the humanitarian situation will continue to worsen, Israeli hostages will continue to be held captive, and Israel's long-term security could be weakened.

General Kurilla, these challenges are compounded by many others, including Iran's nuclear enrichment activities and Hezbollah's attacks in Northern Israel, all of which must be addressed, while maintaining the counterterrorism mission in South and Central Asia.

I understand that you just returned from the region, and I would ask for an update on how CENTCOM is postured to meet these challenges, and what resources and support you need to be successful.

General Langley, AFRICOM remains an important theater in the United States' strategic competition with China and Russia. Many African countries have longstanding military ties with Russia and even deeper economic ties with China.

As the United States manages relationships across the continent, we must be mindful of these preexisting ties and avoid taking a with us or against us approach, or we will risk alienating the very nations we seek to engage with. I would welcome your thoughts on how best to calibrate the United States approach to the region in light of these factors.

Over the past year, the security situation in West Africa has continued to decline. Violent extremist organizations have expanded across the region and are now threatening to push down into the lateral states in the Gulf of Guinea.

Partner nations are working hard to address these challenges, and AFRICOM is working in collaboration with many security forces in the region to enhance their capability to respond effectively.

At the same time, military coups in places like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso have required the cessation of United States training and advising in those countries. Given these challenges, I understand that AFRICOM must explore new methods to maintain United States security interest in the region.

To do so, it is important that your command becomes more synchronized with the United States interagency and that AFRICOM receives the resources it needs to maintain situational awareness. This must include adequate intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support, and the capabilities to continue to work by, with, and through our regional partners and allies.

General Langley, I would appreciate your thoughts on this wide ranging set of challenges and what plans you have to address them. Again, let me thank our witnesses. We look forward to your testimony.

As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing in room SVC-217. Now, let me turn to the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are banding together. They hope to weaken American resolve and shift the global balance of power away from the United States.

The effects of their sinister activities are on full display in both CENTCOM [United States Central Command] and AFRICOM [United States Africa Command] theaters, which we are discussing today. I begin with a particularly acute example. Hamas's barbaric October 7th massacre was not merely a Palestinian terrorist attack on Israel, it was also an Iranian proxy attack on the United States.

The Palestinians attacked Israel. They were proxies of Iran attacking the United States. Thirty-three of our fellow Americans were killed and 12 were taken hostage. Iranian proxies then began near-daily attacks against United States troops in the region.

They attacked Israel with missiles, and they tried to close maritime shipping routes in the region. It is indisputable that Tehran controls its proxies, and those proxies have killed Americans. Iran's objective is and has always been to evict the United States from the Middle East so it can achieve regional hegemony.

We will not be evicted from the Middle East. I believe the Biden administration should address Iran's culpability head on, and we can do this without going to war against Iran. The Administration spent its first 3 years offering Iran billions of dollars in sanctions relief to restore the Obama era nuclear agreement.

President Biden ordered minor counter strikes on Iran's proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, apparently hoping to manage escalation through pinprick responses. This approach has failed and will fail because it assumes that we can deter terrorist groups without causing pain to their chief sponsor, Iran.

General Kurilla, I hope you will share your assessment of what it would take to end Iran's terrorist proxy attacks on our Forces. China and Russia view the African continent as a power projection platform. They use the region to flex their muscles, undermine Western influence, and bolster their economic interests.

Beijing and Moscow do all this through exploitive practices that often come at the expense of African communities. China, in particular, approaches Africa as a critical terrain for its global military expansion.

Its first overseas military base was established in the strategically located country of Djibouti. According to public reports, this base is now capable of hosting some of China's most advanced naval vessels.

Additionally, we know China is actively pursuing a naval base on Africa's Atlantic Coast. General Langley has said this would, "change the whole calculus of the geo strategic campaign plans of protecting our Homeland."

General Langley, I hope you will tell the Committee what is being done to address this disturbing development. Russia's destabilizing activity in Africa is to trade security assistance for access to African natural resources.

Putin does this by spreading disinformation and propaganda to sow unrest, prop up sympathetic regimes, and undermine support for Western engagement on the continent. We cannot lose sight of the continued threat al Qaeda and ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] pose in Africa. Political instability and weak security institutions have allowed these groups to expand territorial control.

We must maintain sufficient force posture and resourcing in Africa to support our national interests there. At the same time, we must develop more effective non-defense tools in Africa. These would include our ability to use private sector financing in non-development contexts through DOD's Office of Strategic Capital.

The world has changed drastically since the publication of the National Defense Strategy. This is particularly true in the Middle East, but the strategy that drives our investments and force posture in both these command theaters must reflect those changes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. General Kurilla, please.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. KURILLA, USA
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND**

General KURILLA. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am joined today by Command Master Chief Fleet Derek Walters, the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of U.S. Central Command.

I am proud to testify next to my good friend Mike Langley. On behalf of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen, and guardians who serve this command and our Nation, I welcome the opportunity to talk to you today. I just returned from my 27th trip to the Central Region.

As I sat here just a year ago, the region was on the verge of improbable, unprecedented, and transformative progress. Today, the central region faces its most volatile security situation in the past half century. This is not the same central region as last year.

The events of 7th of October not only permanently changed Israel and Gaza, it created the conditions for malign actors to sow instability throughout the region and beyond. Iran exploited what

they saw as a once in a generation opportunity to reshape the Middle East to their advantage.

Iran has worked for decades to strategically encircle the region with its proxies, and in the past 6 months, we have seen every proxy in the Iranian threat network operationalized in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank, and Yemen.

Iran's expansive network of proxies is equipped with advanced, sophisticated weaponry, and threatens some of the most vital terrain in the world, with global and United States implications. Houthi attacks on international shipping and an Iranian aligned militia attacks on our forces in Iraq and Syria are direct result of an Iranian threat that has been incrementally spreading.

However, Iran knows that its decade long vision cannot be realized if countries in the region continue to expand integration with each other and deepen their partnership with the United States. Violent extremist organizations have also seized on this opportunity. ISIS surged their attacks in Iraq and Syria earlier this year, and the risk of an attack emanating from Afghanistan is increasing.

ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) retains the capability and will to attack United States and Western interests abroad in as little as 6 months and with little to no warning. Strategic competition has also continued to evolve across the region.

China and Russia are quick to capitalize on destabilizing influences. They have shown meager interest or capability to reduce regional tensions, but rather they have increased their efforts to pressurize regional partners across all elements of national power.

Collectively, Iran, Russia, and China are strengthening their relationships and fostering a chaotic landscape favorable for their exploitation. Iran continues to sell 90 percent of its oil to China, funding Tehran's subversive activities across the region, and Iran has developed a full scale production pipeline for supplying weapons to Russia, fueling their war on Ukraine.

The ramifications of this partnership have global implications. The convergence of crisis and competition makes CENTCOM the area of responsibility, the most likely region to produce threats against the United States Homeland, trigger a regional conflict, and derail the National Defense Strategy (NDS).

The CENTCOM region also remains critical to the world's energy supply and remains essential for the flow of global commerce. But CENTCOM provides strategic depth to our defense of the Homeland, and American security and prosperity are at risk if we cede this space to Iran, terrorism, and China.

The stable future envisioned by our National Security Strategy and shared by our partners supports broader United States national interests and is worth striving for. Our partners in the Levant, Arabian Gulf, and Central and South Asia are committed to advancing the region, and the United States remains the partner of choice for now.

The degree of U.S. investment in the central region will be decisive in shaping this future. Our years of a continuous engagement throughout the region serve as the foundation for this investment.

The U.S. Central Command strategic approach of people, partners, and innovation reinforces the vision of an integrated central

region and supports the whole-of-government effort to secure our regional and global interests.

Our people are the bedrock of everything we do. We are laser focused on optimizing their talents and highlighting their character and competence to our partners. Our strategic advantage remains our strong military-to-military partnerships, while our adversaries and competitors rely on parasitic transactional relationships.

We also innovate with our partners and are developing approaches, concept, and technologies to address the threats we face protecting our forces and creating strategic depth in our force posture. These efforts have saved lives.

We are clear eyed about the task before us. The shock waves of the past year continue to reverberate globally, and our servicemembers are standing to watch side by side with our regional partners right now.

They operate in harm's way every day, whether at a small outpost in Syria fighting ISIS, or on a destroyer knocking down a barrage of ballistic and cruise missiles fired by Iranian backed Houthis, and they do so with honor and courage.

Five of our teammates gave the last full measure of devotion as they lived out the oath we swear and the freedoms we cherish. They represent the very best of us and it is the honor of my professional life to serve as their commander, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Michael Kurilla follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL MICHAEL "ERIK" KURILLA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Central Region faces its most volatile security situation in the past half century. Just a year ago, the region was on the verge of improbable and transformative progress. The strategic investments in our partners were transforming the security calculus in the region in ways unthinkable just 10 years ago. The vision of an integrated and modernized region was on the precipice of actualization. The events of 7 October 2023 not only permanently changed Israel and Gaza, they also set off a series of reactions that have created the conditions for malign actors to sow instability throughout the region and beyond.

Today, a convergence of crisis and competition have enabled revisionist powers to fuel violence seeking a return to an unfortunately predictable pattern in the region's history. Iran and its expansive network of proxies saw a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the region to its advantage. They have accelerated their efforts to expel Western presence and neutralize our influence in the region, enabling a long-term strategic goal to further their revolution and establish regional hegemony. Iran knows that its decades-long vision of dominating the region cannot be realized if the region's states continue to expand integration with each other and deepen partnership with the United States. ISIS and al Qaeda, despite tremendous losses, remain committed to inflicting violence and suffering on anyone not aligned with their extremist ideology. ISIS retains the capability to threaten United States interests and is attempting to reconstitute in Syria. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia demonstrate that they have little capability or will to reduce regional tensions and are quick to capitalize on instability. Collectively, Iran, Russia, and the PRC are strengthening their relationship, creating a chaotic landscape favorable for their exploitation and the spread of extremism.

However, the region is not predestined to this fate. The path of integration and partnership remains open to us if we remain committed to following it. The stable future envisioned by our National Security Strategy (NDS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) and shared by our partners can support broader U.S. national interests and is one worth striving to achieve. Despite Iran's best efforts, the region is holding open its doors to security cooperation with the United States. It is modernizing at an incredible rate, seeking to shake free from the turmoil of its past, and looking toward a future of security, stability, and prosperity. Our partners in the

Levant, Arabian Gulf, and Central and South Asia, remain committed to advancing the region—preferably with the United States. The degree of U.S. investment across the instruments of national power and the success of security integration in the Central Region will be decisive in determining whether its future supports U.S. national interests. Our years of continuous engagement throughout the region serve as the foundation for this investment.

U.S. Central Command's strategic approach of People, Partners, and Innovation, codified in our Theater Strategy, reinforces the vision of a modern and integrated Central Region and supports a whole-of-government effort to secure our regional and global interests. Our strategic advantage in the region remains strong military-to-military partnerships, while our adversaries and competitors rely on parasitic and transactional relationships. We seek to integrate our partners, while Iran seeks to leverage instability to its advantage. We enable our partners to defeat violent extremists by catalyzing unified responses, while Iran threatens national sovereignty and regional stability by supporting and enabling sectarian militias. In concert with our partners, we drive innovative approaches, concepts, and technologies to address the many threats we face, developing solutions for real time decision advantage and creating strategic depth in our force posture.

USCENTCOM is clear eyed about the task before us. The shockwaves of the past year will reverberate across the Central Region for some time. Iran intends to seize on its opportunity, and it will not be easily deterred. The fight against violent extremism is not complete. The PRC and Russia will exploit instability at every turn to undermine United States interests and advance their own strategic positions. Beyond the region, we acknowledge there are a myriad of global challenges that require deliberate risk and resourcing decisions by our national leaders. USCENTCOM remains committed to the vision of a prosperous and integrated Central Region in which U.S. national interests are advanced.

II. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Central Region remains vital to our national interests. USCENTCOM protects the security of the American people and supports the expansion of American economic prosperity and opportunity. We benefit from deep diplomatic ties and military-to-military relationships throughout the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), with many of the United States' most steadfast partners resident in the region or astride it. We also have critical economic interests to protect. The Arabian Gulf contains around 800 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 2,800 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves—nearly half the world's oil and natural gas. Twelve percent of our imported oil comes from the region, and it supplies the world with 15 million barrels per day—much of which goes to our global partners and allies through the Strait of Hormuz. Many of the resources that do not originate in the region traverse it, along shipping routes between Asia and Europe, passing through strategic chokepoints in the Bab al Mandeb Strait and Suez Canal.

There are also significant security challenges in the region. From Iran's regional hegemonic ambitions to the world's biggest concentration of violent extremism, the security of America's Homeland, its interests, and the security of our partners are under threat from an array of actors seeking to prevent the vision of a free and prosperous Central Region from coming to fruition. We must ensure malign actors do not proliferate regional violence around the globe and to our shores. We must also be cognizant that our partners are weighing their options as they interpret signals that suggest we will reduce our commitment. Meanwhile, the burgeoning military alliance between Russia and Iran threatens to amplify their aggression across multiple theaters. USCENTCOM secures United States national interests and addresses these destabilizing influences through three lines of effort: Deterring Iran, Countering Violent Extremist Organizations, and Competing Strategically.

Deterring Iran

For several decades, Tehran has pursued a three-pronged strategy for regional dominance: achieve a threshold nuclear weapons capability, advance and proliferate its standoff weapons arsenal, and leverage a vast proxy network to sow instability throughout the region. It is that proxy network, known as the Iranian Threat Network (ITN), that provides Iran operational reach throughout the region and enables its offensive actions against our regional partners and global interests.

Iran continues to use its nuclear program for international blackmail. Last year, Iran continued to produce and stockpile highly enriched uranium well beyond what is needed for commercial use in hopes of gaining economic concessions from the international community. On 10 February 2024, the International Atomic Energy Agency announced Iran had amassed a 121.5-kilogram stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium, and 5,525.5 kilograms of enriched uranium overall. Should Iran de-

cide, it could enrich enough uranium for three nuclear devices within weeks. A nuclear-armed Iran would transform the region overnight and forever, likely igniting a regional race for nuclear weapons and creating a security umbrella for its hegemonic ambitions.

Iran also projects power through its ballistic missiles, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and other advanced conventional weapons. Over the last 12 months, Iran continued to expand its arsenal of precision guided weapon systems including ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges up to 2000km and one-way attack UAS with ranges up to 3000km. These capabilities enable Iran to strike every country in the Central Region and to range key United States allies as far away as Europe. Iran distributes many of these weapons to proxies in the region, presenting a high-end, multi-axis threat to United States Forces and those of our allies and partners. Iran's advanced weapons have been used by its proxies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen continuously in the past 5 months, and they continue their illicit shipments—in violation of U.N. sanctions—on a daily basis. Finally, HAMAS's barbaric attack on Israel would not have been possible without years of Iranian material and training support.

Not only does Iran actively undermine the sovereignty of neighboring states in the region by providing sophisticated lethal aid to its various militias, it also supplies countries like Russia, Venezuela, and Sudan with attack and surveillance UAS, with more customers lining up globally. Regardless of who pulls the trigger, Iran is unconcerned with ensuring its weapons are employed in accordance with the Law of Armed Conflict. Iran displays its growing UAS capabilities by attacking commercial shipping, striking merchant vessels more than 1,000 nautical miles into the Indian Ocean. In fact, since 2021, Iran attacked or seized 19 merchant ships in international waters, and still illegally holds five vessels and their crews against their will in Iranian ports.

Tehran has long driven instability in the region with its proxies, but 2023 saw an unprecedented activation of virtually every facet of the ITN across the entire region. After HAMAS attacked Israel, the Houthis in Yemen targeted the global economy, Iranian Aligned Militia Groups (IAMG) waged a campaign of violence to force the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS out of Iraq and Syria, and Lebanese Hezbollah's increasingly escalatory attacks held Israel's northern border at risk. Iran saw an opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of its so-called "Axis of Resistance," and manifested decades of conditioning, provisioning, and preparation. Since 7 October 2023, IAMGs like Kata'ib Hezbollah and Harakat al Nujaba, enabled by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force, have attacked Coalition Forces 71 times in Iraq, 102 times in Syria, and twice in Jordan, killing three United States servicemembers on 28 January 2024. The Houthis have attacked international shipping and Coalition warships over 50 times, sparking supply chain issues reminiscent of those during the COVID-19 pandemic and contributing to food aid delays in hunger-stricken Yemen.

Through the ITN, the proliferation of its ballistic missile and UAS capabilities, and the threat of nuclear breakout, Iran is executing a strategic encirclement of the region. They are emplacing forces, ideology, and weapon systems that can threaten U.S. interests, allies, and partners from multiple vectors and at critical chokepoints with little-to-no warning. Now, more than ever, Tehran has the capability to advance its regional goals and threaten global interests. Houthi attacks threaten the free flow of 15 percent of the world's commerce, while Iran itself repeatedly attacks and seizes international merchant vessels. IAMG attacks and Iranian political pressure jeopardize the hard-earned gains of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Iran's proliferation of advanced conventional weapons fuels conflict on three continents. All of this is underscored by Iran's status as a threshold nuclear State. With conditions now set, we assess Tehran perceives an opportunity to force the United States out of the Central Region, divide its neighbors, and take substantive steps to eradicate the State of Israel.

Opportunities for Deterring Iran

In line with the NSS and NDS, USCENTCOM leverages the United States' unparalleled ability to integrate partners in pursuit of mutual interests. USCENTCOM's role is gradually shifting from security guarantor to security integrator, and many of our regional partners are increasingly willing to coordinate with their neighbors to enhance the defense of their borders. Behind this trend is a growing recognition that Iran is their greatest threat. In response, we develop competitive overmatch among our partners by enhancing our collective capabilities and leveraging our network of regional security constructs. Middle East Air Defense (MEAD) is an example, as the regional integration of our partners' air defense capabilities has helped

detect and intercept the unprecedented wave of missile and UAS attacks coming from the ITN.

Multinational organizations aligned against individual domains, such as the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) help to address specific Iranian threats, like illegal ship seizures and arms smuggling. Even groups designed to counter other threats, such as the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the 41-nation Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) bring the world together in common cause to defend the rules-based international order, which Iran is actively working to undermine.

We must continue to strengthen our longstanding bilateral military-to-military relationships. Just as our partners count on our support, we depend on our partners. Faster and more transparent foreign military sales (FMS) will underwrite the trust among our partners and help bolster their capabilities relative to Iran as well as protect their own sovereignty. Beyond materiel contributions to any fighting force, our close partnerships enable access, basing, and overflight that will be critical to mission success. For example, our close relationship with Egypt allowed us unique access to expedite humanitarian aid at the outset of the Sudanese Civil War, in addition to our daily operations. Going forward, we must continue to develop the partner-enabled Western Access Network, which provides alternate routes to transport equipment and personnel throughout the USCENTCOM AOR. You cannot surge trust in crisis, and our partners must know we are there for them before we need something in return.

Risks to Deterring Iran

Iran believes it has the momentum to force a premature withdrawal of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, allowing them opportunity to expand its land bridge to the Mediterranean Sea and revive the narrative of abandonment in the region. Further, the PRC and Russia would undoubtedly capitalize in the information environment by characterizing our withdrawal as a demonstration of American unreliability, hoping to drive a wedge in our global partnerships and assault a core premise of the NDS and NSS.

Iran's potential pursuit of a nuclear weapon could significantly alter our risk assessment. Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon remains a top priority with global implications. While we have not seen indications that Iran's Supreme Leader has changed his calculus to pursue a nuclear weapon, we will continue to develop military options for the Secretary of Defense and President, should they be necessary.

Countering Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO)

Five years after the fall of the physical ISIS caliphate, the group's extremist ideology endures. It endures in more than 5,000 fighters and operatives still at large throughout the Central Region and beyond. It endures in detention facilities, guarded by our Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partners, which hold approximately 9,000 detainees. Finally, it endures in pockets of camps for displaced persons like Syria's Al Hol, which currently holds approximately 43,000 men, women, and children. ISIS remains resolute in its quest to plunge the region into sectarian violence, impose its ideology, and eventually spread its influence globally.

Without the Global Coalition's continued focus, ISIS resurgence remains a threat. In 2023, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) conducted 475 total ground operations and 45 total airstrikes, resulting in 164 ISIS fighters killed and 619 detained. We assess our high volume of partnered operations has kept ISIS at bay; however, IAMG attacks on United States and Coalition forces degrade the D-ISIS campaign. Eliminating ISIS's ability to conduct terrorist attacks requires sustained investment in Iraqi security forces, partners on the ground in Syria and a robust counterterrorism apparatus consisting of intelligence community and interagency elements.

The barrage of Iranian-sponsored attacks after 17 October 2023 forced CJTF-OIR to come off plan as we prioritized protecting our forces in Iraq and Syria. The ensuing spike in ISIS attacks demonstrates the gravity of disruptions to the international effort to permanently defeat the group. In the first 2 weeks of 2024, ISIS conducted 275 attacks in Iraq and Syria, the highest rate of attacks in the last 2 years. The Government of Iraq is rightly concerned that ISIS is taking advantage of the Global Coalition temporarily letting up due to IAMG attacks. Furthermore, Tehran is exerting incredible political pressure on Baghdad to expel the Coalition, which would all but guarantee ISIS' return if it occurred before Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were ready to stand on their own. We would also be challenged to support our Syrian partners without a military presence in Iraq. In Syria, we saw ISIS increase intensity of activity across multiple provinces, as it enjoyed more freedom

of movement due to SDF conflicts with local tribes and Turkish airstrikes that restricted SDF operations. A spate of ISIS attacks in late 2023 drove up the annual average casualties per attack to twice the rate of the previous year.

Disruptions in Syria also forced temporary delays in training guards for detention facilities and displaced persons camps. We must ensure the SDF can sustainably hold ISIS detainees who have no prospect of rehabilitation while the international community repatriates foreign fighters. In addition to training guards, we assist with the maintenance and refurbishment of the detention facilities to eliminate vulnerabilities ISIS may exploit in attempts to free detainees.

We also train our partner forces in Syria, many of whom are women, to guard the displaced persons camps. The training is key to keeping the residents safe, enabling access for aid organizations, and preventing the spread of extremism. Nonetheless, the longer that displaced persons remain in camps like Al Hol and Al Roj, the more likely they will succumb to ISIS ideology. Alongside our partners, we continue to identify and detain ISIS facilitators operating in the camps. To prevent the next generation of ISIS, the international community must sustain the recent momentum in repatriating and reintegrating displaced persons in their home countries.

Our Central and South Asian partners repeatedly share their concern over ISIS' pursuit of opportunity and capability to conduct external operations. The Taliban targeted some key ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) leaders in 2023, but it has shown neither the capability nor the intent to sustain adequate counterterrorism pressure. In fact, this lack of sustained pressure allowed ISIS-K to regenerate and harden their networks, creating multiple redundant nodes that direct, enable, and inspire attacks. Additionally, the Taliban has shown little interest to apply counter-terrorism pressure against the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), presenting a significant threat to stability in Pakistan's border regions. We do not expect that dynamic to change.

These groups have leveraged poor economic conditions, lax governance in Afghanistan, and a sophisticated network to recruit, train, and sustain an expanding cadre of fighters.

Tragically, even as Iran undermines the Global Coalition in Iraq and Syria, ISIS-K killed 91 Iranians and injured 284 others in Kerman on 3 January 2024. This was the deadliest terror attack in Iran since 1979 and it is part of ISIS' efforts to exploit the war in Gaza to rejuvenate its global attacks. In retaliation, Iran further destabilized the region by carrying out strikes in Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria, drawing harsh condemnation from both Pakistani and Iraqi Governments and reportedly causing civilian casualties in two of these incidents.

Al Qaeda, while weakened, still enjoys safe havens in Afghanistan and Yemen. Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) operates training camps, safehouses, and religious schools in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) launched a counter-offensive against Republic of Yemen Government forces in September 2023, likely to regain access to historically supportive areas in the southern Governorates. Both AQIS and AQAP continue to call for lone wolf attacks on United States and Western interests via their global digital reach.

Opportunities to Counter VEOs

The enduring defeat of the ISIS depends on the repatriation and reintegration of displaced persons from camps like Al Hol and Al Roj, and our efforts to encourage this process gained traction in 2023. The international community repatriated 6,396 displaced persons from Syria, helping to reduce the population of Al Hol, the largest of the camps, by 18 percent. Iraq and Syria led the way on repatriating their citizens, while nations like the Kyrgyz Republic also set the example, conducting 332 repatriations in 2023. The government of Iraq stepped up its efforts to shorten the average stay in its rehabilitation centers, like Jeddah 1, which hold returning citizens until they can be reintegrated into society. This is also a moral imperative. In my six visits to Al Hol, I have met adolescent children who arrived in the camp as infants.

Our partners in Iraq and Syria, including Iraq's Counterterrorism Service and the Syrian Democratic Forces, continue to demonstrate improving capability, capacity, competency, and will. In 2023, the ISF conducted five independent D-ISIS operations without Coalition assistance. Funding mechanisms like the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) are key to sustaining this progress and fully transitioning Iraq's security to Iraqi hands.

In August 2023, the D-ISIS mission in Iraq took a major step forward when the United States and Iraqi Governments agreed at the Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue to form a Higher Military Commission (HMC), a consultative mechanism for the Coalition's transition. The HMC will enable the transition to an enduring bilateral security partnership between Iraq and the United States, on a timeline that factors in the threat from ISIS, operational and environmental requirements, and

the capability of the ISF. CJTF-OIR, in lockstep with NATO Mission Iraq, will continue to train and develop the ISF until it is fully capable of independent operations.

In Central and South Asia, we can partner with countries like Pakistan, Tajikistan, and others to help them address the growing threat from the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. Our partners in the region consistently cite counterterrorism as one of their highest priorities for cooperation and combined training.

Risks to Countering VEOs

Despite gains in the Counter-VEO fight, various groups in the Central Region retain the capability and will to target U.S. interests abroad in under 6 months with little to no warning. We assess an attack on American soil would likely take longer. The reprioritization of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), targeting expertise, and linguists creates gaps and seams in our ability to detect and disrupt plots, increasing freedom of movement for VEOs to plan a strike against the Homeland. This could be partially mitigated by additional and alternative ISR assets and cooperation with our Central and South Asian partners.

Taliban pressure against ISIS-K temporarily disrupted the group's ability to plan and conduct attacks against the Homeland and Western targets, but that pressure has been intermittent and insufficient. ISIS-K and its allies retain a safe haven in Afghanistan, and they continue to develop their networks in and out of the country. Their goals do not stop there. They have called for attacks globally on anyone not aligned with their extremist ideology, and Taliban efforts to suppress the group have proven insufficient. The recent ISIS attack in Kerman, Iran demonstrates the group's resiliency and indicates that they retain the capability and will to conduct spectacular external operations.

Safe havens like Afghanistan also increase the risk of VEOs inciting regional conflict. VEOs killed at least 2,300 Pakistanis in 2023, with TTP in particular attacking Pakistan 881 times, the highest rate in over 5 years. In addition to hundreds of attacks by TTP, ISIS-K conducted at least three high profile bombings in Pakistan in 2023 and plotted to conduct more attacks throughout Central Asia. The Taliban's inability, or unwillingness, to rein in VEOs could destabilize Central and South Asia.

We must also prevent a premature Coalition departure from Iraq and Syria. If Iran and Russia were to succeed in their goal of pushing us out before our partner forces can operate independently, it is my assessment that ISIS would reconstitute the ability to seize territory within 2 years. The Global Coalition's sustained presence not only helps our partners in their fight against ISIS, it also prevents the reemergence of a physical caliphate and ensures the group does not have a safe haven in Iraq or Syria to plan global attacks. The eventual transition to a traditional security cooperation framework must be predicated on Partner Force Development and Security Sector Reform in Iraq, and continued repatriations, secure detention facilities, and a political pathway for the SDF in Syria.

Competing Strategically

Strategic competition is a contest of visions. The United States and our partners promote a vision in which the rules-based international order respects the sovereignty of nations and shared interests are advanced through the strength of partnership. The PRC, Russia, and Iran have deepened their partnership and collaboration as Iran seeks to strengthen its regional position, Russia leverages Iranian military support in Ukraine, and the PRC aims to exploit tensions in the region to afford them a position of advantage and diminishes United States interests. According to public reporting, Supreme Leader Khamenei said in November 2023 that "death to America" is not just a slogan, it is a policy. The PRC and Russia increasingly contribute to Iran's goals through direct assistance or refusing to apply their own instruments of national power to discourage Iran's malign behaviors.

For nearly eighty years, since President Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud aboard USS *Quincy*, the United States has formed a network of hard-earned security partnerships with the Central Region. These partnerships are more than just objects to be guarded from competitors like the PRC and Russia, they must be nurtured and reinforced. Our partnerships are strategic high ground and represent a core strength of the United States. This is evidenced by our rapid response to recent trade disruptions caused by Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. The United States Fifth Fleet leveraged its decades-long relationships under CMF to bring together more than 20 nations under Operation Prosperity Guardian, which protects shipping through the critical Bab al Mandeb Strait in response to the Houthis' indiscriminate attacks. No other nation on Earth could generate an international response so

quickly, and it would not have been possible without the trust and interoperability we have fostered among our allies and partners.

Our partnerships in the Central Region will become even more valuable as the transformation toward modernization and prosperity continues. Our partners want the United States to be part of this transformation, and our competitors know this. In 2023, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) continued to diversify its economy, exemplified by Western tourists strolling through massive shopping centers in Riyadh and ambitious megaprojects, while remaining dedicated to seeking peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) catapulted itself to global prominence in space, sending an astronaut to the International Space Station for 6 months and providing the world with a new map of Mars from its Hope Spacecraft, the second probe ever to successfully enter Mars orbit on its first try. Just a few months earlier, in November 2022, Qatar hosted the world's largest sporting event, the FIFA World Cup, for the first time ever in the Central Region. American engagement has contributed to this transformation, and the Central Region of the future will remain open to those who continue to help it.

Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China

With telecommunications and physical infrastructure, diplomacy, and security cooperation, the PRC is rapidly penetrating the Central Region and feeds misperceptions of American disengagement to try to supplant the United States as the security partner of choice. In late October 2023, the PRC's outgoing Naval Escort Task Force (NETF), which ostensibly counters piracy in the Gulf of Aden on rotational deployments since 2008, visited Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, and Pakistan before departing the theater. This unprecedented series of port calls was a milestone in the PRC's nascent campaign to gain security influence and access.

The term "security partner" means something very different to the PRC than it does to the United States. The PRC offers discounted sales and rapid delivery of military equipment, and the region is learning the hidden cost associated with these quick sales. When Chinese equipment performs poorly, there is no maintenance, logistics, or training architecture in place. Furthermore, the PRC shows no desire to support the region's security or stability with military forces. For example, the PRC's NETF in the Gulf of Aden has done nothing in the defense of international shipping under Houthi attack, nor has it responded to the recent series of piracy events in the Somali Basin, instead solely focusing on the protection of Chinese assets and interests.

Meanwhile, the PRC has also done little to rein in Iran's destabilizing behavior since the much-touted rapprochement it brokered between Tehran and Riyadh in March 2023. Unfortunately, perhaps as evidence of the lack of depth of the arrangement and tepid commitment toward actual stability, Iran's actions following the agreement, including the continued arming of the Houthis, have undermined the very stability the relations were intended to achieve. It is noteworthy that the PRC buys 90 percent of exported Iranian oil, which they could use to influence Iranian lethal aid to the Houthis if they chose to. Instead, Beijing only helps Tehran evade sanctions and accelerate its destabilization of the region. The PRC's unwillingness, or inability, to enforce the terms of its own deal has contributed to Iran's disruption of the free flow of international commerce.

The Central Region is vital to the PRC achieving its goal of refashioning the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences and become the world's leading power. Increased cooperation between the PRC and the Central Region advances its Belt and Road projects, strengthens bilateral relations, and helps regional countries diversify their economies. Trade between the PRC and the Central Region surpassed \$436 billion in 2022, and its investments in the region under the Belt and Road continued apace in 2023, with projects in telecommunications, construction, transportation, and more.

A key element of the Belt and Road seeks to create overland shipping routes between the PRC and Europe through Central and South Asia, which could bolster regional economies but also carries risk. For example, Pakistan is the world's third largest recipient of Chinese loans (behind Russia and Venezuela), receiving over \$67 billion to fund the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Now, amid its ongoing economic crisis, Pakistan is vulnerable to PRC influence.

We have also seen an incremental increase in Beijing's political investment in the region. In the past 2 years, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, KSA, Qatar, and UAE became dialog partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, while Iran joined as a full member last year. This year, Egypt, UAE, and Iran formally joined BRICS. We now routinely see People's Liberation Army (PLA) general officers serving as Senior Defense Officials (SDO) or Defense Attachés, whereas just a few years ago, these would have been mid-grade officers.

The PRC relies on the region for its energy, importing 56 percent of its crude oil and 43 percent of natural gas from USCENTCOM AOR countries. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) announced last year by President Biden, along with six other countries and the European Union, offers a promising counterbalance to the PRC's Belt and Road. USCENTCOM's military-to-military relationships can provide critical and timely insight on projects that could be incorporated into IMEC. Time and time again, our partners tell us they would prefer to contract with U.S. or Western companies if a viable option were available.

We are at risk of deterioration in our strategic relationships and losing influence to Beijing in the Central Region if we cannot effectively assist our partners with their security needs. Our partners recognize the superior quality of our military equipment but, as the advent of drone warfare has demonstrated, even a third-rate product employed rapidly and in large quantities can be effective. Often, our partners cannot accommodate our FMS timelines and are forced to look elsewhere, opening doors for competitors like the PRC, who has increased arms sales to the region by 80 percent in the last decade.

We are also monitoring the potential expansion of PLA basing in the Central Region, beyond their current naval base in Djibouti and border outpost in Tajikistan. If the PRC were to secure additional PLA naval bases, it could give them the ability to hold our strategic lines of communication at risk. Even in ports where they have no intention of establishing a naval base, Chinese state-owned enterprises that own or operate terminals could give them considerable political influence to present us with logistical challenges in a future conflict.

Strategic Competition with Russia

Russia's goals in the Central Region are different from those of the PRC, but they are no less intent on diminishing American influence in the region. Russia's primary security interests in the region are maintaining its access in Syria, preserving its legacy Soviet status in Central Asia, and developing its military cooperation with Iran. Russia's two largest foreign bases are in Tajikistan and Syria, both in the USCENTCOM AOR. Further demonstrating the region's importance to Russia, Vladimir Putin's only international visits since he launched the invasion of Ukraine—outside of the PRC, Iran, and the former Soviet states—were to KSA and UAE.

Over the past year the collaboration between Russia and Iran grew into a nascent military alliance. Iran has delivered at least 1,000 attack drones, and dozens of multipurpose UAS, to Russia for use in Ukraine. With Iran's help, Russia plans to build 6,000 UAS domestically by 2025. After U.N. sanctions on Iran's missile program expired in October 2023, Russia now intends to purchase hundreds of Iranian ballistic missiles in the coming months, significantly increasing the risk of prolonging its war in Ukraine. In return, Russia agreed to supply Iran with its advanced Su-35 fighter jets, attack helicopters, and training aircraft.

Our partners in Central Asia observed Russia's unprovoked invasions of Ukraine and Georgia, and its military's subsequent performance, raising doubts about its reliability as a security partner. Furthermore, the lack of intervention by the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite multiple Armenian requests, underscored the ineffectiveness of the alliance among the Central Asian states, many of whom are members. As a result, USCENTCOM has a generational opportunity to strengthen and expand our partnerships with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

We also have the opportunity to support U.S. European Command by coordinating across theater boundaries. When Russia uses the Central Region to evade sanctions or transport illicit war materiel, we can work with willing partners to frustrate its logistics. In addition, when we seize lethal aid that Iran smuggles to its proxies throughout the region, and when authorized by applicable law, we will work with the Interagency to transfer it to our Ukrainian partners, just as we did with 1.1 million rounds of seized rifle ammunition in October 2023.

The growing military alliance between Russia and Iran is expanding to new domains. Apart from Iran's proliferation of advanced weaponry with no export controls or end use monitoring, they are also cooperating in cyber and space. In March 2023, Russia sent Iran digital surveillance software, and Tehran is seeking more assistance. As of December 2023, the two countries are reportedly on the verge of signing a new long-term comprehensive cooperation agreement covering defense, energy, and space sectors.

Russia welcomed Syria's reintegration into the Arab League in 2023, which boosted the status of one of its key regional partners while simultaneously ramping up pressure for the D-ISIS Coalition's withdrawal. Syria's reintegration was a lifeline

for Assad, who has depended on a mixture of Russian and Iranian support and funding from drug smuggling to sustain his regime. Additionally, Russia's continued irresponsible and unprofessional behavior in Syrian airspace and on the electromagnetic spectrum needlessly raise the risk of miscalculation.

III. STRATEGIC APPROACH

USCENTCOM seizes the opportunities and mitigates the risks that arise in the Central Region through our strategic approach: People, Partners, and Innovation. My first 2 years in command reinforced the value of these three pillars. We've outlined this approach in our Theater Strategy, new Campaign Plan, and our approach to current operations. Our approach aligns with the 2022 NDS, which is a call to action to incorporate our unparalleled network of allies and partners. USCENTCOM will continue this approach as a security integrator in the region.

People

Our People—our servicemembers, civilian workforce, contractors, and supportive families—serve as the bedrock of everything we do. They are our greatest asset and our most critical resource. Our goal is to instill in them a sense of accomplishment, purpose, identity, and belonging. We recognize that the top talent in the workforce, both in and out of uniform, have many options. As an actively engaged Combatant Command, we require the best, but also develop and cultivate expertise, so that the best want to work here.

We seek to attract and retain premier talent to meet our evolving needs. For example, we hired a team of experts to critically analyze our operations to ensure we do everything possible to preserve innocent life, in line with the Department's guidance to mitigate civilian harm. We also maintain a cadre of Interagency liaisons to support a whole-of-government strategy in the region, such as our USAID team that enables us to support humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions.

Our partners see the professionalism of our Service Members as we engage with them on a daily basis and seek to emulate their example through investment in reforms across their military formations. Our Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corps is the envy of all other militaries, and we are working with many of our partners across the Central Region to build world-class NCO development and education systems. In Central Asia particularly, our partners are increasingly seeking our help with NCO development, as we've done with Kazakhstan over the past 30 years.

Our People are not just in our headquarters and in our subordinate commands, but across the enterprise that supports our operations, activities, and investments in the Central Region. Piecemeal reductions over time, such as rank reductions in our defense attaché positions and reallocation of analytical support across the intelligence community, have a cumulative effect. As necessary and logical resourcing decisions have been made to reprioritize assets against other emergent challenges, risk accumulates over time if cuts are made too quickly or deeply. Much like blocks being removed from a Jenga tower, the impact may not be obvious at first, but eventually the tower will fall.

Finally, we are committed to bringing on individuals who can help accelerate innovation in USCENTCOM. In addition to our Chief Technology Officer, last year we hired our first Chief Data Officer and an AI & Robotics Advisor, both of whom will enable our digital modernization and shift toward data-centric operations. We then initiated our Technology Residency program in January of this year. The program will bring in exceptional talent from across the industrial base throughout the year to support us on a three to 6-month timeline. The Residents will partner with elements of USCENTCOM staff and components to help tackle the friction points we encounter in our experimentation, aid in our data modernization efforts, and contribute key skillsets that are not organic to the Department of Defense.

Partners

Both the NSS and NDS emphasize the importance of partnership. The trusted relationships we've built with our partners over decades give us an advantage over competitors like the PRC and Russia, and sustaining that advantage is key to our strategic approach in the Central Region. We help our partners achieve competitive overmatch versus Iran and suppress VEOs through security integration and dependable cooperation, such as timely FMS and Foreign Military Funding. FMS in particular is a double-edged sword that can increase interoperability and strengthen partnerships, but the slow pace and complexity of the process often leads to resentment. Our partners consistently express frustration with delays, issues, and insufficient explanations. In many cases, delays in our system—coupled with their security requirements—have led them to look to other nations to fill their needs.

Our fight against ISIS depends on multilateral constructs like NATO Mission Iraq and CJTF-OIR, and on our bilateral partnerships in Iraq and Syria. Our Coalition remains in Iraq at the invitation of the government. The Government of Iraq faces immense pressure from Iran to withdraw its invitation for Coalition presence, but they have resisted external manipulation thus far, even holding their first provincial elections in a decade in December 2023. Iraq is committed to cooperating with the United States, reforming its security sector, and realizing the full development of the ISF, which made strides in 2023. We are planning for an orderly transition to a normalized military-to-military relationship featuring traditional security cooperation. In Syria, the SDF remain committed to the enduring defeat of ISIS, in detention facilities, in displaced persons camps, and at large—despite facing an existential threat on their northern border and pressure from the Assad regime.

Our relationships with the militaries of the Levant Region helped keep HAMAS' attack on Israel from spiraling into a wider regional conflict. We have stood side by side with Israel, ensuring it has what it needs to defend itself, deter Iran and its proxies like Lebanese Hezbollah from getting further involved, and plan for a transition to post-conflict. Close coordination with our counterparts in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon allowed us to expedite the flow of humanitarian aid and facilitate safe operations for organizations like the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon. Our partners in the Levant also contribute valuable forces and expertise to regional security constructs like MEAD and CMF.

Integrating the security efforts of our Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) partners is the linchpin of our strategy to deter Iranian aggression. GCC members are moving toward operational coordination in the defense of their territorial airspace and waters, bilaterally and via multilateral constructs like MEAD, CMF, and IMSC. Specifically, KSA is enabling interoperability by transforming its Ministry of Defense to more closely mirror the United States model for national defense. Qatar's Air Force contributes aircraft to our daily operations throughout the region. The UAE just completed its second company-level rotation to our Joint Readiness Training Center, with the goal of fielding a brigade completely interoperable with United States Forces by 2028.

Together, the GCC countries can stand strong against Iran. Still, the strategic importance of the GCC goes beyond any singular adversary. GCC countries host the United States Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, the headquarters for CJTF-OIR in Kuwait, and our theater air operations center and the largest United States military base in the region in Qatar. The Gulf is also home to the region's economic power centers in KSA and UAE, and the diplomatic efforts of partners like Qatar and Oman have helped resolve multiple crises and return American citizens home safely.

In September 2023, USCENTCOM held its Central and South Asian Chiefs of Defense Conference in Uzbekistan for the first time in 2 years, an indication of our steadily growing relationships. Our Central Asian partners are cautiously optimistic about the prospect of increased security cooperation, especially border defense, counterterrorism, institutional capacity building, and military medicine. We are also beginning more advanced training like cybersecurity and special operations with some partners. With the region's strategic location between Iran, Afghanistan, the PRC, and Russia, this momentum in our military-to-military relationships is invaluable to our national security but it also places constraints on our partners. We intend to continue cooperation, via programs like International Military Education and Training and the State Partnership Program, at a pace with which our Central Asian partners are individually comfortable.

In South Asia, Pakistan has had a deep and multi-faceted strategic partnership with the PRC since the 1960's. Ties between the two countries deepened further in the early 2000's as the two countries developed shared concerns about the rise of India as a regional power. Since 2015, nearly 75 percent of Pakistani arms imports came from the PRC, which represents 40 percent of Chinese arms exports, making Pakistan Beijing's largest security customer. Nevertheless, Pakistan seeks United States security and economic assistance. Considering the weight that Pakistan carries throughout Asia, we must approach our relationship from the perspective of its own merits. Any security strategy in Afghanistan will require Pakistan's help. They have invaluable expertise, access, and geographic location for countering ISIS-K, and they are willing and capable counterterrorism partners as they face persistent threats from VEOs like TTP.

Finally, our global partners provide invaluable contributions to USCENTCOM operations in support of our mutual interests. Our "Five Eyes" partners (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and New Zealand) share intelligence and commit forces across all three of our lines of effort. In addition, France continues to be a ready and willing military partner in defeating ISIS, countering Russia, and deterring Iranian aggression at sea.

Innovation

In USCENTCOM, we are not just experimenting with new technologies—we are developing innovative processes, building innovative teams while encouraging individual contributions, and responding to emerging threats in innovative ways. Importantly, our personnel use the capabilities that we are developing in real world operations today. We are helping to create America’s military of the future, not waiting for it.

USCENTCOM has implemented a wide range of mechanisms and processes to drive innovation. The Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) software suite USCENTCOM employs today is drastically different from the C2 systems used in counterinsurgency operations of the past 20 years. The persistent and multidomain threat created by Iran’s ongoing proliferation of advanced weaponry to its proxies necessitates decisionmaking tools that enable seamless command and control functions from the tactical to the strategic level in real time. The importance of speed and a holistic approach in seeing, understanding, and acting cannot be overstated. The CJADC2 software suite we have tested, and now use daily, enabled us to thwart numerous ITN attacks. This momentum must be continued and accelerated through the Combatant Commands under the Department’s strategy. These efforts are complementary to ongoing work across the Department, and we have hosted senior officials from across the entire enterprise to share our lessons learned and help the Joint Force modernize.

Since January 2023, we have conducted a series of quarterly digital exercises, preceded by month-long software sprints, to develop the tools needed for CJADC2. CJADC2 is more than just a concept for us, it is a daily activity that we are improving with each exercise. By pairing operators with software developers, we are proving that we can use digital tools to improve our situational awareness, make our targeting more efficient and effective, improve our planning and sustainment processes, and embody true digital warfighting. Exercises like these demonstrate the value of hands-on training with live data and the centrality of robust networks in CJADC2. We nest our exercises and experimentation under DOD efforts such as the Global Information Dominance Experiment series.

In addition to quarterly CJADC2 exercises, we have driven other events to encourage innovative thinking and solutions. In 2023, we continued our Innovation Oasis, a “Shark Tank” style competition open to the entire USCENTCOM enterprise. The winning ideas are rapidly introduced to the force, such as an intuitive software tool for managing force flow into theater that won last year’s competition and is already in use across the Command. This is indicative of how we look for innovative responses to our most pressing challenges. For the counter-UAS problem, we developed a series of tailored “SANDS” exercises to address the problem’s many unique aspects, and established an integrated experimentation center in KSA where we can test the newest technology alongside our partners. Another example is cybersecurity. In 2023, we held a “Best Cyber Warrior” competition in Oman. Exercises and training events with our partners in rapidly developing fields like counter-UAS and cybersecurity are key to establishing regional competitive overmatch versus Iran.

We also organized our subordinate commands to encourage innovation, with each now operating an innovation task force tailored to their unique domain. On land, Task Force 39 is experimenting with additive manufacturing, counter-UAS technologies, and unmanned logistics vehicles.

At sea, Task Force 59 has not only revolutionized how the U.S. Navy incorporates robotic and AI systems, but now contributes daily to regional maritime security, and encourages partner investments in unmanned surface and subsurface vehicles. Last year we launched Operation GATEKEEPER, the largest operational employment of multinational unmanned surface vessels in the world. GATEKEEPER allows us and our partners to not only increase maritime domain awareness across 18,000 square kilometers in the North Arabian Sea, but unlike an operation with manned assets, it enables continuous presence.

In the air, Task Force 99 is testing a wide range of new technologies to expand our air superiority, including long endurance ISR platforms that can fly for days and low-cost 3D-printed UAS, some built for as little as \$3,000 in 8 hours. Task Force 99 is also experimenting with new tools for expeditionary aviation logistics and exploring new ways to detect and counter jamming.

Our special operations innovation task force, TF 179, is developing digital and unmanned solutions for ISR, target information sharing, electronic warfare, and payload delivery. For example, TF 179 takes advantage of USSOCOM’s rapid acquisition capabilities to field disposable, swarming unmanned systems that can be employed unilaterally or through a surrogate force as a one-way attack platform, electronic warfare delivery, or tactical ISR.

IV. CONCLUSION

The United States cannot just articulate a vision of integration and partnership for a brighter future that aligns the interests of the United States and our partners; we must match that vision with the commitment necessary to give partners the confidence to continue on that path with us. There is a narrative that the Central Region is too fraught with turmoil to be considered worthy of American investment. Twenty-plus years of American military engagement in both Iraq and Afghanistan play to this narrative. But the past, while it may serve as prologue, does not predetermine the future. The vision, the hopes, and the ambitions of our partners throughout the Central Region are palpable and they are real. Equally real are those recidivist forces attempting to undermine those who seek progress, pulling them back into a past checkered with violence and disorder.

We are and should remain engaged in every corner of the Central Region, from Egypt to Kazakhstan and from Lebanon to Pakistan, strengthening our partners and securing our vital national interests. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, and coast guardsmen are executing critical operations that contribute to the collective security of the U.S. and our partners. They operate in harm's way each day: whether it is an F-15 pilot flying missions in support of our Iraqi partners; the USS *Carney* patrolling the Red Sea and defeating Houthi attacks; a Patriot Battery protecting our forces and those of our partners; a Marine Task Force ready to respond to crisis; a U.S. Space Force detachment combatting adversary attempts at jamming; or a United States Coast Guard boarding team interdicting a shipment of Iranian weapons. The women and men of U.S. Central Command remain committed to the vision of a stable Central Region in which U.S. national interests are secure and our partners prosper.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Kurilla. General Langley, please.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY, USMC
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND**

General LANGLEY. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Committee Members, it is an honor to appear before you today representing the outstanding servicemembers, civilians, and families of the United States Africa Command.

I am proud to testify with my good friend General Kurilla, the Commander of United States Central Command. Now, today I am also joined by my USAID advisor, Ms. Maura Barry Boyle, and also my State Department foreign advisor, Mr. Phil Nelson. They represent AFRICOM's whole-of-government team and integrated approach to Africa.

In the last year, thanks to your authorities, resourcing, and support, AFRICOM all-star team responded to numerous crises and conflicts across the continent. They performed flawlessly, and I am honored and proud to serve among them.

Today's global events, ranging from Russian Federation's war in the Ukraine to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, directly impact the lives of millions of Africans. Terrorism, poverty, food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration shatter African lives.

These factors sow the seeds of extremism and Russian exploitation across entire regions of the continent. AFRICOM's campaign revolves around central themes of ensuring strategic access, countering threats to the Homeland and U.S. interests, preparing for and responding to crises, and last, bolstering our allies and partners.

This campaign places our African partners at the center, achieving positive change by executing African led and United States enabled operations focused on our shared objectives. In today's dy-

dynamic environment, our whole-of-government partners require appropriate resourcing.

I strongly advocate for our State Department and USAID partners to receive the resources they need to guarantee our combined success. I would also like to highlight a campaign that benefits from our Congress, which supports the African Center of Strategic Studies, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

In Africa, modest investments and resources go a long way toward achieving our National Security interests. Africa faces many challenges, but also offers even more opportunities.

With our African partners at the forefront, reinforced by our efforts and the efforts of our allies, we will continue to gain ground toward achieving lasting stability, security, and prosperity on this crucial continent.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to be here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Michael E. Langley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL MICHAEL E. LANGLEY

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Committee Members, United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is steadfast in protecting America's interests across a vast and dynamic continent. This Combatant Command is committed to our shared values—including civilian control of armed forces, the rule of law, and respect for human rights—while responding to fluid situations in Africa. To accomplish our mission, USAFRICOM weaves together a community of military professionals who work in concert with America's allies and partners.

USAFRICOM's team is synchronized across the executive branch to achieve whole-of-government effects alongside the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Intelligence Community, and other U.S. agencies. This Command views itself as one part of a three-part team of diplomacy, development, and defense professionals—what we call the “3D” approach. Using this approach, we operate at the intersection of the interests of the American and African peoples. These common interests provide fertile ground for cultivating multinational collaboration focused on achieving peace and prosperity throughout the continent.

We work together with our sovereign African partners as they implement their own solutions to achieve a just, secure, and prosperous future. Such a future is a common aspiration of the United States, African states, and the international community. We work together because no organization or nation—African or otherwise—has the resources to overcome these challenges alone. America's lead for that collaboration is the Department of State and its diplomats at embassies throughout Africa. USAFRICOM stands in support of our diplomats, just as we support USAID officers who lead development and humanitarian efforts. Representing the ‘defense’ component of our 3D approach, we manage security cooperation and other missions in Africa in ways that support diplomacy and development activities. Ultimately, sustainable long-term progress relies on governance and development, which enable African nations to lay firm foundations to achieve economic and security self-reliance. The need is most acute in partners like Libya, where—in the wake of tragic flooding last year—USAFRICOM joined the United States Special Envoy to Libya and USAID officials on the ground to deliver 13 metric tons of humanitarian aid and engage with senior Libyan leaders. By itself, this event was small. Yet it illustrated how this Command works within the interagency in accordance with the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy.

The adversities facing America on today's global stage constrain the resources available to USAFRICOM, making us an “economy of force” theater. USAFRICOM carefully stewards modest funds and personnel to maximize effects in close alignment with other Combatant Commands and the U.S. interagency. Our efforts build on each other. Where USAFRICOM helps cultivate security, State and USAID resources can cultivate economic and human development, so African Governments have more resources for security independence. To describe how we allocate our lim-

ited resources, we begin by setting the stage: a vast continent with a diverse security State of play.

The contrasts across Africa's operating environment are stark. Some of the continent's governments are struggling to stave off State failure, while others enjoy the benefits of modern development and reliable governance. While Africa has some of the least developed countries in the world, more than 20 African countries have space programs. Our newest Component Command, U.S. Space Forces Europe and Africa (SPACEFOREUR-AF), activated in December at Ramstein Airbase, Germany, will drive our defense space collaboration. Challenges on the continent cover a spectrum from natural disasters to corruption to terrorism. This spectrum of challenges requires a spectrum of solutions spearheaded by African peoples and authorities. Given its vast size—three times the landmass of the continental United States—we consider the continent region by region.

The recent military takeovers in West Africa are giving space to Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and our strategic adversaries. In East Africa, al-Shabaab and ISIS bring violence to peoples already struggling with inter-ethnic clashes and climate-related food and water shortages. Conflict and climate challenges also loom over the vast populations and natural resources of Central Africa, while Southern Africa faces economic and energy shortfalls, combined with an ISIS insurgency in Mozambique. Our support to several partners, most notably those in North Africa, is complicated by differences over the conflict in Gaza, along with Libya's long-running struggle to achieve a united government and military force.

Use of kinetic military force is a last resort that can produce fleeting or counter-productive outcomes. Therefore, USAFRICOM's approach is to help African peoples address underlying conditions. We operationalize the toolkit of security cooperation through the Security Force Assistance Brigade and medical team deployments, institutional capacity building, multinational exercises like AFRICAN LION, intelligence and information sharing, and logistical assistance. The United States National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Programs in Africa complements our operations. Last year, the National Guard launched State Partnership Programs that joined North Carolina's National Guard citizen-soldiers with Malawi and Zambia, which look forward to decades of mutually beneficial training and relationship building. Our naval assets—especially the USS *Hershel "Woody" Williams* and the USNS *Trenton*—fly the Stars and Stripes during joint patrols and maritime engagements in strategic ports along Africa's 19,000 miles of coastline. Partner counterterrorism forces benefit from American equipment and training in combat skills, support to operations, the law of armed conflict and civilian harm mitigation. These programs flow into the USAFRICOM Enlisted Development Strategy, which reinforces Africa's Non-Commissioned Officer Corps—the backbone of all professional military forces. At the forefront of our campaign, USAFRICOM senior leaders crisscross the continent conducting defense diplomacy to reinforce relationships with governments that are crucial to our ability to defend America's interests, both today and in the future.

WEST AFRICA

During the past 3 years, national defense forces turned their guns against their own elected governments in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger. These juntas avoid accountability to the peoples they claim to serve. An understanding of West Africa's spike in coups—and potential remedies—requires an appreciation for the underlying conditions that laid the groundwork for coups in the first place.

The drivers for coups in Africa include endemic corruption, lagging development, weak democratic institutions, and a shortage in strategic patience. Criminal groups and terrorists aligned with al-Qaeda and ISIS exploited underdeveloped, under-governed areas to prey on vulnerable populations. Popular grievances grew against historical colonial powers. Centralized national governments lacked the ability to defeat extremists, purge corruption, provide basic services, and mediate inter-ethnic conflicts over limited resources like access to land and fisheries. Coup leaders overthrew elected governments claiming they will fix these problems.

Having overthrown legitimate governments, however, these coup leaders find themselves distanced from security partners like USAFRICOM, European allies and United Nations peacekeeping missions. Instead of making progress, the junta leaders and their constituents see their security problems only get worse. African mechanisms for multinational collaboration—like the G5 Sahel—dissolve. Violence against civilians increases. As security worsens, coup states need international partners more than ever, and they turn to partners who lack restrictions in dealing with coup governments: our strategic competitors—particularly Russia.

We work with all African partners to improve security training and assistance to help safeguard sovereign nations that share our values of constitutional, civilian-led government. We do not give orders to—or otherwise control—our partners, including graduates of U.S. military training programs. Yet, USAFRICOM activities have helped to prevent coups by educating military leaders about the negative consequences for security partnerships with competitors. If America ceased providing training to African militaries in reaction to a handful of trainees becoming involved in coup attempts—usually years after their training—the risk of more military takeovers would only grow. Our whole-of-government approach, including persistent engagement with problematic partners, is the best way America can help mitigate the risk of future coups and encourage military juntas to rejoin the rules-based international order. When Africa’s military officers understand the painful security, diplomatic and development penalties levied against coup states, and they participate in defense education that strengthens their already ingrained aversion to coups, they are less likely to view a military takeover as a viable path to solving disagreements with democratically elected civilian leadership.

USAFRICOM needs to stay in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea to limit the spread of terrorism across the region and beyond. Amid withdrawals of European and United Nations missions—often directed by the host nation, we have remained because West African leaders ask for our continued assistance and presence. They value our security cooperation because it is both effective and politically neutral. Recent history shows that Moscow and Beijing jump to fill the void when American engagement wanes or disappears, and we cannot afford to do that in West Africa.

Even where our engagement is restricted, we continue key tasks, such as surveilling VEOs and supporting USAID’s unfaltering humanitarian assistance. The 2019 Global Fragility Act enables collective U.S. effort to assist coastal West African states, which are facing growing threats from Sahel-based VEOs and illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing that saps a priceless national resource for food and employment. USAFRICOM support is key to stemming the rise of Russian disinformation, human rights abuses, and private military company expansion that exploits sovereign resources and fosters violent extremism.

EAST AFRICA

USAFRICOM’s main effort in the Horn of Africa is supporting the Somali Government’s fight against al Qaeda’s largest franchise—al-Shabaab—as well as ISIS-Somalia. We returned to a persistent deployed presence in Somalia in 2022. We are providing training, logistical support, medical evacuation, and intelligence to vetted units in the Somali National Army (SNA)—the Danab commandos—and collaborating with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Last year, we conducted 18 air strikes requested by SNA commanders and removed a global ISIS facilitator and leader in Somalia, Bilal al-Sudani. None of these operations caused a single civilian casualty.

With the SNA at the helm, we have seen progress in Somalia, but we also see mounting challenges. ATMIS is expected to be phased out by 2025 and the SNA is not currently prepared to defeat al-Shabaab, even though their training, firepower, and ability to muster resources outmatches al-Shabaab. Where the SNA most needs help is in reinforcing battlefield gains and providing resilient security for development of sustainable local governance that can root out lingering al-Shabaab influences. Al-Shabaab dominates swaths of Somali territory and regularly launches attacks into Mogadishu and other cities. Al-Shabaab is poised to exploit any reduction in counter-terrorism pressure by rejuvenating their ability to attack the United States Homeland and our facilities in East Africa.

Our largest facility in Africa is in Djibouti, a few minutes’ drive from the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC’s) only overseas military base. Beijing is deeply invested in the Horn of Africa, as it is across the African continent. USAFRICOM does not offer African partners “United States vs PRC” ultimatums, because our partners rely heavily on China’s economic and infrastructure investments. We seek to out-compete the PRC in the security cooperation arena—and African militaries see the difference. In comparing the quality of training and equipment, USAFRICOM’s partnership offers stark advantages over PRC partnership. African partners consistently prefer United States defense assistance, but they often have to turn toward Beijing when United States timelines do not meet their urgent needs.

Being a trusted partner in East Africa allows USAFRICOM to respond to crises. For example, a civil war unexpectedly broke out in Sudan last April—and USAFRICOM was ready when the State Department called. Within hours, we were coordinating with the U.S. interagency, both parties in the civil war, and our allies and partners. Within days we were joining forces with those allies and partners to

rescue Americans and others in need who were caught in the crossfire. Within weeks, Embassy staff and Americans in need of evacuation had safely crossed the Red Sea. While the evacuation last year was a success, the Sudanese people still face protracted fighting, displacement, ethnic cleansing, and potential famine.

The world is watching conflicts across East Africa. Inter-ethnic clashes involving Ethiopia and Eritrea have defined the ever-shifting landscape of opportunistic alliances that leave civilians in jeopardy. Eritrea's alignment with Russia risks establishing a Russian base on the Red Sea, endangering global commerce and freedom of movement in this critical maritime highway. Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea demonstrate that threats to African partners don't have to originate in Africa to have an effect in Africa. Even though the Red Sea marks a geographic boundary between United States Combatant Commands, USAFRICOM and USCENTCOM seamlessly coordinate to help inform and protect our African partners from these threats. This relationship demonstrates the interoperability USAFRICOM has with all Geographic and Functional Combatant Commands in support of the Department's globally integrated construct.

We can't overlook the progress in East Africa. Kenya is a leading force behind regional security efforts, including the African Union's ATMIS mission in Somalia. Last year, the Tanzanians hosted our annual pan-Africa communications and cyber symposium AFRICA ENDEAVOR, and this year they will host our annual African Directors of Military Intelligence Conference. Tanzania is charting a non-aligned course between us and the PRC to maximize development and economic opportunities to support their emergence as a hub for continent-wide defense collaboration. With continued USAFRICOM support, East Africa as a region can also progress toward security self-reliance and full participation in global defense of the rules-based order.

NORTH AFRICA

Our partnership with North Africa dates to just after the American Revolution—America's longest treaty relationship is with Morocco. USAFRICOM is proud to build on that legacy. Morocco and Tunisia are significant contributors to regional security along NATO's southern flank. Algeria is a highly capable partner often aligned with United States objectives. Our continual engagement with these predominantly Muslim countries has created resilient bonds. One engagement in particular, USAFRICOM's flagship annual exercise AFRICAN LION, relies primarily on our North African partners as they make game-changing contributions in training their African neighbors. Morocco and Tunisia also joined USAFRICOM at last year's Exercise PHOENIX EXPRESS, which trained Africa's maritime forces to combat IUU fishing and criminal smuggling. Empowering female sailors was a cornerstone of that exercise, driven by 2017's Women, Peace and Security Act.

Libya is struggling to realize the vast potential of its people and natural wealth. Competition between rival political stakeholders poisons Libyan prospects for development and internal security. The solution lies with the Libyan people, but USAFRICOM's role is to contribute within our whole-of-government 3D approach alongside allies and partners. USAFRICOM is on the United States State Department's team to facilitate trust between Libya's factions and close the fissures in their security leadership. USAFRICOM is on USAID's team to provide life-saving humanitarian aid and development assistance. Our goal is to facilitate the establishment of legitimate, unified governance that answers to its people while protecting Libyan sovereignty and resources from VEOs and Russian encroachment. The emergence of a strong Libya will be a victory for the stability of North Africa and the national security of the United States.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

As in Libya, the solutions to Central and Southern Africa's security challenges are not military, but are diplomatic and developmental. The tragic conflict between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda has long threatened to descend into a full-scale war, and America is joining with African partners to provide mechanisms that build trust and de-escalate tensions.

Our Central and Southern African partners have little trust in our strategic adversaries, but these partners need what Chinese and Russian companies offer: infrastructure, inexpensive equipment, and quick financial incentives. These countries are in a dilemma: they must balance their development needs against risks to national sovereignty. Chinese and Russian companies have used predatory tactics to entangle African states in debt and extractive contracts that leave local populations in the lurch. America offers an alternative. U.S. diplomatic, development, and defense support does not hold their peoples and natural resources hostage, so we do

not impose a moral balancing act on our partners. Instead of demanding financial and political concessions, we demand accountability on the fundamentals: respect for human rights and the rule of law. These are interests we share with peoples throughout Central and Southern Africa.

In this region, the stakes are high. Its wealth of critical minerals contrasts sharply with its vulnerability to natural disasters. USAFRICOM's approach is to enable information sharing and to support our State Department and USAID colleagues to cultivate climate resilience in governments and security forces. Geospatial data sharing is a low-cost, high-impact way to equip our partners' forces to deal with the criminal and terrorist elements that prey upon our partners' safety and sovereign natural resources. Those resources include staple local food sources—notably fish—and minerals designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as critical for our national security. Chromium, cobalt, manganese, tantalum—the list is long. If we don't support host nations in securing these resources, the implications for America's defense edge will be grim. These are critical minerals for our adversaries too.

When we look at partners in southern Africa, we see a bright and secure future for the peoples of southern Africa. Angola is moving away from its historical partnership with Moscow to embrace United States military cooperation. This puts them on the fast track for becoming a regional security exporter in its own right. South Africa is the leading contributor to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) military force that is overcoming ISIS-Mozambique's insurgency in Cabo Delgado. In a historical 'first' for USAFRICOM—this year's iteration of our flagship annual Chiefs of Defense Conference will be on the African continent, co-hosted by the Botswana Defense Force. USAFRICOM looks forward to this and numerous other senior leader conferences in Africa during coming years, because these events culminate in the multinational defense collaboration that paves the way toward our common security objectives.

CONCLUSION

The outcome for which we all strive in Africa—the outcome most important to America's national security—is a continent of free, safe, prosperous, and resilient nations that hold their peoples' interests at heart. We seek to foster nations that are self-reliant for domestic defense and are able to provide defense assistance to their neighbors through bilateral, multinational, and international security collaboration frameworks. The nations of Africa are on the road to achieving this goal, and some have arrived. For those that have not, they need USAFRICOM support more than ever.

It is sobering to see our international allies downsizing in Africa. France's considerable counterterrorism presence is at a low point. The U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali has departed, and the mission in DRC is drawing down. International funding for African Union peacekeepers in Somalia beyond this year is unresolved. Because of this trend, USAFRICOM will continue to reinforce security cooperation programs that reenergize partnerships with African militaries. Those forces are the world's first line of defense against technologically savvy VEOs, and they need to build capacity to keep pace in this 21st century contest.

The second-order value proposition of USAFRICOM's capacity-and relationship-building effort is competition with America's strategic adversaries. While our allies are moving out, our adversaries are moving in. Last year, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) completed its first circumnavigation of the continent since 2018. In the last few years, Russian military forces—both public and private—have made in-roads in West Africa's coup states, the Central African Republic, and Libya. Russian fighters claim to fight terrorists, but they do so at a grave human and financial cost to their host nations. Moscow's disinformation machine is adept at obfuscating their atrocities, and the Kremlin's agents are keen to spread disinformation and meddle in their African clients' domestic political affairs while claiming to provide "security."

Information sharing is a key component of USAFRICOM's campaign on the continent. It goes to the core of our value proposition to Africa's defense forces. Maritime domain awareness and geospatial intelligence enable our partners to take the fight to terrorists, smugglers, pirates, and IUU fishing operations. We shed light on Russian disinformation and the risks of partnership with unregulated Chinese industries. The information we provide trainees on human rights, civil-military relations, law of armed conflict, and civilian casualty avoidance is our best means of deterring our military partners from the pitfalls of operating on a continent as diverse and dynamic as Africa.

Africa is big, and so are its challenges. There is high potential for strategic-level national security threats to grow this year. Africa's critical minerals and maritime

shipping lanes become more important to America's technological and energy independence every day. Coups in West Africa have distracted local security forces from fighting VEOs, giving branches of al Qaeda and ISIS room to expand, modernize, and reconstitute capabilities to threaten the United States Homeland. America's fastest-growing partners for trade, space exploration, and scientific exchange are in Africa, and its young and fast-growing populations are the key to safeguarding the global rules-based order. USAFRICOM is shoulder-to-shoulder with our State Department and USAID colleagues to do America's part in helping Africa address its challenges. If we fail in Africa, our strategic competitors will move in. If we succeed, so do the peoples of Africa.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Langley. General Kurilla, you are facing numerous and complex threats, and that is probably an understatement. Is there a purely military solution to the complex threat you face?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Chairman, for that question. There is no purely military solution to all the complex threats that we face.

We need not only a whole-of-government, all the instruments of national power between diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. We need an international solution to a lot of the problems that we are seeing in the Middle East.

Chairman REED. Thank you, and how are you trying to integrate these efforts? I know you were just in the region. I know personally you are engaging. What are you doing to get the whole team on the field?

General KURILLA. What we do is, we have a lot of regional conferences that we bring people together. I spend the majority of my time either talking to my partners or over in the region, physically looking at them eye to eye.

We work together to be able to try and solve a lot of these problems. I try and look at the problems and their challenges in the region through their eyes, because they understand the region far better than we ever will, and they provide some interesting solutions and very helpful solutions on how we should approach certain aspects of that.

We do have a regional security construct that we get together and we discuss these on.

Chairman REED. The Houthis have and are continuing to disrupt significant trade and threaten our ships and international ships. It seems difficult to deter them. I know we spoke about the lack of intelligence. Could you indicate some of the obstacles you are facing in deterring the Houthis, or taking them out, if you will?

General KURILLA. Chairman Reed, our campaign in the Red Sea is to restore freedom of navigation in the Red Sea Bab al-Mandab and the Gulf of Aden. It focuses on protecting the ships that are there.

We have 24 nations that are part of the operation protecting those ships. Seventeen of them talk about it publicly, and then we also want to degrade the Houthis' offensive capability, anti-ship ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and a myriad of other systems that they are using, all provided by Iran.

But to degrade that capability means nothing if Iran is able to resupply them. So, we have an effort to deny Iran the ability to resupply them, and that is where we need more of an international and a whole-of-government approach to be able to stop Iran from resupplying the Houthis.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Kurilla. General Langley, last year you spoke about the Wagner Group's activities. I know there has been some changes in the Wagner Group. They are still a presence in the AOR I assume.

General LANGLEY. Yes, Chairman, there is.

Chairman REED. Last year, you indicated how they are really extorting these countries rather than helping them in any way, shape, or form. The question arises, what are we doing in terms of information campaign to try to inform governments and the people of the dangers that these groups, not just Wagner groups, but other entities are posing?

General LANGLEY. Chairman, thanks for that question, because I would say the Russian Federation's narrative drowned out the United States Government's in the past years. They were accelerant.

The Russian Federation, not just through Wagner, stoked a lot of the instability across the Sahel. They did this through misinformation, disinformation campaigns. So, I see how we could double down in our efforts is through our own information campaign but matched with our assurance efforts—assurance efforts across a whole-of-government.

Just not building military and security capacity, but the story needs to be told about the successes of USAID and State Department collectively and all of our operations, activities, and investments.

Chairman REED. That requires additional resources, I presume?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Chairman, it certainly does. Especially in the information operations.

Chairman REED. I also will presume that timely passage of the supplemental appropriation, as well as the regular appropriations would be critically important to your Command. Is that correct?

General LANGLEY. Absolutely, Chairman. Because, you know, as we are looking at a CR [continuing resolution], and during this period of the continued resolution, we are canceling a number of operations, activities and investments, and also my biggest capstone exercise in Morocco, African Lion, is going to have effects.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Kurilla, passing the supplemental as well as the budget is critical to Central Command?

General KURILLA. It is absolutely critical on the supplemental Chairman, \$2.4 billion, \$531 million of which is for counter unmanned aerial system defense, the very systems that are shooting down a lot of these systems. It is for our command and control systems. It is for a lot of the modernization efforts that we need.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I do appreciate the Chair and the General pointing out the importance of passage of the supplemental. I would gently make this point about the regular appropriation bills.

In the Senate, they were all reported by the Democratic Chairman and the Republican Ranking Member. For reasons not clear to many of us, the distinguished Democratic leader has chosen not to bring the bills up to the floor before the end of the fiscal year in regular order, and that is mystifying to me.

There is no one else on the face of the earth that can bring an appropriation bill to the floor other than the Democratic leader, and I certainly share the unhappiness and disappointment on both sides of the dais about the fact that we have not been able to get our appropriations done on time. General Kurilla, we would like to avoid war with Iran, correct?

General KURILLA. That is correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Now, does Iran seek war with the United States?

General KURILLA. They do not, Senator.

Senator WICKER. They would like to avoid a head to head war with the United States, and so, they use proxies. From October 2023 through January of this year, Iranian backed militia groups targeted United States Forces in Iraq and Syria more than 150 times. Iranian backed militia groups attacked our forces more than 150 times. That is correct, is it not?

General KURILLA. That is correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. We responded just eight times militarily. Is that correct, General?

General KURILLA. That number sounds correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Now, unfortunately, the proxy attacks continued and on January 28th of this year, 3 United States servicemen were killed and more than 30 were injured at Tower 22 in Jordan. That is also correct, isn't it?

General KURILLA. That is correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Okay. My understanding is that with a little bit of extra luck, the Iranian backed militias would have been able to inflict earlier casualties. Is that correct?

General KURILLA. That is correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Okay. So, before the deadly attack on Tower 22, how many instances were there in which Iranian backed attacks came close to killing United States personnel?

General KURILLA. I don't have the exact numbers, Senator, but there are several incidents where UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] coming into a base, hit another object, got caught up in a netting or other incidents where had they hit the appropriate target that they were targeting, it would have injured or killed servicemembers.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, in your military judgment to us as members of this branch of Government, what type of military action might we have taken to prevent the attack on Tower 22 and earlier ones that you just referred to?

General KURILLA. Specifically on Tower 22 and the other ones specifically, there was action taken, as we said, on that eight times that were taken. My job as the Combatant Commander is to provide options ranging from kinetic to cyber, and I balance the risk of those options against escalation when I provide those to the Secretary of Defense and the President.

Senator WICKER. Sure, and I would not ask you what advice you gave up the chain to the Commander in Chief, but what are you telling us your opinion is as to whether we should have responded more than seven times?

General KURILLA. I think the key to establishing deterrence is Iran has to understand there are consequences to their actions. I

think on the last attack that we did against 85 targets, our messaging matched our actions, and then we killed an individual name, al-Saadi.

He was the Kataib Hezbollah overall commander for Syria, and I think that sent a very strong deterrent message, and we have not had an attack in 32 days in Iraq and Syria. But I will tell you that deterrence is temporary.

Senator WICKER. General, in 1988, Operation Praying Mantis, you are familiar with that, are you not?

General KURILLA. I am, Senator.

Senator WICKER. That involved the United States destroying much of the Iranian navy. That did not lead to a war between the United States and the navy, but it pretty much put a stop to what they were doing at the time. Is that correct?

General KURILLA. That is accurate, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Do we have the capability to degrade either the Houthi maritime security or the Iranian maritime security?

General KURILLA. Well, the Houthis don't really have a maritime force. They do have explosive unmanned surface vessels and underwater unmanned vessels. We hit those when we see them. In fact, we hit three of them yesterday and destroyed them. In terms of the Iranians, we do have the capability in the Department of Defense (DOD) to do that.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and thank you, General Kurilla and General Langley for your service and for being here this morning. Thank you for the maps. I love the maps the DOD gives us. Picking up on that, I thought it would be helpful for us to have a map of AFRICOM and most of CENTCOM I think is in there, with respect to where we don't have Ambassadors.

I really appreciated both of you talking about a whole-of-government approach that you are doing in your areas of responsibility, because, as you point out, there isn't a military solution in these countries. I wanted to show this map. You can see by the pins where we do not have Ambassadors in Africa and also in Turkmenistan.

We have eight open missions in Africa, the African Union, in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the biggest most populous country in Africa, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, where Senator Wicker pointed out the Chinese have a base, Liberia, Somalia, Burundi, and Burkina Faso. We also do not have an ambassador in Turkmenistan, in CENTCOM.

How important is it for us to have Ambassadors in the countries where you are operating to help us move the missions that we have in these countries? I would ask both of you to respond to that.

General LANGLEY. Senator, it is very essential that we have, especially with our whole-of-government approach. These African partners understand that we are here to help them reach their overall national goals of stability and security.

But when we bring our assurance actions and our African campaign plan and say three D, they say, okay, then why are we important enough to have an ambassador? So, it does draw a strategic

communication that can be exploited and leveraged by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is certainly essential.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and I would point out that the PRC has Ambassadors in all of those countries. General Kurilla.

General KURILLA. Thank you, Senator. Actually, it has been a great year for CENTCOM in terms of getting Ambassadors confirmed, so I thank this body for that. In Turkmenistan, the recent Ambassador did recently leave so we actually had a very—it is critical to have an ambassador. I talked to the Ambassador from Afghanistan—from Iraq just this morning.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I would hope that our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, but particularly those Republican colleagues who have been blocking these Ambassadors, will help us get this done. It is in our National Security interest to have Ambassadors in these countries.

It helps not just with your mission, but with other efforts that Americans are making in those countries. General Kurilla, I just returned from a trip to Turkey. I met with President Erdogan.

We were the first congressional delegation to meet with President Erdogan since 2019. It seems like there may be an opening for a new—to reset somewhat our relationship with Turkey. One of the things we talked about with Syria and the potential for us to cooperate more going forward in Syria.

I recognize we have challenges in trying to do that. But as we look at the role that Iran and Russia are playing in Syria, it seems like that might be an opportunity for us. Can you talk about what we are doing currently to maintain military-to-military deconfliction relations with Turkey and how we might benefit from more cooperation there.

General KURILLA. Thank you, Senator. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate more with Turkey. As you know, that is part of the EUCOM Combatant Command. But we are in Turkey—or sorry, we are in Syria for the enduring defeat of ISIS and that is the whole reason that we are inside of there.

What I do look forward to is the ability to cooperate with Turkey in a more wholesome manner going forward on that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. What is CENTCOM doing to try and ensure the repatriation of ISIS fighters who are a real threat in that region?

General KURILLA. Senator, last week I was in Syria. I was at the Al-Hol detention—IDP camp, and I was in the Al-Roj IDP [internally displaced people] camp. We have been making quite—good progress. I think almost 7,000 have been repatriated in 2023.

When I was in there, what we try and do—the large population of those are Iraqi. We are trying to move those back into a place called Jeddah one. It is the throughput there before they go back into the communities. There has been other countries that have done a tremendous job on repatriating their people.

Kyrgyzstan is one of them, and we have gone from a high of 70,000 in Al-Hol camp, we are down to 43,000 right now. So, we are making progress. We would like to make faster progress. The other thing is the ISIS army in detention.

Over 9,000 detainees across 27 different detention facilities in Syria. We need to repatriate those detainees for either to face prosecution or reintegration and rehabilitation back into their societies.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you both very much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer—excuse me, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today. General Kurilla, in your written testimony, you stated that, “despite gains in the counter VEO fight, various groups in the central region retain the capability and will to target U.S. interests abroad in under 6 months with little or no warning.”

I remain deeply concerned about our ability to conduct over the horizon counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. We have conducted only one strike against a target in Afghanistan since that withdrawal. We don’t have reliable partners on the ground or basing agreements with neighboring countries, and we rely on Pakistan for access to Afghan airspace.

Despite these challenges, your mission of preventing ISIS-K or other terrorist groups from successfully conducting another large scale attack on the United States or our partners remain an integral part of our National Defense Strategy.

General, in your written testimony, you also stated that, “the reprioritization of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance targeting expertise and linguists creates gaps and seams in our ability to detect and disrupt plots, increasing freedom of movement for VEOs to plan a strike against the Homeland.”

That, “this could be partially mitigated by additional and alternative ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) assets and cooperation with our Central and South Asian partners.” Have you requested any additional or alternative ISR assets from your chain of command that have not been provided?

General KURILLA. Senator, I have made the assessment of order required to accomplish all of these missions, and I have passed it up to the chain of command.

Senator FISCHER. Have you been provided those assets?

General KURILLA. I don’t think any combatant commander has all of the assets that they have. As you look at the Secretary has to balance this globally across all the combatant commands. We have received some and there is some that I have asked for that I have not received.

Senator FISCHER. Have you been able to do an analysis when you do not receive those assets on negative impacts that has had on any of your forces or strategic plans?

General KURILLA. Senator, what I do is I turn the—if I don’t get these resources, we measure that in terms of risk. We look at the consequence of an action happening should we not get that resource and the probability of that action happening based on that. We look at that across all the different resources and missions that we have.

Senator FISCHER. I would hope that you would make use of your unfunded priorities list in the future so that Congress has a better idea of what you need and what we need to do in order to provide you with the resources that you and your men and women need.

General KURILLA. I look forward to doing that, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir. Also, would you—can you tell us if a mix of kinetic and directed energy weapons in CENTCOM would provide you with better options to defend against the Houthis attacks that Senator Reed was talking about and asked you about that we are seeing in the Red Sea?

General KURILLA. We do want to get—

Senator FISCHER. Senator King and I love this.

General KURILLA. We do want to get—it is a layered defense, and whether that is on a ship, or it is on a base. We do have directed energy. The Army's transformation in contact for it, they have sent us some directed energy, mobile short range air defense that we are experimenting with right now over in the Middle East.

I would love to have the Navy produce more directed energy that can shoot down a drone, so I don't have to use an expensive missile to shoot it down. But what is worse than not having that expensive missile shoot it down is hitting that \$2 billion ship with 300 sailors on it.

Senator FISCHER. Agree. I hope that we can see some further usage of those developmental systems that are out there. But as you said, your first and most important priority is to protect the men and women that are serving this country. So, thank you, sir.

Also, how is CENTCOM supporting the Israeli military as it seeks to root out Hamas? Are you—and in conjunction with that, working with Israelis, are you also working to continue to develop partnerships with our Arab allies, friends, neighbors as well?

General KURILLA. So, that is one of the biggest things that we work. I will tell you up until October 7th, we were on a trajectory that we had not seen any time in the past, and that was in developing these relationships with our Arab partners, and also with our Israeli partners there.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. Senator Manchin, please.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your service. I appreciate it very much. General Langley, if I could, on this—I hope you have been made aware of the just—I think it has just been brought out in the case of West Virginia National Guards announced yesterday a new State partnership with Capone. I don't know if that has been brought to your attention on—

General LANGLEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay. I am biased, but I confirm the National Guard of West Virginia specifically got asked to take on the partnership giving their close relationship that they have built with Qatar and Peru.

We have been working there very strategically. Part of the reason that I believe West Virginia was selected was due to the seven countries in Africa having gone to a military coup in recent years. However, the August military takeover of Gabon saw positive reactions from the public due to previous Gabonese Government's corruption.

So how productive have your previous engagements with Gabon been, and how do you plan to use the new partnership to expand

the relationship? Or how will the West Virginia National Guard fall into that?

General LANGLEY. Thanks for that question, Senator. Because I will tell you that the State Partnership Program writ large is something that is unrivaled. When I say it is unrivaled, because this is not offered by the People's Republic of China, nor is it rivaled by the Russian Federation.

So, we are continuing to engage through this authority—is going to be able to assist Gabon into being—increasing their partnership and capacity. We are going to operate within the imposition of 7008 sanctions because there was a coup.

But I think there is enough on notwithstanding authorities to increase their overall capacity in their security construct and also get them back on the road to democracy.

Senator MANCHIN. Does the military have—their military has taken over. The coup was done with the military. Do they still have control and they are running the country?

General LANGLEY. Yes, they do, and General Nguema says that he is laying out a plan. State Department, our African Bureau, Assistant Secretary Phee is going to ensure that they lay out the benchmarks that will be acceptable to the United States Government for them getting back to that end State.

Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, if I may, Iran continues to fund their terrorist organizations and all their allies that they have been working with there, and they have killed United States troops.

They are backing more recent destabilization activity with Hamas. It goes on and on. Despite a State sponsor of terror, they continue to evade sanctions. How knowledgeable have we been of the go ships and turned a blind eye to that?

General KURILLA. Senator, that is actually Department of Justice and Treasury in terms of the go ships. But in a closed session, I can tell you what I know of the number and how they operate when.

Senator MANCHIN. When we go into that session, I would love to hear more about that. Alongside of our partners and allies in the region, are you able to prevent Iranian vessels from selling sanctioned oil used to finance terrorism, or do you have to have approval from Justice to do that?

General KURILLA. The Department of Justice is the one that then does the—

Senator MANCHIN. Unless they give you the order, you don't get the order directly. You cannot stop?

General KURILLA. We don't seize those ships, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. You don't seize them or stop them?

General KURILLA. Generally, what happens is they talk to the master of the ship, and they take it to a port. But what I would highlight is that 90 percent of that oil is going to China. So, China is funding that, and the very dollars are then going out to fund Iran's malign activity through their proxy network.

Senator MANCHIN. It is a lose, lose proposition for the United States of America and all of our allies and freedom loving countries around the world to allow what is happening to happen.

Putting that oil into that market, such as that, makes it much more challenging and difficult for us, and just makes no sense at all. Are you worried about the delays and theft in equipment deliveries from the Kurds in both Syria and Iraq?

General KURILLA. The vast, vast majority of all the equipment makes it up to the Kurdistan Region and the Peshmerga. There has been some delays of some of that equipment in Baghdad as they work through some of their own process.

Senator MANCHIN. You have to close that loophole. I mean—

General KURILLA. I am sorry?

Senator MANCHIN. Were you able to stop—are we able to stop that from happening?

General KURILLA. What we do is, we work with the government in Baghdad to be able to make sure that that equipment makes it up to the Peshmerga.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Manchin. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, General Langley, welcome. Thank you for your service and the men and women who serve in your commands.

General Kurilla, last year at the same hearing you said that Iran was undeterred. You have touched on this a couple of times today. What is your current assessment? Iran deterred or not deterred?

General KURILLA. I would tell you Iran is undeterred in support to the Houthis. They are undeterred in their support to Hezbollah, their support to Hamas, to some more support into the West Bank.

They are deterred right now in Iraq and Syria and their support to the Iranian aligned militia groups, but not—in terms of attacks, but not necessarily in terms of their funding and equipping.

Senator COTTON. Okay. I think in response to Senator Wicker, you said there hasn't been an attack in Iraq and Syria in 32 days?

General KURILLA. Thirty-two days.

Senator COTTON. That is what you judged, they are deterred?

General KURILLA. I also base it—based on the intelligence that I read.

Senator COTTON. Okay. But you also used the term temporary. That is—

General KURILLA. Deterrence is always temporary.

Senator COTTON. Okay. But they are still training and equipping those militias and other proxies in Iraq and Syria?

General KURILLA. One hundred percent.

Senator COTTON. If you raise and train a Pitbull and then you let it off the chain in the neighborhood, do you think you are responsible for the actions of the Pitbull?

General KURILLA. Senator, I do.

Senator COTTON. Okay, thank you. Talking about those attacks, Senator Wicker asked you how many occurred since October 7th? What was that number?

General KURILLA. Number of attacks in Iraq and Syria or where?

Senator COTTON. I think he asked Iraq and Syria.

General KURILLA. Iraq and Syria is approximately 175.

Senator COTTON. Okay.

General KURILLA. One hundred and seventy-three.

Senator COTTON. How many times since October 7th have we struck Iran proxy positions in Iraq and Syria?

General KURILLA. I believe it is eight.

Senator COTTON. That doesn't seem like a very good balance, 173 to 8. What is up with that?

General KURILLA. I think the—when we strike, we are hitting it. On the last strike that we did, we hit 85 targets, and we killed them, and we waited. Then we killed their top commander for Syria, for Kataib Hezbollah.

Senator COTTON. Unfortunately, though it wasn't just attacks on October 7th and since. Do you know the number of attacks from January 20th, 2021, to last October 7th?

General KURILLA. I don't have the number, but it is up there, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Would it surprise you that Secretary Austin testified to this Committee last year that it was 83 attacks?

General KURILLA. That would not surprise me.

Senator COTTON. How many retaliatory strikes had we launched in those 2 years and 9 months?

General KURILLA. I don't have the exact number at the tip of my fingers.

Senator COTTON. He testified that it was four. Would that surprise you?

General KURILLA. No, that would not surprise me.

Senator COTTON. Again, not a very good balance, if you ask me. Okay, so you said they are not deterred with Houthis, which I think we can see obviously since the Houthis keep sinking ships and killing people every day in our global chokepoint that accounts for one-sixth of the world economy. Have you offered strike options against the Houthis that go beyond the current strikes that have occurred?

General KURILLA. I provide options, a wide variety of options, everything from cyber to kinetic, and with the risk of escalation based on those.

Senator COTTON. Can you tell me a little bit about the campaign to compel?

General KURILLA. The campaign to compel is when we wrote back in October, and that is to compel Iran to cease their support and attacks through their proxies. It is to hold Iran accountable for those.

Senator COTTON. Are you currently implementing that campaign?

General KURILLA. We are implementing portions of that campaign, but it requires a whole-of-government. There is no just big military and our instruments of national power beating diplomatic information, military and economic.

Senator COTTON. Okay. You testified or you stated that one of your priorities is limiting Iranian resupply of the Houthis. What about striking their indigenous manufacturing capabilities that Iran has built up substantially over the years?

General KURILLA. Where—internal to Iran?

Senator COTTON. No, in Yemen. Yemen is making a lot of its own drones and—

General KURILLA. Absolutely, Senator, and I can talk to you in a closed session some of the challenges with that.

Senator COTTON. Those are fake sites, aren't they?

General KURILLA. They are, if you know where they are.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Do you think it is a good idea to remove the Houthis from the Foreign Terrorist Organization list in February 2021?

General KURILLA. That was a policy decision, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Do you think that embolden the Houthis or encouraged them to think they could get away with this kind of action?

General KURILLA. I am not certain how much that changed their current action.

Senator COTTON. Okay. They were recently designated, specially designated a global terrorist organization, which is a pale simulacrum of being designated a foreign terrorist organization. That doesn't seem to have changed their calculus, does it?

General KURILLA. It does not.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. One final followup on a statement you made earlier. You said, and this is close to a direct quote, that we could see attacks against United States or Western interests abroad with little to no warning in as little as 6 months. Are you speaking there about ISIS and al Qaeda from Afghanistan?

General KURILLA. ISIS-Khorasan specifically, and also out of Syria, which they are trying to factor into predominantly European countries.

Senator COTTON. So, ISIS out of either Afghanistan or Syria, attacks against United States interests and Western interests abroad in as little as 6 months. Now abroad can mean a lot of things. Abroad could mean our embassy in Tajikistan. It could also mean Western Europe or North America. Can you be more specific?

General KURILLA. Europe and Eurasia.

Senator COTTON. Okay. What is the timeline you foresee in which those terrorist organizations could launch an attack with little to no warning against the American Homeland?

General KURILLA. I think it is that a lot more difficult for them to be able to do that and requires substantially more resources.

Senator COTTON. Okay, so 6 months anywhere across Eurasia and indeterminate time in North America?

General KURILLA. Yes.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Duckworth, please.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I slid right in there, didn't I, John?

[Laughter.]

Senator DUCKWORTH. Good morning, General Kurilla, General Langley. Thank you for appearing today. I have the honor of being a Member of both the Senate Armed Services and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

Because of this, I have a responsibility in ensuring strong inter-agency coordination to address pressing National Security challenges. We continue to see increasing PRC investments in the

CENTCOM and AFRICOM AORs [area of responsibility] that involve economic, diplomatic, and military activity.

This poses a threat to our National Security, requiring strategic coordination across the interagency. So, we must also leverage our allies and partners to counter this PRC activity. General Kurilla, General Langley, can you explain the importance of DOD working across the interagency, especially with the State Department and USAID, to counter malign PRC activity in your AORs, and how can Congress help you?

General LANGLEY. Thanks for the question, Senator. Collectively at our headquarters, we have representation across the interagency and also USAID and Department of State.

Collectively, when we campaign with our African partners, we take this into effect. We do this to counter, one, the information space. There is a number of things by Russia and China that are pushing and shaping on to our African partners, especially across our society, that changes ways in a departure away from international norms.

So, what we are doing is, with activities and investments across USAID and the State Department to employ type of efforts that are unmatched, such as in global health. You know, just strategic health and is unmatched, but what—just one thing.

When I was with, Minister Counselor Mark Berry, we went to Zambia. We went to Zambia because we knew that they had already put out information about the helicopters that we delivered there for crisis response were all about fighting a war.

That was a skewed message, but what it was—I was with, Minister Counselor Berry, and she used to say, tell what the numbers for PEPFAR [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief] are about. We saved 25 million lives. We increased the life expectancy by 20 years when we started this 20 years ago with President Bush.

This was—and others that supported this Congress's supporting funding of PEPFAR. That is something that is unmatched by our partners, by our competitors.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

General KURILLA. Thank you, Senator. Very similar in that we also have interagency representation across all of CENTCOM. Really it takes a whole-of-government approach to solve all of the challenges we have in the region.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, and General Kurilla, the PRC has continued to target the United States relationship with our long standing allies. How can we strengthen our military—our mil-to-mil engagement with our partners in the CENTCOM AOR?

General KURILLA. One of the challenges we have sometimes is the bureaucratic process of our foreign military sales, which goes across all of our elements of the Government. What China does is they come in and they provide basically like Amazon, anything in the catalog, express shipping.

They give them funding, which they don't know there is a little bit of a catch sometimes in their funding with no end user agreement. The time it takes for us sometimes to bring foreign military sales to actually deliver is a challenge for some of our partners because they have real security needs.

So, anything that we can do, and there are elements in the Department of Defense, State, Congress, and industry, to be able to get that to happen faster would be helpful.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Since October 2023, there has been a significant increase of missile and drone attacks in the CENTCOM AOR, leading to the tragic death of three servicemembers in Jordan back in January.

I worked with my colleagues to add a provision to the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would provide an assessment of the Iraqi security forces, including the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, air and missile defense capabilities, and would provide a training and equip plan. Kurdistan has been targeted with missiles and drone attacks for hosting United States Military Forces.

That plan was due February 1st. The required implementation timeline for the training is 90 days after the development of that plan. General Kurilla, can you provide my office an update on the status of this training plan and what you are doing to ensure its full implementation within the required timeline, or are you going to miss the timelines?

General KURILLA. Senator, I will get that to you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, General. How is CENTCOM working to ensure that it has an integrated air and missile defense system to counter the increased threats posed to U.S. servicemembers in the region?

General KURILLA. That is one of our top things that we are working on, Senator, through our regional partners. One of the first things that we are trying to do is come up with a common air picture.

You have to be able to see the threat before you can defeat it, and where there is many elements that we are doing in terms of radar sharing agreements with a lot of our regional partners.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Duckworth. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. First off, thanks to both of you for being here. Thank you for your service and the men and women that serve with you. Thank you for what you do. First, General Kurilla, can you talk about, what is the cause for all these assets in the Red Sea area—why are you there?

General KURILLA. So, the U.S. economy relies on open sea lanes. Right now, when you look at the Red Sea, 30 percent of all container traffic travels through there. 12 to 15 percent of the entire global economy flows through there. By our National Security strategy, we will not allow a State or non-State actor to affect the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, or the Suez Canal.

Senator SCOTT. How many of those container ships come to states?

General KURILLA. I can't give you the exact number of those container ships, but right now what we are seeing is a diversion of not going through the Red Sea.

For instance, if you are talking oil that comes through, we have seen a diversion of that, and it goes around the Cape of Good Hope.

What that is going to do is bring products late to need, to market, and price increases as well.

Senator SCOTT. Do you have a feel for how much money we are spending right now with all the assets we have added since the Houthis started shooting at us?

General KURILLA. I don't have an exact number for you, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. Do you have any feel for how much they are spending?

General KURILLA. I don't have an exact number for you, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. So, the attack on the ship that killed the Filipinos, how is that—how is that going to change anything?

General KURILLA. In what sense, Senator?

Senator SCOTT. Are going to get more international support or—are you getting that much international support or is this really borne by the American taxpayer?

General KURILLA. There's 24 countries right now that are providing support in Operation Prosperity Guardian. The first ship that responded to that was an Indian ship, an Indian destroyer.

There was an Iranian ship 30 nautical miles away from that that sat and watched. Another thing I have never seen is a Chinese ship respond to a safety of life.

All these ships that we have out there from all these 24 different nations, whether it is ships or servicemembers participating in this, we work together to be able to defend those ships or respond.

Senator SCOTT. Do you have any feel for what percentage of the cost is being borne by our military versus the Indian military, the British, anybody else?

General KURILLA. I am assuming that the cost of a ship is roughly the same to operate. So, I would have to look at that by the number of ships that are out there. We see several Indian ships that are out there right now. There are several European ships that are out there as well.

Senator SCOTT. So, what we have done so far, do you feel like—it is not stopping anything, right? The Houthis haven't changed.

General KURILLA. So, if we look at the campaign of establishing freedom of navigation, protect those ships and we protect—our United States ships, we are escorting, to degrade Houthi offensive capability. One of the challenges is determining the exact number of what they had to start with, and I can talk about that in a closed session.

Then really, the most important thing is to deny their ability to resupply from Iran. The Houthis are not building—they are putting it all together and assembling, but they don't create inertial navigation systems.

They don't create medium range ballistic missile engines. They don't create the stage separations on these medium range ballistic missiles or the anti-ship cruise missiles.

Senator SCOTT. Do you know of any products that we would miss if the Red Sea was—there was no travel through the Red Sea?

General KURILLA. I think you would have a lot more expensive products and it would affect the global economy.

Senator SCOTT. Do you have any examples?

General KURILLA. I think the stuff that flows through the Red Sea in terms of products. I think you would see products late to

need. You also have shipping containers that—there will be a shortage. The market will adjust. Free markets adjust. What you will see is a higher price of commodities.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. Thank you. General Langley, can you talk about why we have—why we care about what is happening in Africa right now. I mean, can you tell the American taxpayer, why are we there? Why are we spending the money we are spending there?

General LANGLEY. Thanks for the question, Senator. For access and influence. I would say that a number of countries are at the tipping point of actually being captured by the Russian Federation, as they are spreading some of their false narratives across Libya.

From a strategic answer of peace, access, influence across the whole Maghreb, that is NATO's Southern flank. We need to be able to maintain access and influence across the Maghreb from Morocco all the way to Libya.

The PRC and Russia are also remaining exploitative where possible and coercive when necessary. They want that ground. They want power projection capabilities. So, for the most part, the rest of the continent is also for mining concessions, whether it be gold or rare earth minerals.

Both of them have a long range plan, but I think at the accelerated pace, a Russian Federation is really trying to take over Central Africa as well as the Sahel.

Senator SCOTT. Thanks both of you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your service and all the men and women who serve under your command. I recently visited the region, particularly our base in Jordan, the MSAB [Muwaffaq Salti Air Base] base jointly manned by our Air Force and Armed Services and the Jordanians.

I also read Tom Friedman's piece in the New York Times detailing his travels with you, General Kurilla, through Western Jordan and Syria. What I saw there and heard from our commanders was about the small, nimble Iranian drones, Shahed 101s, that were apparently used in the attack that killed three of his service people, and the potential for those small, cheap drones to swarm and to strike targets because of their number and because of the difficulty of detecting them.

They fly low and they are slow. We have apparently a counter weapon called the Coyote, which has been produced apparently in limited numbers. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the use of these small drones in that setting and elsewhere in the region where our forces and our allies forces may be at risk because of those small, inexpensive Iranian drones like the Shaheds that are being shipped all over, and what we can do to counter that threat.

General KURILLA. Thanks, Senator. Appreciate that. That is one of the top threats because it is inexpensive. It is a precision guided weapon. Iran produces some that can go over 2,000 km with those weapon systems.

The bigger concern is if you start talking about swarms. So, we need to continue to invest in things like high powered microwave to be able to counter a drone swarm that is coming at you. I mean,

in a classified setting, I can talk about some of the activities also that we can do against them.

But when you look at things like the Coyote missile has been very effective. I mean, nothing is 100 percent, and at some point the law of statistics will come up because you have to have a layered defense. Certain systems cost more than others. What we want to get to also is directed energy where it costs \$1 or \$2 a round.

We do have those right now in the Middle East that the Army has provided us. What we are going to do is, they are transforming in contact and be able to provide that feedback back to them of what is working well.

What I asked the Chief of the Army is, don't give me something to replace it. Give me something to augment and I will tell you how it works, because it is a pretty rough and harsh environment to operate there.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Do you think that there are sufficient countermeasures underway right now, or should we be focusing more resources to develop?

General KURILLA. One of the things I would ask is to pass the supplemental, because I have \$531 million in counter UAS [unmanned aircraft system] technology that I need to get forward into the theater that will save lives. There is the technology. There are things out there. We have to continue to experiment.

We are experimenting right now with a system that actually can go after both UAVs and land attack cruise missiles, because it can go 300 knots. But if you go out there and you decide not to engage, you can bring it back and have it land. What we have to get better at is the cost curve on that, to get those systems to be less expensive.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. In response to some of my colleagues' questions about Iranian oil, you have rightly observed that it is not simply or solely a military problem. Obviously, a lot of it is sold to China. So, it is an export control or sanctions issue. But at the same time, this regime employs a fleet of rogue vessels that use a myriad of evasive technologies.

Those practices include, for example, turning off GPS [Global Positioning System] trackers before docking in Iran, at sea transfers of oil between tankers, repainting vessels mid journey, labeling oil as different types of fuels.

I think that clamping down on these practices to intercept the shipments requires investment of American military resources, correct me if I am wrong. Do you think we have invested enough?

General KURILLA. So right now, we do not do any of the seizure of any of that oil. It is generally done by the Departments of Justice and Treasury.

But Justice then usually contacts the master of that ship and tells that ship that they are carrying—if it is on a larger commercial ship, they tell them they are carrying sanctioned Iranian oil. But then there is this whole ghost fleet that you mentioned that is out there, and we can talk about that, I think, best in a closed session.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Wouldn't our interceptions be more effective if it were more than just the Department of Justice?

I worked for the Department of Justice as a prosecutor. I have great faith in the lawyers there. But they are not military people. I don't know how much they understand the logistics or the force requirements.

General KURILLA. Senator, if I was given that mission and the appropriate resources to accomplish it, I am certain that we could accomplish the task given to us.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Thank you both again for your service. Thanks.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Good morning. How are you? Commander Langley, you stated that you seamlessly integrated CENTCOM regarding activity with the Red Sea. What type of support are you giving them? Would you support an increase if the activity continued to increase?

General LANGLEY. Senator, I can get more explicit in closed session, but I can tell you both myself and General Kurilla can always use more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets.

That is something that is in high demand globally, with the challenges and the emergent threats are across the globe. That is just one of the areas that would actually help us in protecting the force, and also indications and warnings against attacks on America.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. China has been investing in economic infrastructure developments in Africa since the 1990s. What are the operational advantages that China has over our efforts in Africa, and what are we doing to help out on that?

General LANGLEY. So, Senator, right now, China has a plan, a long range plan, but they are coming in with their Belt and Road initiatives. I think they do have global aspirations for a security construct to get a decisive advantage over the United States.

We need activities and investments to deter that, especially engaging with our partners, our African partners, telling them to ensure that they are not militarized. This takes information campaign that is successful, but also assurance actions of building partnership capacity where they won't need China and their false offerings of security construct.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General Kurilla, I feel your pain on needing more money. We are all—most of us for the Israeli supplemental. I know we have a disagreement on all of it up here, but we surely want to help. I am going ask you, you might not want to answer this one, ask about your rules of engagement for our military forces. They appear to be very lax. What is your thoughts on that?

General KURILLA. Senator, in terms of where or what?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Engagement with—

General KURILLA. The Houthis?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Anybody that attacks our Forces in the Middle East.

General KURILLA. Senator, when I look at the Houthis, for instance, I think in the last 72 hours we have destroyed under my authorities and really all the way down to the individual self-defense authorities, we have destroyed probably 8 anti-ship missiles,

shot down one way attack UAS explosive, unmanned surface vessels.

They have all the authority they need to protect themselves. The other strikes that we do, those are Presidentially approved strikes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Any other bases in the Middle East we have different rules of engagement?

General KURILLA. The rules of engagement—everyone has the right to self-defense. Those are the strikes that we take. Other than that, those are Presidentially approved strikes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. You know, most of us up here, we don't really get it when it comes to this Administration's support of Iran.

Seems like we are fighting on both sides of the coin here. I have talked with a lot of people that have been in the fight for Israel, been in Gaza, and it is horrific. We all know that. But I think they need to focus more on survival than they do winning, because there is going to be a gang up here and, you know, we need to fund this fight. There is no doubt about it.

So, and I don't think either—and I am going to ask you to comment on this. This is not an Israel problem when it comes to Palestine, this is an Arab problem. Arabs need to take care of their business over there. If they want to help the people of Palestine, they can help them. They need to get them out.

I totally agree with the problem of genocide. That is all the questions I have, but I have a few in classified. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning. General Kurilla, one of my nightmares is terrorists getting hold of nuclear weapons. Deterrence has been our strategy for 80 years and it has worked, but it doesn't work if somebody doesn't have a capital city or care about dying.

What are we—share some thoughts. I mean that is one of the things that worries me about Iran moving toward a nuclear weapon, North Korea, countries that may not be as responsible as others in regards to the security of their nuclear weapons. Thoughts on that issue?

General KURILLA. Senator, I will just speak for CENTCOM in terms of Iran. As you know, Iran has kind of a three pronged approach. One is to remain a nuclear threshold country. They do not have a nuclear weapon right now and I don't believe they have made the decision to go to a nuclear weapon.

There are advanced standoff weapons and then use of their proxies. They have, and this is open source and unclassified, their production of 20 percent enriched uranium has increased by 64 percent. Their production of 60 percent highly enriched uranium has gone up 39 percent over the last year.

That is all creating the highly enriched uranium, but it is not the nuclear weapon. You would then have to weaponize that. But is the assessment that they could create enough highly enriched uranium, i.e. 90 percent, in a matter of weeks of approximately three systems, and then they would have to weaponize that going forward.

Senator KING. Then the question if they go—if they take those steps, what about Hezbollah, Hamas? I mean, that is—the danger

that I am worried about is, Iran has to worry about Tehran and deterrence is a factor. If it gets into the hands of a terrorist, that is—then deterrence doesn't work.

General KURILLA. That is a great concern. But a nuclear armed Iran would change the Middle East overnight and forever.

Senator KING. It would probably lead to nuclearization of other neighboring states.

General KURILLA. One hundred percent.

Senator KING. Of course, one of the issues in Gaza right now is humanitarian aid. Very complicated, difficult to get in, checkpoints, trucks lined up. What about the option of seaborne humanitarian aid? Also, Admiral Stavridis suggested a hospital ship coming to Gaza to provide medical care, which would avoid some of these problems of Hamas being embedded underneath hospitals.

General KURILLA. Senator, I was in the region last week. I will tell you the suffering in Gaza is significant, the human suffering. I was in Al Arish in the Rafah gate. I saw 2,500 trucks loaded with humanitarian aid waiting to go in.

The challenge is the security and distribution internal to Gaza. Just this morning, about several hours ago, we did another third drop to the Northern part of Gaza. That is where the human suffering is the greatest. That is North of the Wadi Gaza. That is an area that kind of cuts the Gaza in half.

There is about 300,000 individuals that live there. There used to be 1.4 million. There is no Israeli presence in the North. They have predominantly defeated that by getting the distribution of the aid up to there.

So, I have also stood at the Arabs Crossing last week, and I was down at the central crossing into Gaza to look at options of how do we increase the land based trucks going into there, then can get into the North.

Then we have provided options of a maritime based option to be able to bring humanitarian aid into Gaza as well.

Senator KING. A hospital ship would be an option?

General KURILLA. I mean, there are obviously many wounded. If that is a direction, I know that there is a hospital ship on the East Coast. If I was given that, I would figure out the best way to utilize that.

Senator KING. Let's move to Yemen for a minute. I have been surprised, frankly, that once identified that Yemen was firing these missiles into the Red Sea, that it has taken so long to disable them, and I understand they are continuing to make those kind of attacks.

First question is, why is it taking so long? I thought we had fantastic intelligence and targeting ability. How come a small country like Yemen is still at it?

General KURILLA. So, what I would tell you, the Houthis, well they are a tribal force up in the Northwest of Yemen, they are fighting with the most advanced weapons that Iran has, and they are being provided by Iran.

So, we are basically fighting the Iranian weapons through the hands of the Houthis. In the closed session I will go into great detail the challenges right now internal to targeting inside of Yemen.

Senator KING. Well, I think Senator Fischer mentioned this, but directed energy—this is a place where directed energy would really pay off, because those missiles that we are firing to knock down their relatively inexpensive missiles are \$2, \$3, \$4, \$5 million a pop. Directed energy is about \$0.50. So, I think that is something—I hope that there can be an acceleration of the development of that capacity.

General KURILLA. I am 100 percent supportive of that, Senator.

Senator KING. When he is 100 percent supportive of something I suggest, I will—that is a good time to stop. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The United States has put a number of rules in place to ensure that we don't inadvertently contribute to civilian casualties. But rules on the books are not enough.

I want to make sure that these rules work and that our military leadership is putting the protection of civilians at the forefront. Defense Secretary Austin has said preventing civilian harm is, "a moral and strategic imperative."

During your confirmation hearing, General Kurilla, you agreed, and you said you would work to improve those processes. The DOD has taken an important step in that direction when it issued the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Instruction last December to provide guidance on how the Department should prevent and respond to civilian harm, and I want to thank you for that.

Among other things, the guidance directs the Department to identify whether the partners and allies we provide weapons to will mitigate civilian harm. Now, General Kurilla, can we get an accurate picture of whether U.S. arms transfers contribute to civilian harm if we don't collect information about how these weapons are actually used?

General KURILLA. Yes. So, Senator, I am not involved in the advising of the ground operation—

Senator WARREN. I understand that. I understand. But do you need information about how the weapons are used to figure out if the rules are effective?

General KURILLA. To be able to answer that last question, we would.

Senator WARREN. Yes. All right. It would seem to me to be crucial, but the Government Accountability Office identified significant gaps in our oversight about how the weapons are used, particularly in Yemen.

In response, the Department of State established a civilian harm incidence response guidance to investigate, and it created an internal data base to track reports of partner governments suspected of using U.S. weapons against civilians.

Yet, the Department of Defense has not created a similar process or committed to work with the State Department on its efforts to get the information needed for civilian harm. General Kurilla, why is that? Why wouldn't DOD want the information on whether our partners are using U.S. weapons against civilian populations?

General KURILLA. I can't speak for why the Department of Defense does not have that, Senator.

Senator WARREN. But I take it you would like to see it?

General KURILLA. I think any time we can do anything to do civilian harm mitigation—so once, as you mentioned, we stood up our own civilian harm mitigation response team. We have hired 9 of the 10 individuals—

Senator WARREN. I am grateful for that. I am just asking about getting the data. More data helps us make more and better decisions.

General KURILLA. Better data always does. I will tell you it will be difficult data to get though.

Senator WARREN. Okay. I understand that but the State Department is committed to that. I would like to see DOD committed as well. Now, another tool that we have for preventing civilian harm is Leahy Laws, which require DOD and State to vet foreign forces for any gross violations of human rights before providing U.S. funded assistance.

This vetting process is a cornerstone of our human rights policy, and it is supposed to ensure that we don't contribute to human rights abuses abroad. However, DOD seems to find ways around it.

I just want to take one example. General Langley, should the U.S. provide assistance to a military that is notorious for targeting civilians, or that recently overthrew its democratically elected government?

General LANGLEY. Senator, no.

Senator WARREN. No. Good. I like that answer. That is exactly right. Yet, the U.S. military's exercises last year and planned exercises for this year included Mali and Sudan, where that has occurred.

DOD claims that under the Leahy Law, it does not need to fit that foreign forces for human rights abuses when it engages in activities such as joint military exercises because DOD does not technically categorize that help as assistance.

Now, when Secretary—when Senator Cardin and I found out about this practice, we sent a letter to DOD raising our concerns, and I am glad that DOD stopped its exercise plans in Mali and Sudan. But we need to proactively close this gap and protect civilians going forward. The protections that we have for civilians, both in the statute and in guidance can't just be pieces of paper.

They need to have a real impact. We need to strengthen our tools for preventing civilian harm and I look forward to working with the Committee and with you to do that. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, welcome and thank you for your service. General Langley, you briefly mentioned earlier the State Partnership Program that the National Guard has and how they work with our global allies and partners to make sure we have stronger relationships between them.

As part of the State partnership with Liberia, the Michigan National Guard engineers have trained and they built critical military infrastructure, as well as help to combat infectious diseases in Liberia. That has gone through some significant challenges, as you know, in years past.

These partnerships advance State partnership priorities as well as objectives of combatant commands, including AFRICOM. So, my question for you, General, is if you would expand before this Committee on your earlier comments about the strategic importance of the National Guard State Partnership Program and your command, and specifically, how have Liberia and other countries benefited from this ongoing relationship with the Guard, and how do you see that developing in the future?

General LANGLEY. Senator, thanks for that question because what myself and General Hokanson have been laying out into the rest of the decade is a plan that will get more State partner programs across the continent.

Here is how it helps. In our overall competition with the PRC and Russian Federation, they can't match that. The way we build and partner with our countries—build with our African partners, builds capacity and capabilities, and also gives them an appreciation for the rule of law, law of armed conflict in working with our partners. It makes them even more resilient in getting into their own civil society and closer to closing the gap between civ-mil, some of the drivers of instability.

Partnering with it—just California and Nigeria, and others, have been the bedrock of stabilizing and increasing capability in our African partners. That is unmatched by our competitors.

Senator PETERS. That is great to hear. Great. Thank you, General. General Kurilla, CENTCOM has become a proving ground, I think, for new operational concepts, for technologies, weapon systems as well as formations.

Whether it is deterring the Houthi attacks that were out of Yemen, or countering Iranian proxies, CENTCOM provides a valuable operational environment for experimenting with some cutting edge innovations.

What is, without question, as realistic and as relevant as you can possibly get, CENTCOM Task Forces 39, 59, and 99 are combining AI, they are combining that with unmanned systems, as well as some commercial technologies that clearly will give the DOD an edge in future conflicts.

My question for you, sir, is what lessons learned are you sharing with other combatant commands as they stand up similar task forces, and how are you helping to accelerate the adoption of these commercial technologies into the broader DOD mission?

General KURILLA. Thank you, Senator. Appreciate that. When I look at something like Task Force 39, what we are doing with robotic logistics, or what they are doing, they have just stood up an additive manufacturing 3D printing center in the CENTCOM AOR, and how we are going to then use that to distribute so I don't have to do a logistical convoy to get parts out somewhere when I can actually build those parts right onsite.

They don't have to wait for those parts to come. Or Task Force 59, which right now we have dozens of unmanned surface vessels out on the ocean right now, providing indications and warnings in real time back to our maritime operations center to help feed that intelligence picture.

What we can do in the central region sometimes—right now, if you were to put some of the systems out in the middle of the South

China Sea, they might not last very long right now, where we can put those out and be able to learn and experiment and then figure out how best to use them in all the combatant commands, and we do share our lessons learned.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you, General. General Langley, African military leaders are enrolled, to my understanding, in many of China's 34 military officer academic institutions and their associated noncommissioned officer schools.

In fact, I think the PLA annually educates roughly 2,000 African military leaders, currently. I am certainly troubled by that and concerned that these training efforts are clearly part of the PLA's broader efforts to have control or have significant influence in Africa.

So, my question for you is, how is AFRICOM establishing military academic partnerships with African nations to counter China's efforts in this area?

General LANGLEY. Senator, thanks for that question, because that leads into my request for more international military and education training for our African partners. They treasure our values.

They acknowledge and best practices of a civilian led military. What we offer in our value proposition is why they keep asking me for more seats. Morocco, I was there a few weeks ago and talked to their higher learning of their command and staff and top level schools.

They said, we are replicating what you guys do in the United States because they keep asking us for more seats, because the United States doesn't offer enough. That is also competing with the Russian Federation.

They are beating us 12 to 1, Senator. Well, so 12 to 1, and then all the statistics you just stated there and the PRC trying to get influence. They are trying to unseat us as a security answer of building capacity and capability to meet all the threats these African countries have to endure.

Senator PETERS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, I want to go into our approach toward Iran and the region. Thomas Friedman, a very astute observer and a New York Times piece entitled, A Titanic Geopolitical Struggle Is Underway. Mr. Chairman, I would like to put this in the record. This Thomas Friedman article.

[The information referred to follows:]

OPINION

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

A Titanic Geopolitical Struggle Is Underway

Jan. 25, 2024

By [Thomas L. Friedman](#)

Opinion Columnist

This article has been updated to reflect new developments.

There are many ways to explain the two biggest conflicts in the world today, but my own shorthand has been that Ukraine wants to join the West and Israel wants to join the Arab East — and Russia, with Iran's help, is trying to stop the first, and Iran and Hamas are trying to stop the second.

While the two battlefronts may look very different, they actually have a lot in common. They reflect a titanic geopolitical struggle between two opposing networks of nations and nonstate actors over whose values and interests will dominate our post-post-Cold War world — following the relatively stable Pax Americana/globalization era that was ushered in by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet bloc, America's chief Cold War rival.

Yes, this is no ordinary geopolitical moment.

On one side is the Resistance Network, dedicated to preserving closed, autocratic systems where the past buries the future. On the other side is the Inclusion Network, trying to forge more open, connected, pluralizing systems where the future buries the past. Who wins the struggles between these two networks will determine a lot about the dominant character of this post-post-Cold War epoch.

What's scary is that this clash is widening. On Sunday we saw Iran-backed militiamen from the Resistance Network launch a brazen drone attack on a U.S. military base in Jordan, part of the Inclusion Network, [killing three U.S. service members](#) and injuring 25 others.

(And in case you're keeping score at home, China under President Xi Jinping straddles the two networks, along with much of what's come to be called the global south. Their hearts, and often pocketbooks, are with the Resisters but their heads are with the Includers.)

Ukraine is trying to break away from the choking Russian sphere of influence to become part of the European Union. Vladimir Putin is trying to block it, because he knows that if Slavic Ukraine — with its vast engineering talent, land army and agricultural breadbasket — joins the European web, his thieving Slavic autocracy will be more isolated and delegitimized than ever. Putin will not be easily defeated, though, especially with the help of arms from his network allies Iran and North Korea, and passive support from China, Belarus and many members of the global south hungry for his cheap oil.

Israel was trying to forge a normalized relationship with Saudi Arabia, which is the gateway to the many Arab Middle East states and Muslim states in South Asia with whom Israel still does not have relations. But it's not only Israelis who wanted to see El Al planes and Israeli technologists landing in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia, under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, itself aspires to become a giant hub of economic relations that would tie Asia, Africa, Europe, the Arab world — and Israel — into a

network centered in Saudi Arabia. His vision is a kind of European Union of the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia playing the anchor the way Germany does with the real E.U.

Iran and Hamas want to stop this for joint and separate reasons. Jointly, Hamas and Iran knew that if Israel cemented ties with a newly modernizing Saudi Arabia — on top of Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain under the Abraham Accords — the balance of power between the secularizing, pluralizing, more market-driven network in the region and the more closed-off, anti-pluralizing, political-Islam-inspired network could tip decisively against both Iran and Hamas, isolating them both.

Hamas also does not want to see Israel normalize relations with Saudi Arabia without having to make a single concession to Palestinians in terms of their own aspirations for statehood. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel believed it would be the crowning achievement of his career — and prove all his critics wrong — if he could seal open diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam's holiest sites, without conceding one iota to the Palestinians. This was a reckless goal — Netanyahu should have offered the Palestinians at least some pathway for greater self-rule, if only to make it all easier for Saudi Arabia to sell at home — and Israel is now paying the price. Saudi Arabia says it is still open to normalizing with Israel, [but only if Israel gives a firm commitment now](#) for an eventual two-state solution.

So don't let anyone tell you that the wars in Ukraine and Gaza do not matter or are disconnected — or are none of America's business.

Sign up for the Opinion Today newsletter Get expert analysis of the news and a guide to the big ideas shaping the world every weekday morning. [Get it sent to your inbox.](#)

These wars very much are our business — and now clearly inescapable, since we're deeply entwined in both conflicts. What's crucial to keep in mind about America — as the leader of the Inclusion Network — is that right now we're fighting the war in Ukraine on our terms, but we're fighting the war in the Middle East on Iran's terms.

How so?

In the Ukraine-Russia war, the Ukrainian Army and people are bearing the full brunt of the conflict — and are ready to continue doing so. All they are asking the United States and its allies for are advanced weapons and financial help. How could we possibly be balking? For tens of billions of dollars, and not a single American soldier killed, Ukraine has inflicted a profound setback to Putin's army that makes it much less dangerous to the West and to Kyiv. It's the greatest bargain NATO ever got.

[CNN](#) recently described, per a source familiar with it, a declassified U.S. intelligence assessment provided to Congress saying that Russia had lost 87 percent of its preinvasion active-duty ground troops and two-thirds of its tanks that it had prior to its invasion of Ukraine. Putin can still inflict a lot of damage on Ukraine with missiles, but his dream of occupying the whole country and using it as a launching pad to threaten the Inclusion Network — particularly the NATO-protected European Union — is now out of reach. Thank you, Kyiv.

At a breakfast with NATO leaders devoted to the Ukraine issue at Davos this year, Canada's deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, noted that it is we, the West, who should be thanking the Ukrainians, not forcing them to beg us for more weapons.

She also [eloquently formulated](#) the stakes: "What Putin wants is to transform the world order" that evolved since World War II and the post-Cold War — where "the competition between nations was about who can be richer and who can help their people prosper the most. ... Putin hates that world because he loses in that world — his system is a loser in a peaceful, global, wealth-enhancing

paradigm. And so what he wants is to move us back to dog-eat-dog, to a 19th-century, great power competition, because he thinks he can, if not win, be more effective there. ... Let's not think that this is a Ukrainian problem; this is a problem for us all."

She is exactly right.

The struggle in the Middle East has different roots, and fascinating ones: The Resistance Network and the Inclusion Network there were born within two months of each other in 1979.

The Middle East's Resistance Network came into being on Feb. 1, 1979, when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini flew into Tehran from Paris, capping an Iranian revolution that ousted the shah and gave birth to the Iranian Islamic Republic that would attempt to export its ideology across the entire Muslim world, while also seeking to drive America out of the region and Israel out of existence.

The Middle East's Inclusion Network was birthed that same year when the U.S. brokered the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, enabling Arab-Israeli collaboration for the first time. Also in 1979, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum — the ruler of the port city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates — completed Jebel Ali Port, one of the largest in the world, establishing Dubai and the U.A.E. as a global hub that would connect the Arab East — through trade, tourism, services, shipping, investments and world-class airlines — with almost every corner of the planet.

In 2015, this Middle East Inclusion Network got a huge boost with the rise in 2015 of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — with whom I recently met in Riyadh — and his aspiration to transform Saudi Arabia into a giant Dubai on steroids and make it the cultural, investment, conference, tourism and manufacturing center of a much more integrated region.

Nadim Koteich, a Lebanese-Emirati political analyst and general manager of Sky News Arabia, who helped me see the contrast between these two networks struggling to shape the Middle East, explained that the Resistance Network "is orchestrated by Iran, Islamists and jihadists" in a process they refer to as the "unity of battlefields." This network, he noted, "seeks to bridge militias, rejectionists, religious sects and sectarian leaders," creating an anti-Israel, anti-American, anti-Western axis that can simultaneously pressure Israel in Gaza, in the West Bank and on the Lebanon border — as well as America in the Red Sea, in Syria and in Iraq and Saudi Arabia from all directions.

In stark contrast, Koteich said, stands the Inclusion Network, one that's focused on "weaving together" global and regional markets — instead of battlefronts — business conferences, news organizations, elites, hedge funds, tech incubators and major trade routes. This inclusion network, he added, "transcends traditional boundaries, creating a web of economic and technological interdependence that has the potential to redefine power structures and create new paradigms of regional stability."

So today, while the U.S. is indirectly degrading Russia's capabilities, through its proxy Ukraine, things are different in the Middle East. There, it is Iran that is sitting back comfortably — indirectly at war with Israel and America, and sometimes Saudi Arabia, by fighting through Tehran's proxies: Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, and Shiite militias in Iraq.

Iran is reaping all the benefits and paying virtually no cost for the work of its proxies, and the U.S., Israel and their tacit Arab allies have not yet manifested the will or the way to pressure Iran back — without getting into a hot war, which they all want to avoid.

My own view is that the best way to deter Iran is by enhancing pressures from the inside — where the Inclusion Network has the most allies: Iran's young people and their aspirations to be part of the Inclusion Network. How do we know? Because many of Iran's youth, starved for inclusion, have been in open revolt against the regime since September 2022, when a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini,

was arrested in Tehran by Iran's morality police for allegedly [wearing her hijab improperly](#) and then died in custody.

A regime under which women die in custody after being arrested for not covering up enough is not a secure or popular regime. Moreover, many educated Iranians know that their regime is just using support for the Palestinian cause as a cover for Iranian imperialism all across the region, where Tehran indirectly controls Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. Which is why — *remarkably* — we keep seeing protesters in Iran popping up to express support for Israel since Hamas's Oct. 7 attack and against Tehran's costly imperial adventures. Yes, you read that right.

"During a game between the football clubs Persepolis and Gol Gohar at the country's national football stadium, operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps attempted to rally support for the Palestinian cause by waving Palestinian flags on the pitch," The London Jewish Chronicle [reported](#) on Oct. 9, posting the raw footage from X, formerly Twitter. "Instead of sympathy, the Basij — one of the five forces of the I.R.G.C. — was met with chants from fans in the stands to 'shove that Palestinian flag up your a**!' Footage of the incident went viral on social media." It included tweets like: "True Iranians will always support Israel! The Islamic Republic is an occupying force."

The nonpartisan Stimson Center in Washington published a [commentary](#) by an Iran-based analyst in October on Iranian opposition to the Hamas attack, which included an amazing Instagram video posted by a prominent Iranian analyst [showing](#) Iranian "college students refusing to walk over the flags of the U.S. and Israel which are often placed at the entrance to universities in Iran as a show of support for the Palestinians." Meanwhile, The Economist [reported](#) about Iranian "baristas in cafes" who "pinned stars of David to their aprons."

This attitude is by no means universal; lots of other Iranians surely side with Hamas, especially with the civilian casualties in Gaza. Nevertheless, [noted Iran International](#), an Iranian opposition channel based in London, "No Gaza, No Lebanon, I shall die for Iran," has been a recurring slogan in many protests in Iran."

The members of the Resistance Network are great at tearing down and breaking stuff, but, unlike the Inclusion Network, they have shown no capacity to build any government or society anyone would want to emigrate to, let alone emulate. (The visa line to get into Houthi-run Yemen is not long.) We don't stress that enough.

For all of these reasons, this is a moment of great peril as well as great opportunity — especially for Israel. The competition between the Resistance Network and the Inclusion Network means that the region has never been more hostile or more hospitable to accepting a Jewish state.

It is too bad that a traumatized Israel under Netanyahu's failed leadership can't see this right now. If Israel could one day agree to a long-term process with a transformed Palestinian Authority to build two states for two peoples, it could decisively tip the balance between the Resistance Network and the Inclusion Network.

The Resistance Network would have nothing to justify the wasteful wars it fights and the arms it amasses — supposedly to defeat Israel and America but actually to keep its own people down and itself in power. Meanwhile, the Inclusion Network would find it that much easier to widen, to cohere and to win.

As I said, there's a lot more at stake today than meets the eye.

Senator SULLIVAN. He says that today, while the United States is indirectly degrading Russia's capabilities through its proxy, Ukraine, things are different in the Middle East.

There, it is Iran that is sitting back comfortably, indirectly at war with Israel, at war with the United States, at war with Saudi Arabia by fighting through Tehran's proxies, Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, and Shia militias in Iraq.

Iran is reaping all the benefits and paying virtually no costs for the work of its proxies, and the United States, Israel, and their tacit Arab allies have not yet manifested the will or the way to pressure Iran back. Do you agree with that, General?

General KURILLA. I think Iran is using all of its proxies in the region.

Senator SULLIVAN. But are they paying no cost?

General KURILLA. I think they are not paying the cost.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Well, let me get into some specifics, and one that I just cannot fathom we have not undertaken yet. Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, the former Commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, now the Deputy Commander at CENTCOM, recently appeared on 60 minutes.

When asked if the Houthis could execute these attacks against United States Navy vessels in the Red Sea and international shipping without Iran's support, he said, "no, Iranians have been supplying the Houthis, resupplying them, they are advising them, and they are providing them target information. This is crystal clear."

So let me go into that. I have raised this with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, we have the biggest terrorist group in the world providing targeting information on the USS *Eisenhower*, the *Carney*. The *Carney* shot down three different missiles from the Houthis.

Why are we not sinking those Iranian ships? If there is an Iranian spy ship providing targeting information to kill sailors from Alaska and North Dakota, why aren't we sinking those ships? By the way, isn't that part of ROEs [Rules of Engagement]? You don't even have to ask the President for that permission.

General KURILLA. That is not accurate, Senator, that I wouldn't have to ask the President to do that.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. That is not part of your ROEs, third party targeting? You have third party targeting Americans to kill them. You don't have the authority to take that target out?

General KURILLA. Not on the Iranian ships.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Have you made a recommendation to take out and sink these Iranian ships that are targeting our sailors?

General KURILLA. I provide options ranging everything from cyber to kinetic. I also identify the risk of escalation in all of those options.

Senator SULLIVAN. We always talk the risk of escalation. The Iranians are escalating on us. We have it backward. I talked to the Chairman about this. This is not useful when you guys start by saying the risk of escalation.

The Iranians are killing our servicemembers. They are escalating. Hamas is escalating. I think we need to drop that talking point. In your personal opinion, do you think the best way to get the Houthis and the Iranians to stop shooting at American ships is to covertly or overtly announce that the next time you target an American ship with an Iranian spy ship, we will sink that ship. In your personal opinion, what do you think that will do from a deterrence standpoint?

General KURILLA. Senator, I think there needs a whole-of-government approach—

Senator SULLIVAN. I know, but I am asking about.

General KURILLA.—to—on Iran.

Senator SULLIVAN. I am going to get to the whole-of-government here. I got 50 seconds left. On that issue, in your personal opinion,

is that how you heard the Ranking Member talk about Operation Praying Mantis. Are you familiar with that operation?

General KURILLA. I am very familiar with it.

Senator SULLIVAN. What is your personal opinion on getting the Houthis and Iran to stop trying to kill our sailors? I had a meeting with the CNO [Chief Naval Officer] recently. She mentioned that the Navy worries about one of these missiles slipping through.

General KURILLA. As do I.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay, so how do we get them to stop doing it? It is obviously not working.

General KURILLA. There has to be cost imposition on Iran.

Senator SULLIVAN. There hasn't been. Thomas Friedman and all of us believe there has been no cost. I am not blaming you, General. I am sure you have had strong meetings where you say, of course we should sink these ships. They are targeting our sailors.

But so, I am asking you not what advice you have given to the President. Remember, when you got confirmed here, we gave you a letter saying we can ask you in your personal opinion. You don't have to talk to us about what you said to the President.

What are you, as a 40 year General, decorated, knows about combat, what is your personal view on whether we should be sinking intel ships from Iran who are providing targeting information to the Houthis to kill American sailors and marines?

General KURILLA. I think it is best if in a closed session, I can talk you through the intelligence of what we know Iran is providing and the implications and what we can do about that.

Senator SULLIVAN. I think this is a scandal and to me, it is shocking, and I am sure you probably in the closed session will tell me, of course you think we should sink their ships. But I just don't understand it.

One final question. I have talked to the President directly and Jake Sullivan and their whole team about non-kinetic actions like reimposing sanctions on the oil and gas regime of Iran. At the end of the Trump administration, the Iranians had \$4 billion in foreign reserves. That is not a lot.

Now they have about \$75 billion because we lifted sanctions in essence. Have you recommended—and by the way, the President said he thought it was a good idea. Said look, there is the National Security Advisor. Talk to Senator Sullivan and the team on this. That was in December. We are not doing that.

Have you recommended non-kinetic options like stronger sanctions against the Iranians and their oil and gas regime?

General KURILLA. My recommendations are military in nature, but I do recommend a whole-of-government approach for cost imposition on Iran.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Langley, General Kurilla, good to see both of you again. So AFRICOM and CENTCOM have seen conflicts involving extremist terrorist organizations for decades now.

The recent wave of coups, especially in West Africa, is creating some fertile ground for VOs, and it is creating a big problem. I was there in the region last January. Iranian backed extremists

continue to wreak havoc in the Middle East as Senator Sullivan, was talking about.

It is a problem that I think requires some new solutions. As we are currently pivoting to fifth generation fighters for readiness against pure adversaries like China, it is critical that we don't lose sight of the very real threat that we face every single day from extremists in Africa and the Middle East. General Langley, you have previously highlighted the need for more ISR capability, calling ISR an active deterrent in Africa.

Yet there are limited number of ISR aircraft to go around. They are also limited number of assets that can provide any kind of close air support in the region. Then SOCOM has begun its acquisition of the new light attack aircraft, the OA-1K for armed overwatch and close air support.

It seems to be capable and filling some of this gap, and it does seem to be an aircraft that is uniquely positioned to excel in AFRICOM. Just a few months ago, I was flying an F-16 in Arizona, and I was reminded how difficult it is to do close air support in a really fast moving airplane like an F-16, F-35.

So, can you talk a little bit about how platforms like Armed Overwatch can provide some important capability against extremist groups?

General LANGLEY. Yes. Yes, Senator. Because as I was saying that in my statements that, we need more capability, capacity, and especially in our positioning on the continent and especially in the Sahel.

Because like I said, we are at a tipping point and there is modest investment for us to do the whole tasking for indications and warnings, especially with the Metaxas, with the violent extremist groups, Jama'at and ISIS-Sahel, bordering toward the Northern borders of the Gulf of Guinea countries.

Any increased ISR, expanding my ability to give a persistent stare, if you will, Senator, is going to be helpful.

Senator KELLY. What do you have now doing that mission?

General LANGLEY. Right now, we just have like—contractor owned, contractor operated ISR, and a B350, which is actually a co—

Senator KELLY. So, how many aircraft total?

General LANGLEY. Right now—I would cover that with you in closed session, and as far as how many a platform we have—

Senator KELLY. Do you feel what you have is enough?

General LANGLEY. At this time, given this emergent threat, Senator? No, I don't.

Senator KELLY. General Kurilla, can you talk a little bit about the importance of an armed overwatch capability in CENTCOM?

General KURILLA. Yes. Anytime you can have armed overwatch overhead that also provides an ISR, and intelligence capability is beneficial. The only thing we have to watch for is the ability of the air defense systems that could take that down because it is a slow mover.

Senator KELLY. Do both of you think that the air tractor, the OA-1K K is appropriate for this mission?

General LANGLEY. Senator, I would have to do a full assessment on it based on the threat that we have, because there are other characters on this AOR, especially in the West.

General KURILLA. It depends on the region we would operate it with.

Senator KELLY. I was in Jordan about 6 weeks ago. Saudi Arabia, Israel as well, but in Jordan they had some of these on the flight line. Not ours, but the Jordanian Air Force, and they had a lot of stuff hanging on it.

General KURILLA. The King's daughter flies one of them.

Senator KELLY. Oh, really? I did not know that. Yes, and it seemed like you could hang a lot of stuff on it and it has a lot of loiter time and can fly to pretty low altitude even. An airplane like that that is designed initially as a crop duster can fly around and turn really effectively, you know, below 50ft.

So I was, just looking at it. I haven't flown it either, but it seemed quite impressive. For the kind of missions that you are involved in, in your AORs, it seems appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Cramer, please.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Generals, for being here. I am just, I am going to followup with Senator Kelly's line of questioning and going back a little bit to Senator Fischer's with regard to ISR, now that we are getting a little more specific.

I will try to avoid having to get into secrets, but you mentioned in your opening statement, General Kurilla, that the continued threat from Afghanistan.

Have you had to divert ISR from Afghanistan or from anywhere else to cover other areas? I mean, remember Afghanistan was to be protected by Over the Horizon. I mean, I just, I worry that we are so thin. Give me some specifics about diversion of ISR, providing gaps.

General KURILLA. So, every day, Senator, I have to provide I have to determine where the risk is. I have to move intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets around, just like I do with my defensive counter air fighters.

The only places I was being shot at the time were Iraq and Syria and in the Red Sea. So, for a period of time, I did divert ISR out of Afghanistan to be able to cover down on those areas that are most critical.

I do know that when Iran-aligned militia groups or Houthis are out and they are trying to launch UAVs, rockets, missiles, that when we have ISR, we have determined that has a deterrent effect. So, we do need, and this is something that I do think we need to continue to fund is additional capabilities.

Senator CRAMER. I worry about that because we are going just the opposite direction. I mean, we are retiring particularly unmanned systems at a very fast rate and not building more of them nearly fast enough.

I worry that we are leaving a lot of really expensive assets out there unprotected, the survivability of the sea fleet, in some cases the carrier fleet, as well as the men and women on the ground.

With regard to AFRICOM, General Langley, now the MQ-9 Reaper is pretty important in your AOR. Can you just maybe elaborate a little bit on the importance of that system?

General LANGLEY. In comparison to the MQ-1, it just has more on station time, let's just put it that way, exponentially.

Given the tyranny of distance, especially across the Sahel and even in East Africa, is—that platform is in dire need to continue with that.

I understand that there is going to be a transition coming up, so we need other type capabilities that are equivalent or even more given the emergent, threat that we have across Africa.

Senator CRAMER. What you just said is really, really important. That the best we have is older maybe than the threat requires, and we ought to continually be developing more modern, more durable, perhaps more sustainable, more lethal, as well as covert.

Maybe in the later session, we can talk more specifically about potential solutions. That is all I have, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Cramer. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank General Kurilla and General Langley for testifying today, and always for your service to our country. Thank you.

I want to talk a little bit about Iran and the long term strategy to deter Iran, because our brave servicemembers in the Central Command area of responsibility, well, they are facing drone and rocket attacks on a regular basis from both land and sea.

Recently, three United States soldiers were killed, dozens more injured in an attack against our troops in Jordan. They were Staff Sergeant William Rivers, Sergeant Kennedy Sanders, and Sergeant Breonna Moffett. They all made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation and their service will never be forgotten.

I am going to add, may their memories be a blessing to all those who knew and loved them. But we know where these attacks are originating, Iran's hostile regime and its deadly proxies.

Yet, we lack a sufficient deterrence strategy. That is why Senator Ernst and I have successfully led initiatives to mandate CENTCOM air and missile defense and maritime strategies to defend against Iran's regional aggression and protect United States servicemembers. So, General Kurilla, please.

While recent United States strikes on Iranian aligned militias may have degraded their short term capabilities, what is our long term strategy to deter Iran and proxies? For what we can say here, I am sure we can have a classified as well.

General KURILLA. Well, thank you, Senator. I mean, deterrence is always temporary whenever you do establish it. But we need to have a whole-of-government approach in our ability to deter Iran's malign behavior. They are the epicenter of instability in the Middle East.

Senator ROSEN. What are we doing proactively to prevent these militias before they attempt to harm us? I think that is—deterrence is one thing, but how do we proactively stop what they are doing, try to cut them off before they can do anything?

General KURILLA. So, part of that comes with the use of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, defensive counter—we know that has an effect. On a classified session, I can tell you exactly how that works.

But in terms of our ability to stop them, we have struck back. The last strike we did in Iraq and Syria hit 85 targets, and then we waited several days, and then we killed the commander of Kataib Hezbollah in Syria, in downtown Baghdad.

He was directly responsible for conducting attacks on U.S. servicemembers. That has had a temporal deterrent effect. Right now, there has not been an attack in over 32 days in Iraq and Syria.

Senator ROSEN. Well, good. I look forward to the classified briefing so we can hear more.

I want to also talk about CENTCOM's support for Israel, because Israel is our closest and most reliable ally in the Middle East, and in recent years, the Abraham Accords and Israel's absorption into CENTCOM have enabled unprecedented regional security cooperation between the United States, Israel, and some of our Arab partners.

At the same time, Israel faces, as we know, we are seeing a coming from Iran, mounting threats from Iran and its proxies. General Kurilla again, how can CENTCOM support Israel's defensive needs as they face a war with Hezbollah up North?

General KURILLA. I think you are seeing that right now in terms of the material support we are able to find for their ability to defend themselves.

Senator ROSEN. When you think about the Abraham Accords and what that means and what we have been able to do so far—of course, I started the Abraham Accords caucus. We have traveled to the Abraham Accords countries. How do you think that you can leverage Abraham Accords and grow that relationship between Israel and CENTCOM?

General KURILLA. I think we do that through encouraging the relationships between those countries and Israel.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I am going to kind of keep on this issue here and thinking about water and food insecurity. There is a lot of things that make the region unstable, right, terrorism, water and food insecurities.

What are the security implications of the scarcity of water and food in CENTCOM? How might a regional—when we think about the Abraham Accords, that is what some of these things are built on. How might a regional water and food security working group help CENTCOM act and reduce the security risk caused by lack of good, clean water and food?

General KURILLA. Water and food insecurity drive migration which drives instability. I think a working group could identify where the greatest need is, when we work with our USAID partners and others to be able to provide that aid to their.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate that. I think there is a lot to do with soft power, like food and water and security, intelligence, and other things that we do. I look forward to just having both of you come in classified settings so we can ask some more detailed questions.

General KURILLA. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. During the first few weeks in office, the Biden administration ended the sales of—the sale of offensive arms to Saudi Arabia and focused on achieving a cease-fire in Yemen.

They also reversed the previous Administration's—the Trump administration's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization. To what extent do either one of you believe that the Houthis exploited that cease-fire to increase their missile arsenal and other capabilities?

General KURILLA. I am certain that Iran exploited that and continue to provide funds and equipment to the Houthis.

Senator SCHMITT. Would you agree with that?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. If the Administration had continued to sell Saudi Arabia offensive weapons, do you think that the Houthis would be stronger or weaker now?

General KURILLA. I think Saudi Arabia would be stronger right now.

Senator SCHMITT. In effect, do you think that that would have weakened the Houthis?

General KURILLA. Are you talking if they did not stop them, Senator?

Senator SCHMITT. Yes. If we didn't stop the sale, if Saudi Arabia continued to have offensive weapons that we stopped selling them, and then we lifted the terrorist designation from the Houthis, do you think the Houthis would be stronger or weaker today?

General KURILLA. I mean, I think that is a hypothetical without knowing exactly how they were going to implement.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Was this a mistake—like, right now, 15 percent of the world's commerce is being disrupted by the Houthis.

I don't pretend to know all the considerations the Biden administration put into this decision to do those two things, which was to not sell arms to Saudi Arabia and also lift the terrorist designation, but it hasn't worked out.

They have been emboldened. What is it that you think, General, we should do right now to—this can't go on. This terrorist organization cannot hold 15 percent of the world's commerce hostage. What is it that you suggest that we do?

General KURILLA. I think we need a whole-of-government and an international approach to this.

Senator SCHMITT. Maybe like sanctions? Maybe like selling arms to Saudi Arabia? Would those two things be included in your whole-of-government approach?

General KURILLA. I think that would be something to for the State Department and the Department of Justice and Treasury. I can talk about the military aspects of this, and what we do need though, as the international community, just like we did for counter piracy, to stop the flow of Iranian arms. But there must be a cost imposition on Iran for what they are providing.

Senator SCHMITT. I agree with you on that, and you would agree that there is no cost right now on Iran for any of this, correct?

General KURILLA. There is some, but not enough.

Senator SCHMITT. Right. Like enforcing sanctions as relates to them selling oil would be one of them, a whole-of-government approach, right?

General KURILLA. Well, I think sanctions have to be international. There is one unit—I mean, their oil is sanctioned. All the oil they are selling to China right now, 90 percent of Iranian oil that goes to China—China buys 90 percent of Iran's oil. That is all sanctioned oil.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, and I guess I have a limited time, so I want to sort of turn the attention to Israel for a second. What more can be done or what can be done to bring our hostages home?

This sort of this gets lost, I think, a lot in the news cycle, but there are Americans there. What more can be done to bring them home?

General KURILLA. I mean, our hope is that all of them will be coming home. In the classified session, I can give you a little more details of what is being done.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, thank you for being here today. General Kurilla, as you know, the United States must take a firm stance against Iran and its proxies.

This is essential to get Iran to back down and to stop its barbaric and destabilizing activities in the Middle East. But how we achieve that goal is important—as important as achieving it in the first place. Europe and the Middle East are at war. The Indo-Pacific looks like it may not be far behind.

So, if we are going to avoid a war in the Indo-Pacific, then we must defend United States interests in other theaters without using up capabilities that are needed to deter China. So, we know that long range missiles like Tomahawks will be needed to deter or defeat Chinese aggression. Other things like air and missile defenses will be equally vital.

We also know that based on DOD and CENTCOM's public statements, that CENTCOM is using significant numbers of all these capabilities in its ongoing operations. So, General, are you concerned that CENTCOM's use of these capabilities, such as critical munitions, air and defense missiles, and the like is coming at the expense of America's ability to deter China?

I know not in your AOR, but, the materials you use may be of concern.

General KURILLA. I am concerned with defending our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, and coast guardsmen out there right now. What I would encourage is that our defense industrial base ramps up production of these systems.

I would like cheaper systems that we can use that are just as effective. Things like directed energy and other systems that can bring down the demand—but there is only one thing that can bring down a ballistic missile right now from a ship, and that is an SM-6 missile.

Senator BUDD. Thanks for that. General, continue on, can CENTCOM achieve its objectives against the Houthis and others in the region without using Tomahawks or other weapons that are vital to deter China that already in short supply? You touched on that a bit, but if you would expand, please.

General KURILLA. Yes. In a classified session, I can tell you the exact number we used. I can tell you why we used them and when we did. But I don't think we fired a Tomahawk missile any time recently.

Senator BUDD. Has OSD or the Joint Staff directed CENTCOM to stop or reduce the use of weapons required for China contingency in CENTCOM's ongoing operations against the Houthis?

General KURILLA. They have not.

Senator BUDD. Can you provide this Committee with a full list of munitions—I think you may have mentioned that in the confidential setting, that CENTCOM has used during operations in the aftermath of the October 7th attack. Would you be willing to share that with us?

General KURILLA. Yes, I will provide that through the Department.

Senator BUDD. Yes, thank you. General Langley, I am very proud of the North Carolina National Guard State Partnership Program.

As you mentioned in your written testimony, the North Carolina National Guard recently expanded this program in AFRICOM to include both the Republic of Malawi and the Republic of Zambia, in addition to its current partnership on the African continent with the Republic of Botswana.

Can you please provide an update on the State Partnership Program in AFRICOM, particularly on the new partnership with Malawi and Zambia?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Senator. I was just talking to General Hokanson, and especially at the anniversary last summer. We see that outsized effects of the Institution of State Partnership Programs.

I wish we had more, because in competing with our competitors, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, they have nothing to match that. So, these are assurance actions that really solidifies us as a partner of choice. Other countries see this, and they ask, when are they are going to get their country partnership.

So, this vastly outweighs some of their rhetoric, and when I say their, I am talking about the competitors, of how they are trying to replicate what we are trying to do. Because we already know that Africa, within Africa, now the Russian Federation wants to establish a grounding that resembles a State Partnership Program, but it doesn't have the values—it doesn't have the democratic values of what we bring.

That is intrinsic values for stability, security—and security and prosperity with our African partners.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General. So how do short term continuing resolution, CRs, how do they impact the execution of the State Partnership Program?

General LANGLEY. They participate in building resiliency and getting on the continent and partnering with them. So, there is no new starts.

So, if they are going to be part of an exercise such as like African Lion, I am not sure if the Utah National Guard can actually come this year because that is on this—next budget's money that hasn't been appropriated yet.

Senator BUDD. Thank you both. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd, and thank you, gentlemen, for excellent testimony. For the benefit of my colleagues, there is a vote on the floor now. We will go to that vote.

We will reconvene in SV-217 at 2:15 p.m., which will allow people to stop along the way—12:15 p.m., I am sorry. I was going to give you a long break. You need it after this session. But we will recess until 12:15 p.m. at SVC-217. Thank you, gentlemen.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

CIVILIAN HARM MITIGATION AND RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

1. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and DOD Instruction on Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR DOD-I) require the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to establish civilian harm mitigation and response as a component of security cooperation programs, develop baseline assessments of partner capabilities to mitigate and respond to civilian harm, and leverage “tailored conditionality” to set expectations with partners. What progress has each of your commands made toward establishing civilian harm mitigation and response as a component of security cooperation programs?

General KURILLA. Our civilian harm mitigation and response efforts remain an integral and important part of command efforts. The CHMR-AP and CHMR DODI promote our long-term strategic and mission success. To date, the majority of our CHMR progress thus far has been to support our military operations, RED Teaming, planning, and responding to CIVHARM reports resulting from CENTCOM military operations, however we remain fully aligned in and supportive of the Department's CHMR-AP work related to security cooperation programs.

CENTCOM, along with the rest of the DOD and DOS, have been coordinating the development of an Interim Policy Guidance on Supporting U.S. Ally and Partner Forces in Their Efforts to Mitigate and Respond to Civilian Harm (IPG). Properly developing and coordinating this document is critical for CHMR Security Cooperation implementation. I would like to highlight that we want to use this process to strengthen our relationship with our Allies and Partners which the USG has worked very hard to build over the decades. If not carefully crafted, it could inadvertently push them toward competitors in our AOR including PRC and Russia which is why we are thoroughly developing this policy to achieve the right end-state in a complex region.

Our CHMR team has begun coordination with our security cooperation division to begin inclusion of CHMR and ensure our next round of significant security cooperation initiatives (SSCI's) will include how we effectively promote CHMR with our Allies and Partners.

General LANGLEY. U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is making significant progress in establishing Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR) as a component of security cooperation, in accordance with DODI 3000.17. USAFRICOM's CHMR team will lead briefings with its security cooperation counterparts to provide guidance on incorporating CHMR activities into security cooperation programs. The CHMR team is also working with the security cooperation enterprise to review Fiscal Year 2026 Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives (SSCI) and ensure that they include CHMR considerations. Per the CHMR-AP, USAFRICOM will conduct Civilian Harm Baseline Assessments of Allies and Partners with all countries that receive security cooperation.

USAFRICOM has also begun incorporating CHMR into our Title 10 programming, particularly those under section 333 Authority to Build Capacity. In accordance with Executive Order 13732 and DOD policy, foreign military sales (FMS) in Africa of air-to-surface, surface-to-surface, and ship-to-shore munitions, and their delivery systems, require training on advanced target capability to ensure Allies and Partners employ U.S. munitions in a manner that reduces the risk of civilian harm.

Additionally, USAFRICOM is using the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to provide CHMR training to Allies and Partners. Through the IMET program, the Department of State and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) currently offer one course through the Institute of Security Governance, one through distance learning, and four through mobile training teams. Section 1210 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA also establishes a “Legal institutional capacity building initiative for foreign defense institutions.” USAFRICOM will seek to leverage this authority to, among other things, provide for the protection of civilians consistent with the Law of Armed Conflict, and to assess potential incidents of civilian harm.

2. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, what progress has each of your commands made toward developing baseline assessments of partner capabilities to mitigate and respond to civilian harm?

General KURILLA. The Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) team just concluded a process for developing the pilot CHMR Baseline Assessment for Allies and Partners (CBAPs). The CHMR community will further develop and use this baseline assessment as a guide.

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM, in coordination with the Center for Naval Analysis, will conduct its first pilot Civilian Harm Baseline Assessment of Allies and Partners (CBAP) with Kenya in June 2024. USAFRICOM will also include Ally and Partner capability assessments during planned Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (AM&E) activities. USAFRICOM is developing a list of prioritized countries for fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026 CBAPs to meet this requirement.

3. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, what progress has each of your commands made toward leveraging “tailored conditionality” to set expectations with partners?

General KURILLA. CENTCOM, along with the rest of the DOD and DoS, have been coordinating the development of an Interim Policy Guidance on Supporting U.S. Ally and Partner Forces in Their Efforts to Mitigate and Respond to Civilian Harm (IPG). This work will provide important guidance on tailored conditionality.

General LANGLEY. As established in Objective 9 of the CHMR-AP, USAFRICOM will leverage tailored conditionality in security cooperation programs, where appropriate. USAFRICOM will also use the CBAPs to inform CHMR security cooperation programs. USAFRICOM has deliberately included events that support CHMR, as well as International Humanitarian Law themes, into security cooperation activities. These events are tailored to the needs of the partner nation and the content of the security cooperation initiative. Tailored conditionality options will be refined upon publication of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Global Partnerships) final DOD Interim Policy Guidance on supporting allies and partners.

4. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, how many Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in each of your commands are dedicated to supporting assessments of partners’ capacity, willingness, norms, and practices to adhere to International Humanitarian Law to prevent and mitigate harm to civilians in the course of military operations?

General KURILLA. CENTCOM currently has one (1) dedicated FTE Allies & Partners Civilian Harm Mitigation & Response Officer (A&P CHMRO). The A&P CHMRO coordinates with our J-5 Security Cooperation Division and Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) for all matters concerning allies and partners CHMR efforts. Our CHMROs also coordinates with DoS and NGO’s. CENTCOM, along with the rest of the DOD and DoS, have been coordinating the development of an Interim Policy Guidance on Supporting U.S. Ally and Partner Forces in Their Efforts to Mitigate and Respond to Civilian Harm (IPG).

General LANGLEY. As of March 2024, the USAFRICOM CHMR team includes one FTE dedicated to supporting the Allies and Partners (A&P) portfolio. Due to workload requirements, USAFRICOM is augmenting the single-authorized A&P FTE with a part time FTE from the Civilian Harm Assessment Cell. Additionally, USAFRICOM has a six-person Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (AM&E) branch which assesses the effectiveness of security cooperation programs, including the application of CHMR themes, when needed. USAFRICOM also has 21 Country

Desk Officers dedicated to designing, implementing, and assessing security cooperation programs with African partners. Country Desk Officers will be trained to assess partners' capacity, willingness, norms, and practices to prevent and mitigate harm to civilians during military operations.

5. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, how many civilian harm prevention and mitigation recommendations have each of your commands made regarding partners' capacity, willingness, norms, and practices to adhere to International Humanitarian Law to prevent and mitigate harm to civilians in the course of military operations?

General KURILLA. We have not made any new recommendations pending implementation of the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response DODI 3000.17.

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM has made a deliberate effort to include CHMR engagements in security cooperation plans and activities. USAFRICOM has included 41 recommendations for activities that support CHMR themes in fiscal year 2026 security cooperation programs, including activities that complement ongoing International Humanitarian Law, Law of Armed Conflict, and similar capability developments.

6. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, what were these recommendations?

General KURILLA. N/A.

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM's recommended activities are aligned with CHMR-AP and DODI 3000.17 guidance to incorporate CHMR objectives into security cooperation. Recommendations include developing partner nation military justice capabilities; integrating CHMR into operational planning; legal aspects of CHMR; legal advisor training; compliance with the Law of Armed Conflict; legal and responsible employment of military force; and military justice and civilian harm mitigation training.

CHMR is often approached from a legal perspective when discussing concepts with Allies and Partners. However, a holistic view is required in order to be most effective. Strong legal frameworks and institutions, in particular related to compliance with human rights and the Law of Armed Conflict, are foundational. Achieving meaningful CHMR outcomes, though, requires addressing operational doctrine and processes such as intelligence and target development, command and control, and force development. Consequently, an effective approach tailored to the partner may require support from multiple DOD institutions.

7. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, to which partners did you provide these civilian harm prevention and mitigation recommendations?

General KURILLA. N/A.

General LANGLEY. These recommendations are part of 41 Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives (SSCI). The SSCIs are for Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, and three multinational SSCIs. USAFRICOM will leverage tailored conditionality options, as needed, particularly for those countries experiencing holds.

8. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, assuming a country commits to the recommendations you provide, how does your command plan to measure and assess effective implementation of the commitments?

General KURILLA. Once appropriate recommendations are developed, we could utilize the assessment, monitoring and evaluation process within our security cooperation enterprise.

General LANGLEY. Each security cooperation program includes an Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation (AM&E) plan designed to measure its effectiveness. AM&E plans for programs that include CHMR, Law of Armed Conflict, and International Humanitarian Law components will include dedicated assessments, when applicable.

9. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, how does your command plan to monitor and assess the impacts of U.S. security assistance on human rights, civilian harm, and corruption?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. Military equipment sold or granted to USAFRICOM Allies and Partners includes routine inspection requirements as a term of the transfer. Inspec-

tions are designed to ensure the Partner Nation is using the item according to the terms of the transfer, is properly storing the item, and has not improperly sold or transferred it. Sensitive and highly lethal items, such as night vision devices, munitions, and weapon systems, have enhanced annual inspection requirements, carried out in country by the U.S. Office of Security Cooperation.

Security assistance cases that provide air-to-surface, surface-to-surface, and ship-to-shore munitions also include training on how to prevent and mitigate civilian harm when employing these munitions.

LEAHY LAW

10. Senator WARREN. General Langley, title 10 U.S.C. § 362 bars the United States from providing assistance to foreign military units that have committed gross violations of human rights. In recent years, DOD has invited countries with significant human rights and rule of law concerns—some of which are subject to U.S. coup-related sanctions—to participate in U.S. military training exercises and receive the benefit of training with U.S. Forces. DOD has also provided U.S. taxpayer dollars and support for them to attend exercises under title 10 U.S.C § 321. The United States has trained numerous forces that have gone on to commit coups in Africa. How is U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) reassessing vetting, risk assessments, training programs, and post-training monitoring to understand and address this risk?

General LANGLEY. Ally and Partner Nation units and commanders nominated for any U.S. funded Security Cooperation training must first undergo Leahy Vetting, conducted by the Department of State, to screen for gross violations of human rights and human trafficking violations. Individuals and units that do not pass Leahy Vetting are not allowed to participate in US-led training. State and DOD both use a “One Year Good For” policy for individuals or units found to have no derogatory information for this screening. Partner nation units/personnel that participate in training are included in the annual Foreign Military Training Report (FMTR) input. With regard to units previously found ineligible, resuming assistance can occur when the Secretaries of Defense and State determine that the government of that country has taken, or is taking, effective measures to bring those responsible to justice.

11. Senator WARREN. General Langley will you commit not to invite foreign security force units from countries committing gross human rights violations, or countries in which the duly elected government has been deposed by coup d’etat to AFRICOM exercises?

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM supports a “Whole of Government” approach when engaging with Allies and Partners. A decision to continue engaging with an Ally or Partner after a serious human rights violation would be done in close consultation with our Department of State partners.

Regarding countries in which the duly elected government has been deposed by coup, it is based on the situation. Changes made to Section 7008 in 2022 now allow the U.S. Government to engage with Partner Nations following a coup to “support a democratic transition.” Where appropriate, USAFRICOM will engage with Partner Nations to support their transition back to democracy, along with other U.S. strategic interests.

Additionally, Section 7008 restrictions do not apply to climate, humanitarian assistance, Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP), and law enforcement activities. Consequently, USAFRICOM has included countries that do not participate in security cooperation programs in these activities, such as our Security Implications of Climate Change conference. USAFRICOM recognizes climate change, humanitarian assistance, and global health as trans-regional threats that significantly affect neighboring African countries with whom we actively collaborate.

12. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley what factors would U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and AFRICOM, respectively, weigh prior to waiving the requirement that the United States should not provide assistance to foreign military units that have committed a gross violation of human rights?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM supports a “Whole of Government” approach when engaging with Allies and Partners. A decision to continue engaging with an Ally or Partner after a serious human rights violation would be done in close consultation with our Department of State partners. Important considerations include strategic and national security interests to the U.S., whether the Partner Nation has taken steps to improve their civilian harm mitigation and response capabilities,

and whether they welcome USAFRICOM engagement to build International Humanitarian Law and CHMR capacity.

USAFRICOM is committed to working with our partners to reduce the risk of civilian harm caused by military operations. We find that with such a large number of Partner Nations with varying levels of capabilities, a variety of factors cause and/or contribute to civilian harm. As a result, we must tailor our CHMR approach to our Partners' reality, and to the specific roles and capabilities being developed.

13. Senator WARREN. General Langley, will you commit to ensuring that foreign security force units receiving assistance pursuant to section 321 are subject to Leahy vetting, as required by law?

General LANGLEY. Yes, USAFRICOM will continue to support and enforce Leahy Vetting requirements in coordination with the Department of State.

EX GRATIA PAYMENTS

14. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, Congress has repeatedly authorized \$3 million for ex gratia payments for civilian victims and survivors of civilian harm caused by the United States and its partners. Yet, CENTCOM and AFRICOM have largely failed to use this authorization. How many cases of civilian harm have been deemed credible by your command's assessments and investigations each year for the past 3 years?

General KURILLA. In 2021 there were two reports of CIVHARM, in 2022 there are 0 reports of CIVHARM and in 2023 four reports of CIVHARM that all "more likely than not" resulted from US military operations. Ex gratia payments remain an important tool for the Department. Under Section 1213, these payments are intended to be a nominal expression of condolences rather than a form of compensation. Individual payments will often be significantly less than the maximum allowed. Considerations to offer and pay ex gratia include local economic realities and cultural norms; the victims' status (e.g., place in the extended family, age, gender, tribal affiliation, friendly toward U.S. Military, etc.); feasibility of meeting with recipients in an appropriate setting; whether the offer will materially help obtain and maintain friendly relations and support of the local population; whether the offer will counter adversary information operations; and whether the offer will promote legitimacy of U.S. military operations.

General LANGLEY. The December 2023 DODI 3000.17 established the "more likely than not," standard, using the best understanding of the information available at the time of the assessment. Prior to that, USAFRICOM used the term "unsubstantiated," to describe incidents that did not meet the "more likely than not," threshold. Since 2021, USAFRICOM has received 16 reports of civilian harm, with one deemed credible. The annual numbers are as follows:

2024—three reports, none passed the "more likely than not" threshold
 2023—eight reports, all unsubstantiated
 2022—three reports, all unsubstantiated
 2021—two reports, one substantiated

15. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, for over 2 decades, U.S. operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and elsewhere caused significant civilian harm, often with little public acknowledgement or redress. In light of these shortcomings, the CHMR-AP rightly commits to improving DOD policies for investigating, responding to, and learning from civilian harm. How will you establish an effective process for the civilian survivors of U.S. and partnered operations and their families to seek acknowledgement and ex gratia payments?

General KURILLA. With the publication DODI 3000.17 and refining our processes in CENTCOM, every report of CIVHARM that is determined to be "more likely than not" a result of our military operations will contain a recommendation for ex gratia based on current authoritative guidance.

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM has made progress in establishing its CHMR team, which is a critical requirement to mitigate and respond to civilian harm. Team members are actively building processes and policies to receive, review, and respond to claims of civilian harm, such as a public-facing portal to receive claims of harm. USAFRICOM is also building relationships with civil society organizations that are on the ground in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. These organizations are well positioned to share information on potential claims of civilian harm. Additionally, on the USAFRICOM public facing webpage, there is a link accessible to report allegations of civilian harm. These reports are sent directly to our CHMR team.

16. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla and General Langley, the CHMR-AP and CHMR DOD-I commit the DOD to improving its processes for responding to civilian harm, including with ex gratia payments, and clarifies that the fundamental purposes of acknowledgements and responses to harm include expressing condolences to civilians affected by U.S. operations and helping to address the direct impacts experienced. Will you commit to using the \$3 million ex gratia authorization for cases where it is more likely than not that U.S. operations have resulted in civilian harm?

General KURILLA. Yes. Ex gratia is an important tool and I will continue to utilize this authority consistent with the considerations to offer and pay ex gratia to include local economic realities and cultural norms; the victims' status (e.g., place in the extended family, age, gender, tribal affiliation, friendly toward U.S. Military, etc.); feasibility of meeting with recipients in an appropriate setting; whether the offer will materially help obtain and maintain friendly relations and support of the local population; whether the offer will counter adversary information operations; and whether the offer will promote legitimacy of U.S. military operations.

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM takes all claims of civilian harm seriously, and conducts thorough reviews of all available information when conducting civilian harm assessments. For assessments that meet the "more likely than not" threshold, USAFRICOM must consider the context of the operating environment when developing response options, including ex gratia payments. Important factors include the safety and security of personnel making a payment, confirming identities of individuals receiving payments, and potential affiliations with adversary forces. As established in DODI 3000.17, section 5.2, USAFRICOM will conduct a country-level assessment in consultation with Department of State (DoS) to analyze these factors before finalizing response options for confirmed civilian harm incidents.

SAUDI BORDER GUARD HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

17. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, an August 2023 Human Rights Watch report revealed highly disturbing reports that Saudi Arabian border guards have systematically and brutally targeted, assaulted, raped, and killed Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers who tried to cross the Yemen-Saudi border. Has CENTCOM trained or assisted in providing training for any of the troops alleged to have committed these human rights violations and in what capacity did it do so?

General KURILLA. No. USCENTCOM does not provide training or assist in providing training to Saudi Arabia's land border guards.

18. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, how many CENTCOM personnel are embedded with Saudi forces or Saudi defense agencies and what is their role?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

19. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, have any of these embedded personnel been asked to report on any knowledge of Saudi abuses?

General KURILLA. The DODD 23211.01, Joint Staff, service and CENTCOM regulations all require all DOD personnel, military, civilian employees, contractors and sub-contractors accompanying a DOD component to report through their chain of command all reportable incidents which based on credible information, potentially involves/includes: a war crime; other violations of the law of war; or conduct during military operations that would be a war crime if the military operations occurred in the context of an armed conflict. As mentioned in earlier comments related to Allies and Partners, DOD guidance is being developed which will provide additional instruction on the reporting requirements as defined in the DODD.

20. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, what training does CENTCOM provide to Saudi forces to reduce civilian harm?

General KURILLA. As part of routine engagement with all partners, USCENTCOM emphasizes the importance and value of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the Geneva Convention and the prevention of and mitigation of civilian harm. Engagements have included Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) conducting two courses on Combating Civilian Casualties in the past calendar year. Subjects discussed during these seminars included Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Plans (CHMRAP). USCENTCOM also conducts Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs) that include discussions on the Law of Armed Conflict, Target Development, Positive Identification, No Strike Lists, Collateral Damage Estimates/Assessments, and Crisis Communications.

21. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, what steps has CENTCOM taken to support any investigations into these reports and when will any such investigation be complete?

General KURILLA. We are not currently involved in any investigation of allegations against the Saudi Arabian border guards. That said, USCENCOM supports the development of investigative review processes and procedures that improve the effectiveness of military operations and minimize civilian harm for all our partners. These efforts also encourage a system that captures and utilizes lessons learned and transparency in public reporting. USCENCOM can support partners in their efforts with expertise and releasable information if available.

MAY 2023 SYRIA STRIKE INVESTIGATION

22. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, my office has repeatedly requested a briefing regarding the investigation into the May 2023 strike in Syria that resulted in a possible civilian casualty as followup to a July 2023 letter I sent with Senator Van Hollen and Representative Jacobs. Has this investigation been completed, and when will we receive this briefing?

General KURILLA. Yes, the investigation was completed and were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

23. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, in February 2022, you committed to prioritizing reforms to mitigate civilian harm and agreed that credible reports of civilian casualties deserve a thorough investigation. Despite this commitment, why did you announce just hours after the strike that CENTCOM targeted a Senior al Qaeda (AQ) leader in Syria in May 2023 without having confirmed the identity of the individual killed?

General KURILLA. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024. Timely acknowledgement of U.S. counter-terrorism operations, particularly in today's information environment, prevents confusion on attribution and the spread of misinformation. Final confirmation of the effects of an operation may take time and is provided in follow on reports. The statement was accurate in that we were indeed targeting the Senior al Qaeda leader named.

24. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, why does CENTCOM still have a statement on Twitter that it targeted a senior AQ leader despite CENTCOM having opened an investigation into whether the strike killed a civilian instead amid defense officials' uncertainty over the identity of the individual killed?

General KURILLA. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024. The statement is accurate in that we were indeed targeting the Senior al Qaeda member. DODI 5400.17 states removal of social media content should only be done in the event there is a factual or typographical error; violation of a law, policy, term of service, or user agreement; or an operations or information security concern.

25. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, when did CENTCOM first become aware of the report from the White Helmets that it likely killed a civilian in the May 2023 strike?

General KURILLA. CENTCOM was made aware of allegations that the strike may have resulted in a civilian casualty first raised in a tweet by a White Helmet on 03 May 2023. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

26. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, why didn't CENTCOM consider that report credible and why did CENTCOM wait to open a civilian-casualty credibility assessment report until 14 days after the strike?

General KURILLA. The CIVCAS review process started with the unit's submission of a First Impressions Report (FIR). Initial public reporting and intelligence sources were in conflict and required additional research and clarification and its initial report of civilian harm was on May 8. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

27. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, please provide CENTCOM's civilian-casualty credibility assessment report for this investigation. Will you ensure the assessment is made public with minimal necessary redactions?

General KURILLA. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

28. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, what is the average length of time from an incident to opening a civilian-casualty credibility assessment within CENTCOM, the other combatant commands, and across DOD?

General KURILLA. The facts of each event will drive the specific timeline for initiating the assessment process. This process is typically started within 48 hours of receiving a report or discovering a report of CIVHARM from open-source Non-Government Organizations entities, the Civilian Harm Assessment Cell (CHAC) personnel will begin their assessment of the report to determine initial credibility. Each report will have unique requirements that could range from a few days to several weeks to close with a CIVHARM determination. In some complicated cases, the assessment will require an Army Regulation 15-6 investigation that could take months to close. Most reports are assessed with a closure recommendation within 2 weeks. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

29. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, how have CENTCOM assessment procedures changed since the findings of the 2022 RAND report on “U.S. Department of Defense Civilian Casualty Policies and Procedures” and Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan?

General KURILLA. Since approval of the DOD Instruction 3000.17, effective 21 December 2023, Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response, the CENTCOM Commander and staff, Components, JTF 94-7, and CJTF-OIR have instituted several changes to improve processes and procedures. Collectively, these measures will help ensure future military operations, to the extent feasible, minimize potential harm to civilians and, if errors occur, to take appropriate steps to respond.

CENTCOM has hired ten full-time personnel CHMR branch, including CHMROs, Assessment Cell Personnel, and a Red Cell and Civilian Environmental Team.

CENTCOM has updated the Positive Identification (PID) Policy in February 2024 which incorporates lessons learned from this and other investigations.

Recommendations have been implemented, including cognitive bias training for the target engagement authority training program, red teaming and enhanced pre-mission coordination to improve communications between the organizations.

30. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, what procedures is CENTCOM applying to its investigation into the May 3d air strike?

General KURILLA. The results of the investigation were briefed to Professional Staff Members of the SASC, HASC and SAC-D in May 2024.

31. Senator WARREN. General Kurilla, do you support DOD providing amends in accordance with the families’ wishes, including offering an ex gratia payment, to the family of any civilian killed in the May 3d air strike?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

JANUARY 2024 AL-SHABAAB STRIKE

32. Senator WARREN. General Langley, reports have emerged with claims that a U.S. drone strike killed two Cuban doctors who were held as hostages in Jilib after they were kidnapped in 2019. Was AFRICOM aware of the possibility of civilian casualties before conducting strikes in Jilib in February 2024?

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM goes to great lengths to mitigate harm to civilians during operations, including the operation in question.

33. Senator WARREN. General Langley, a spokeswoman for AFRICOM said they are aware of the reports regarding the two Cuban doctors and are assessing the results of the operation. What is the timeline for AFRICOM to complete its assessment of the report regarding the death of the two Cuban doctors?

General LANGLEY. The final assessment will be completed shortly. USAFRICOM is conducting a thorough review of all available information regarding the reported civilian harm. Once complete, the results of the review will be posted on the USAFRICOM public-facing website.

34. Senator WARREN. General Langley, will AFRICOM inform my office of the results of the assessment?

General LANGLEY. Yes. Once complete, the final assessment can be shared at a higher classification.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN

SUPPORT TO THE KURDS

35. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, the Kurds in both Syria and Iraq have not only stood should-to-shoulder with us but have also done a majority of the fighting and dying against ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] and Iran's terrorist proxies. Their role is so important that we have specifically authorized and appropriated substantial funding for military equipment intended for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to combat terrorist organizations. It has come to my attention that the equipment we have been providing to the Kurds either never makes it to them or is cannibalized before it gets to them because it must stop in Baghdad before going to Erbil. What is the estimated time of these delays of equipment being delivered to the KRG?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

36. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, of the equipment that we have sent to the KRG, what pieces have not been delivered and what is the reason for missing equipment?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

37. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, of the equipment delivered, what is the condition of the equipment upon delivery to the KRG?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

38. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, how does CENTCOM oversee the transit of equipment from the United States, through Baghdad and then to Erbil?

General KURILLA. USCENTCOM has no report of any undelivered or missing CTEF equipment. CTEF equipment does not transit through Baghdad.

39. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, how is timely, complete and undamaged equipment shipments ensured throughout the delivery process?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

PREVENTING IRANIAN FINANCING

40. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, Iran continues to fund terrorist organizations who have killed U.S. troops while also backing the more recent destabilizing activities caused by Hamas. Despite being a State Sponsor of Terror, they continue to evade sanctions imposed by the United States in addition to other nations such as the United Kingdom and the European Union. We must stop Iran's black-market oil sales used to support Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and other Iranian aligned terrorist groups. How are you, alongside our partners and allies in the region, preventing Iranian vessels from selling sanctioned oil used to finance terrorism?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

41. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, specifically, how does CENTCOM support the seizure of Iranian oil whether through collecting evidence, intelligence, or other means?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

42. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, in your opinion, what other sources of Iranian financing could we be going after to make their terrorist resourcing much harder?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

NORMALIZATION ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, ISRAEL, AND SAUDI ARABIA

43. Senator MANCHIN. General Kurilla, I believe the only pathway forward toward a constructive peace in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank is to complete the negotiations around a security, economic, and energy treaty between Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States. This treaty should also incorporate security and economic guarantees that promote the prosperity of the Palestinian people while providing the security needed by Israel. This type of agreement is necessary to ensure Iran fails in their objective of continued destabilization in the Middle East while opening the possibility for other Middle East nations to join the agreement. What do you see as the necessary conditions or necessary steps forward to achieving such a treaty?

General KURILLA. USCENTCOM continues to support and implement the National Defense and Military Strategies, working with regional partners and coalitions to deter external malign influencers like Iran and its proxies and violent extremist organizations from undermining U.S. vital national interests.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN AFRICA

44. Senator MANCHIN. General Langley, Africa is a constant battleground where the freedom of the African people and their democratic values consistently comes under attack by Russian propaganda and Chinese financial exploitation. A prime example of this was in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As mentioned in your statement, Africa has critical resources vital to national security but are at risk of being leveraged by our adversaries to gain strategic advantage. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, how can my staff work alongside your command to identify, prioritize, and protect critical resources vital to the African people and our national interests?

General LANGLEY. We recognize the priority our global competitors have placed on gaining access to critical mineral resources in Africa as evidenced by the recently renegotiated mining-for-infrastructure deal the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) signed with China. However, our African partners are less interested in who they work with, and more interested in ensuring fair terms in any such agreements. The Lobito Corridor agreement is a strong example of this. This trans-African rail line will enhance opportunities to offer alternatives to partner nations, so they do not have to rely on global competitors, particularly China, which intends to use the degraded TAZARA railway to ship minerals from central Africa to Dar es Salaam on the Indian coast.

Regarding how we can work together, our critical minerals of national interest are defined by the "Critical Minerals List" published by the Department of Interior and the "Critical Materials List" published by the Department of Energy. The DOD also determines which minerals and materials are strategic and critical for defense applications and weapon systems. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and coordinate across the Interagency to compete in this sector and secure the range of minerals and materials critical to defense applications and national interest. For example, work with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) offers opportunities to engage. In March 2024, the U.S. Government (USG) announced the opening of an implementing office of Power Africa in Kinshasa, DRC, and the launch of a new activity called "Empowering East and Central Africa program." Power Africa, a flagship USG initiative coordinated by USAID, enhances access to reliable, sustainable energy power across Africa.

Our African partners also struggle to monitor, regulate, and benefit economically from the artisanal mining enterprises responsible for a large volume of the rare earth mineral mining conducted on the continent. These partners would probably benefit from U.S. expertise on developing and implementing regulations for small mining operations, which your staff may be positioned to support.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

IRAN

45. Senator ROSEN. General Kurilla, while U.S. strikes on Iranian-aligned militias may have degraded their short-term capabilities, what are you doing to proactively target Iranian-aligned militias before they injure and kill Americans, not just responding after they successfully conduct an attack and how do we do that without risking expulsion of U.S. troops by the Government of Iraq?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

46. Senator ROSEN. General Kurilla, taking into consideration our force posture in CENTCOM, do you have the forces required to continuously be engaged with Iran and its proxies, while also being able to deter Iran from further aggression?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

ISRAEL

47. Senator ROSEN. General Kurilla, how would CENTCOM support Israel's defensive needs in the event they face a war with Hezbollah?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA

48. Senator ROSEN. General Kurilla, given our partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the Defeat-ISIS campaign, including security training, what contingency plans does CENTCOM have to shore up SDF-run prisons and displaced persons camps to ensure that captured ISIS fighters do not return to the battlefield?
General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

49. Senator ROSEN. General Kurilla, how does the continued elimination of ISIS leadership—which your forces impressively keep executing—impact ISIS’s ability to plan and carry out attacks on U.S. Forces and SDF-run prisons and displaced persons camps?
General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

CHINA

50. Senator ROSEN. General Langley, last year you described the security risks if China were to open a base in Western Africa. Given the economic slowdown in China, have you seen any change in plans from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to create a base in Western Africa?

General LANGLEY. We have not observed any indications that China’s domestic economic conditions have affected the PLA’s basing ambitions.

51. Senator ROSEN. General Langley, do you assess they are closer today to building one than they were last year?
General LANGLEY. [Deleted.]

COOPERATION BETWEEN IRAN AND ALGERIA

52. Senator ROSEN. General Langley, Iran and Algeria recently signed several agreements to strengthen bilateral economic relations. This partnership is concerning, as deeper ties between the two countries could undermine regional stability. For example, in late 2022, it was reported that Iran transferred, through Algerian mediation, kamikaze drones to the Polisario Front. Since that time, Iran has only increased the sale and transfer of its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) around the world. What is your assessment of Iran’s malign actions in North Africa, and can you discuss the impacts of Iranian UAV sales to the region?

General LANGLEY. We have no confirmation that Iran sold UAVs to any nation or non-State actor in North Africa. Tehran has increased its diplomatic and economic outreach to North Africa since the 2023 Iran-Saudi rapprochement. In March 2024, Former Iranian President Raisi visited Algeria and signed MOUs to expand bilateral relations. In July 2023, Iran reopened its embassy and an Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) merchant vessel docked in Libya for the first time in 10 years.

Despite the increased Iranian engagement with North African nations, there is currently no significant Iranian malign activity in North Africa to note, and Algeria would very likely view any Iranian malign activities in the North Africa region with serious concern. Algiers views continued normal diplomatic relationship with both Iran and the West as important to maintaining Algeria’s non-aligned status. Regarding the Polisario, Algeria likely seeks to maintain control of the group and to avoid allowing any nascent conflict to expand into a greater conflict. The U.S. currently has a revised MOU in staffing with the Department of Defense for expanded cooperation with Algeria.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

COUNTER UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS (C-UAS)

53. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, on January 28th a drone attack killed 3 U.S. soldiers and injured more than 30 at Tower 22 in Jordan. Tower 22 had electronic warfare capability to counter drones, but media reporting suggested it lacked the ability to kinetically engage drones. Do you believe all U.S. bases within your area of responsibility should have kinetic air defense systems?
General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

54. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, should Army invest in additional counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS) capabilities?

General KURILLA. USCENTCOM advocates to the U.S. Army, as well as the rest of the services, to prioritize counter-unmanned aerial systems in their investment

priorities. Investments in counter-UAS technology are vitally important to defend U.S. servicemembers in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility as well as our regional Allies and partners. Specifically, USCENTCOM advocates for improved sensing, fire and forget improvements, and the ability to defend against swarms.

55. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, we have been repeatedly told that DOD needs authorities to engage these kinds of drones over military installations; what do you need?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

56. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, are your manuals and guidance documents fully up to date with current law?

General KURILLA. USCENTCOM continues to review and update guidance we provide to our forces to ensure they have the training, current tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) informed by lessons learned. We are working closely with the Department and the Services to ensure we provide the most effective capabilities and training to our forces facing this rapidly evolving threat. As detailed in CJCSI 3121.01B, our forces have the inherent right to self-defense to counter threats from UAS. We also continue to work closely with our partners where we have forces deployed to ensure an integrated defense to counter UAS threats.

57. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, what are you doing to update guidance to expand authority to defend your bases?

General KURILLA. U.S. Forces currently have sufficient authority to respond in self-defense against attacks against bases or personnel. We continue to assess and update guidance to the force as necessary on how to best defeat specific threats.

58. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, is there current guidance prohibiting defenders from employing lethal force to defend against drone threats?

General KURILLA. All U.S. Forces have the inherent right of self-defense and can respond to hostile threats, including those posed by drones, in self-defense, to include lethal force. In non-combat locations, we work closely with our host nation partners to ensure there is an integrated defense.

59. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, are you encouraging your defenders to use lethal force, if necessary?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

60. Senator COTTON. General Kurilla, are you limiting defenses against drones to non-lethal or non-kinetic means?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MICHAEL ROUNDS

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS' INTERNATIONAL CIVIL WORKS AUTHORITIES

61. Senator ROUNDS. General Langley, your posture statement and our previous conversations clearly outline the importance of infrastructure development in the AFRICOM area of responsibility. I introduced a provision in this year's Water Resources Development Act to increase the Army Corps of Engineers' international civil works authorities to provide water resources and other infrastructure support, while building partner capacity, that could serve as an effective tool in AFRICOM and other combatant commands. How would gaining authorities of this type impact your ability to execute your mission?

General LANGLEY. Infrastructure projects such as water resource management, renewable energy systems, and climate-resilient construction methods can directly counter climate change, promoting peace and security. By empowering our partners, we ensure local ownership and long-term impact. These endeavors will strengthen relationships with combatant commands and international organizations, enhancing interoperability and shared commitment to climate-resilient development and peacebuilding. I firmly believe in the potential for collaborative and innovative approaches within the U.S. Government and with international partners to address the interconnected challenges of climate change and security.

USACE Civil Works capabilities are a key enabler for working with African partners when addressing water resource and climate change challenges. These capabilities can support U.S. whole-of-government efforts on the African continent and are an effective tool for integrating military and civil engagement. AFRICOM believes

existing security cooperation authorities and authorities of the interagency (DOS, USAID) are sufficient to support the AFRICOM Campaign Plan requirements for water resource management and climate change initiatives that support Access and Influence and Strengthening partnerships.

62. Senator ROUNDS. General Langley, are there any other “soft power” authorities that might help you to provide incentives to compete more favorably against Chinese Belt and Road initiatives?

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM leverages a number of programs and authorities to compete against Chinese Belt and Road initiatives. The Global Fragility Act (GFA) offers a coherent framework for addressing fragility in priority regions, countering the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative by targeting root causes of conflict. Additionally, programs such as Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) and the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) assist foreign partners, build trust, improve health outcomes, and create durable partnerships. Combined with efforts of our Civil Affairs projects, these efforts strengthen our strategic position and influence in the region, combating Chinese Belt and Road initiatives. While additional “soft power” authorities are not requested, continued funding of existing programs is critical to compete against Chinese Belt and Road initiatives.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

CONFLICT IN THE RED SEA

63. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, in your personal opinion, is the M/V Behshad, or any other Iranian state-owned vessel, providing targeting information to the Houthis, a legitimate military target?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

64. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, do you assess that Iran has the ability to stop the Houthis from attacking commercial shipping and U.S. Navy vessels in the Red Sea?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

65. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, why did the European Union find it necessary to establish their own naval task force—Operation Aspides—with near-identical goals as the U.S.-led Operation Prosperity Guardian?

General KURILLA. I refer you to the European Union for their rationale.

66. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, have any members of Operation Prosperity Guardian left to join Operation Aspides?

General KURILLA. No members (members defined as countries that have publicly announced support for OPG) have publicly withdrawn from Operation Prosperity Guardian (OPG), but all European Union (EU) members who provided direct materiel support to OPG prior to the establishment of Operation ASPIDES have transitioned all materiel support to Operation ASPIDES. These EU nations continue to provide limited staff support to OPG.

67. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, has there been an increase in maritime traffic through the Red Sea since the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

68. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, in your opinion, is our current munition expenditure rate to defend against Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, and drones sustainable?

General KURILLA. Although there is no immediate risk to our operations to counter-Houthi threats to maritime shipping, munitions requirements outside of planned mission stocks do represent risk to mission and readiness posture. If a wider regional conflict were to occur resulting in a dramatic increase in munitions expenditures, then the decrement will need to be reexamined at that time to determine the sustainability of expenditures. CENTCOM fully supports increased investments in the defense industrial base and manufacturing to achieve the planned for level of munitions as quickly as possible in support of operational planning and global readiness requirements. We should also continue to invest in innovative and

non-kinetic weapons and options that will reduce our reliance on traditional manufactured munitions.

69. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, have any People's Republic of China (PRC) naval vessels responded to merchant ships distress calls in the Red Sea since October 2023?

General KURILLA. I am unaware of any instance of PRC naval vessels responding or rendering aid to any merchant ships' distress calls in the Red Sea.

70. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, have any PRC flagged merchant ships been targeted by Houthi forces since October 2023?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND COUNTER-UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS CAPABILITIES

71. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, counter-UAS systems was your top unfunded priority in fiscal year 2024. Given the rise in injuries and deaths from UAS since October 2023, should we expect to see that in the budget as a funded requirement this year?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

72. Senator SULLIVAN. General Kurilla, what can you tell us about new counter-UAS capabilities—like those tested in Red Sands 23.2—that are in the region to defend against UAS attacks?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

RUSSIA IN AFRICA

73. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, beyond shedding light on Russia's exploitative treatment of African nations, what resources do you need to counter Russia's misinformation campaign and growing presence across the continent?

General LANGLEY. As the Russian military has taken control of private military company Wagner, Yevgerny Prigozin's former organization, it has continued to conduct foreign information manipulation and interference throughout Africa. Russia remains engaged in an active campaign of information manipulation and interference against the West. USAFRICOM requires the authorities and tools to build partner capacity to counter foreign information manipulation and interference. We also require both funding and forces to participate in a whole-of-government approach.

74. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, have you seen the Wagner group's influence across Africa wane since the death of Yevgeny Prigozin?

General LANGLEY. Yes, Russian Wagner's influence in Africa has decreased since the death of Prigozhin. While Wagner continues to conduct combat operations in the Central African Republic and Mali, we do not see the group attempting to expand its efforts in Africa as we once did. The Russian Ministry of Defense's new "Africa Corps" unit has taken over Wagner's role as the primary tool for expanding Russian military influence on the continent. Since the beginning of the year, Africa Corps has deployed to Burkina Faso and Niger, two countries which previously did not host Russian expeditionary forces, and to Libya, where Africa Corps took over Wagner's previous mission.

75. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, how has the relationship between Wagner forces and Russian Ministry of Defense personnel changed in your area of responsibility (AOR) since the death of Yevgeny Prigozin?

General LANGLEY. After Prigozhin's death, the Russian government began assuming control over the Wagner group's military, business, and information operations. The various Wagner elements were placed under the supervision of Russia's formal military and intelligence structures. In Africa, the Russia Ministry of Defense developed the Africa Corps, which is gradually increasing its control over Wagner operations. Wagner still operates in Mali and Central African Republic, but Africa Corps likely will move to subsume remaining Wagner personnel and take over these operations within the next year. Some Wagner personnel across Africa have already signed new contracts with Africa Corps.

76. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, have you seen any armed conflict between Russian and Ukrainian military personnel or mercenaries in your AOR?

General LANGLEY. Yes. In 2023, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba promised his country would "free Africa from Russia's grip" during an interview.

Shortly after Sudan's civil war commenced in April 2023, there were indications Ukrainian special operations forces targeted Russian and non-Russians working for Wagner elements supporting Sudan's Rapid Support Forces.

COUNTERING CHINESE INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

77. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, China seeks to expand its military presence on the African continent. Chinese investment through its Belt and Road initiative was initially welcomed by many African nations, but some—like Angola—now see that it hasn't delivered the quality that was promised. The Wall Street Journal reported a few weeks ago that the Chinese missteps have created an opening for the United States to step-in. Where else across the continent have you seen a willingness to pivot away from China and toward the United States and the West more broadly?

General LANGLEY. In Southern Africa, we have seen countries like Zambia embrace U.S. military partnership because of the superior experience, knowledge, and programs we can offer when compared to our competitors. We also see countries with maritime interests seek U.S. assistance to counter illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing activities, often perpetrated by Chinese fishing fleets, in their waters. These countries have consistently asked for maritime domain awareness capabilities, rule of law institutional capacity building, and expansion of our exercises to enhance interoperability.

We also see partner willingness to pivot toward the U.S. regarding Foreign Military Sales. There is a willingness and interest among partner nations to acquire U.S. produced ISR aircraft such as MQ-9s or UAVs instead of procuring Chinese produced equipment. U.S. willingness to support such acquisitions would significantly open further Security Cooperation opportunities with those partners and further undercut competitor efforts. This could provide an opportunity to leverage partners to share ISR products from areas where the U.S. lacks organic ISR coverage.

78. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, how is AFRICOM combatting Chinese influence efforts in the AOR?

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM competes with Chinese influence efforts on the continent by contributing to a whole-of-government approach with partner focused operations, activities, and investments. Through our Campaign Plan and Campaign Order, we sequence and overlap events that demonstrate our value proposition to our partners. Activities such as military expertise exchanges, training teams, exercises, conferences, Foreign Military Sales, and key leader engagements all show the value of U.S. partnerships.

79. Senator SULLIVAN. General Langley, how are you assessing the military implications of Chinese infrastructure investment in your AOR?

General LANGLEY. Chinese infrastructure investment in the AOR supports a key Chinese effort in the region: exportation of critical minerals, which can be used for defense purposes. Beijing has mining interests throughout the continent and Africa has key minerals, which can be used in military applications. These include, but are not limited to: tantalum, used in aircraft and spacecraft; manganese, used in jet engines, batteries, and steel production; and iron ore, critical to producing steel for military uses. Chinese infrastructure investment on the continent, particularly in the transportation sector, including ports, highways, bridges, railways, and tunnel construction, is key to these exportation efforts. It also is important to note that Chinese entrenchment in the African mineral sector allows Beijing to diversify its mineral resources away from Western suppliers and promotes its ability to monopolize the mineral supply chain, including refining and processing. China also can leverage its position as one of Africa's key infrastructure development partners to influence policy, including to garner political support on the international level with its "one-China principle."

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

AIR BASE AIR DEFENSE

80. Senator TUBERVILLE. General Langley, given the threat in the region and increased threat to U.S. military overseas, I'd like to turn attention to base installation protection. It is my understanding that United States Air Forces in Europe—Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA) has developed and demonstrated an air base and air defense prototype with multi-national sensor integration capabilities that can be deployed quickly to provide crucial all-domain awareness of cruise missile

and unmanned aircraft system threats. How could this be expanded to field, train, and operate advanced air base air defense (ABAD) capabilities as quickly as possible?

General LANGLEY. USAFE-AFACRICA is fielding a wing-level C2 system to give commanders threat awareness. Three U.S.-only systems are operational in Europe. The capability consists of a sensor and data feeds displayed on a common operating picture. Plans to incorporate host nation radars, US sensors, flight data, and NATO datalink continue. One partner nation is currently sharing air picture, with 6 more planned. This emerging fused radar picture has been tested in live-fly exercises against simulated cruise missiles and integration with allied nation surface-based air defenses (SBAD) has been demonstrated during live-fire events.

USAFE AFACR indicates that additional funding will support fielding air defense sensors along with kinetic and non-kinetic effectors to establish a self-defense capability at all critical locations in Europe and Africa.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARKWAYNE MULLIN

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS THREATS

81. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, over the last few years, we have seen rapid rise in drone events in both of your areas of responsibility. Over that last 3 years, we have seen approximately 200 separate drone attacks within the Middle East. Over that past 5 months, U.S. Forces have encountered over 150 drone attacks drone attacks from Iranian proxies. Do you think you have the proper number of tools and resources to combat this frequency in threat?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. The threat from un-crewed aerial threats is increasing worldwide, and no Combatant Commander will ever have all the tools they want to uphold the sacred obligation of force protection. United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) has a layered approach to countering un-crewed aerial threats which include small drones, larger one-way attack drones, and cruise and theater ballistic missiles. We are seeking more innovative, easily integrated, and persistent capabilities, as well as the ability to tie them into an assured command and control capability. Without persistent capabilities and assured command and control systems, seamless coordination, sensing, warning, and response to air threats is very challenging. Training is also a major challenge when attempting to deploy and employ non programs of record. However, we are working directly with the Joint Staff and the Services to leverage their training capabilities as they come online. While we're gaining ground, we have also been forced to supplement our rotational National Guard forces with USAFRICOM training programs designed to ensure U.S. personnel can effectively identify and respond to un-crewed threats.

82. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, what do you need from Congress to help provide you rapidly the resources needed to combat this threat?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. Congress must address the critical gaps in USAFRICOM's readiness to combat drone threats through increased resources to develop technology aimed at enhancing integration among counter-drone technologies and systems. Additional legislative measures should prioritize the allocation of resources toward comprehensive training programs tailored to counter-drone operations, ensuring personnel readiness and proficiency.

Congressional oversight should ensure sustained funding and support for the maintenance and enhancement of drone defeat capabilities within USAFRICOM, enabling effective responses to emerging threats in the region.

83. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, as the capabilities of drones and accessibility of drone's advance (i.e. drone stacks and swarms), how are you working with the Services to quickly field new capabilities and adapt to the evolving threat?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. We regularly participate in, and have found great support from, the Warfighter Senior Integration Group forums and work hand in hand with the Services and other Combatant Commands to identify, and in many cases share resources to defend against, the increasing and evolving uncrewed threat.

Within the command, we work closely with the Joint Staff J8 Science and Technology Office, with industry, and service funded Research, Development, Test, and

Evaluation (RDT&E) communities and Joint Solutions (i.e. Joint C-UAS Office) to quickly field new capabilities in order to adapt to evolving and increasing UAS technologies.

COUNTER UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

84. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, 89 percent of counter unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) technology investments in fiscal year 2023 was split among four key companies. These companies are focused on kinetic effects for counter UAS. The proposed supplemental for aid also focuses on replenishment of kinetic based weapons. What is your planned investment strategy to meet your future counter-UAS requirements?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. USAFRICOM requires the prioritization of acquisition and deployment of low-cost precision C-UAS kinetic defeat capabilities that can neutralize small to medium-sized drones. These capabilities must be intuitive to operate and maintain, enabling rapid proficiency among personnel with varying levels of technical expertise.

USAFRICOM aims to select kinetic defeat options that have undergone rigorous testing and evaluation protocols to validate the effectiveness and reliability, while prioritizing scalability and interoperability. In addition, USAFRICOM allocates funding toward supporting operational assessment initiatives that advance cost-effective kinetic defeat technologies, emphasizing interoperability, precision interception, and low collateral damage capabilities.

85. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, how are you working with the Services to bring in new counter-UAS capabilities that meet your requirements to include lowering costs and risks while increasing sustainability and capability?

General KURILLA. At the Departmental level, the Warfighter-Senior Integration Group and Counter-VEO Working Groups have been great venues to communicate priorities to Services, resource solutions to urgent needs, and solicit potential solution pathways for our warfighters. Other focus areas include project proposals with OUSD R&E, A&S and participation in the Chief Technology Officer's Counsel. Internal to USCENCOM we are growing our Modeling & Simulation efforts and experimentation programs. Additionally, we consistently partner with Industry and Academia at the local and national level to assist Services in generating solutions.

General LANGLEY. Annually, USAFRICOM advocates on behalf of our Service components needs through Program Budget Review (PBR)/Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) submissions. Our effort is to prevent threat actor's use of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (S-UAS) against U.S. and partner forces on the continent. We work closely with the Services to determine their needs and I have invited Services and academia to use our area of operations as a collaborative innovation workspace to test and refine C-UAS capabilities. My goal is to at least keep pace with the speed of technology and to mitigate emerging un-crewed aerial threats.

USAFRICOM is collaborating closely with the Services to procure C-UAS capabilities designed to meet our threats and cost reduction targets without compromising operational effectiveness. This initiative aims to integrate advanced C-UAS systems that not only enhance kinetic and non-kinetic defeat capabilities, but also prioritizes ease of deployment, training, and maintenance, thereby reducing logistical burdens and increasing operational flexibility across Africa's diverse environment.

By fostering collaboration across the Services, USAFRICOM seeks to expedite the adoption of scalable and interoperable C-UAS solutions that address evolving threats while maximizing the efficiency and affordability of defensive operations in the region.

86. Senator MULLIN. General Kurilla and General Langley, what can Congress do to help?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. Congress sustains current fiscal and legislative support to effectively advance C-UAS technology amongst the Department of Defense and commercial industry in order to align capabilities to current S-UAS tactics, techniques, and procedures employed by extremist groups. Moreover, sustained support to Service's force protection efforts through the congressional budget processes enables Service components to execute their missions safely at future posture locations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

GROUP 3 UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS THREAT

87. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla, we have heard from the Services, and from you, that you are considering a variety of options to combat the evolving Group 3 threat. Outside of the legacy programs of record, which were not developed to counter the unique attributes of the Group 3 threat, what kinds of capabilities do you need to provide advanced force protection to deployed servicemembers in the region?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

88. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla, what specific attributes do you need to better enable CENTCOM to detect, track and defeat more complex, multi-salvo attacks like the ones we've see in Ukraine?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

89. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla and General Langley, can you please explain the value of Special Operations Forces in your AOR?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) cannot overstate the value of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in our Area of Responsibility (AOR). SOF provides a substantial amount of the forces required to execute our tasks as described in the National Defense Strategy (NDS). SOF conducts counter-violent extremist organizations (C-VEO) operations on the continent to deny, degrade, and defeat threats to the U.S. Homeland and other U.S. interests. SOF is also a key component used to counter our near-peer adversaries throughout Africa. SOF's unique operational capabilities and ability to operate without larger logistic trains and in isolated / denied environments have provided us C-VEO successes and yielded valuable intelligence on adversaries. As USAFRICOM continues to shift toward considering operational effects countering our Global Competitors, SOF will continue to play an essential and expanded role.

90. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla and General Langley, what impacts, if any, do you expect to theater operations given planned force structure and personnel cuts to Army Special Operations Forces?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

General LANGLEY. As a resource constrained theater, USAFRICOM already lacks access to many essential enablers. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations forces are some of our most critical assets. We anticipate planned force structure and personnel cuts to further reduce the fill rates for the units supporting our operations and exercises. We also anticipate staff reductions at all echelons that will further complicate our ability to plan, prepare, and assess civil military operations and military information support operations.

91. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla and General Langley, have you or your command been consulted on the assessment of optimal force structure for special operations forces required by section 1075 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act?

General KURILLA. Yes, I submitted a risk assessment addressing the planned ARSOF reduction to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 September 2023.

General LANGLEY. While we have not been formally consulted yet, we are aware of DOD Inspector General proposals to study the USAFRICOM area of responsibility to gain essential information about the issue. We have also participated in a series of USSOCOM table top exercises to mitigate risk associated with future force structure changes.

GULF PARTNERS

92. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla, the United States has long sought to strengthen our Gulf partners' ability to defend themselves against air, missile, drone, and other attacks by Iran and its proxies. Can you provide an update on these efforts—are we seeing improvements, and what can we do to keep building on progress that has already made?

General KURILLA. [Deleted.]

AIR FORCE BUDGET

93. Senator BUDD. General Kurilla, as you know, the U.S. Air Force is the combatant command agent which has the primary responsibility for funding CENTCOM's headquarters. Do Air Force budgetary constraints or CENTCOM's lack of budgetary control impact mission accomplishment and, if so, how?

General KURILLA. The nature of the USCENTCOM AOR remains dynamic and often requires unpredictable resources. During periods of additional mission requirements, USCENTCOM does place a strain on limited USAF resources. While the USAF strives to support our missions, USAF is tasked to support other Combatant Command missions which limits their ability to provide adequate resource flexibility for USCENTCOM requirements.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED
STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Rounds, Ernst, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony from General Gregory Guillot, Commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, and General Laura Richardson, Commander of U.S. Southern Command. This is General Guillot's first posture hearing as NORTHCOM commander, and we welcome you, sir. I would also note that this is General Richardson's last appearance before the Committee in her current role. General, I would like to express my appreciation for your decades of admirable service to the Nation, including your outstanding leadership of our SOUTHCOM forces. Thank you very much, ma'am.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the ongoing crisis in Haiti. The situation is very concerning, and I understand that United States Military Forces have been deployed to augment security at our embassy in Port-au-Prince and evacuate non-essential personnel. This crisis involves both of your commands to varying degrees, and I would like to know what resources or support you need to respond.

U.S. Northern Command is key to our national security, as the principal command for protecting the American Homeland. Indeed, the first of the four priorities outlined in the National Defense Strategy is, quote, "Defending the Homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China

(PRC).” As we consider threats from China and other competitors, our very concept of homeland defense must evolve. General Guillot, I understand NORTHCOM published the first Homeland Defense Policy Guidance to meet this challenge, and I would ask for an update on the status of its implementation and how it will transform the homeland defense plans of the Department.

The urgency of this mission has been made clear over the past year with the incursions of a Chinese surveillance balloon and other unidentified aerial phenomena in our airspace. These events raised concerns that NORTHCOM and NORAD may have an awareness gap that needs to be resolved. America’s skies and seas must be secure to protect our citizens, and the Department must pursue technologies that provide forward detection. General, I would be interested in your assessment of these potential awareness gaps and what additional tools or resources are needed to overcome them.

Regionally, NORTHCOM also provides support to the U.S. law enforcement mission by helping to counter cartels engaged in drug smuggling, human trafficking, and money laundering across the southwest border. The Committee would appreciate your views on the success of security cooperation efforts with the Mexican Army and Navy, and what role NORTHCOM has in supporting the Department of Homeland Security in border security operations.

Turning to Southern Command, General Richardson, your command faces growing challenges from China and Russia in Latin America. The political and economic instability in the region presents a situation that our adversaries are seeking to exploit to increase their own influence. China, in particular, is expanding its presence in the region, including through investments in strategic infrastructure such as the Port of Balboa in Panama, 5G telecommunications, and an expanding network of space tracking installations. General, I am interested in your assessment of the challenge from near-peer competitors in Latin America, and how we might work strategically with our partners in the region to build resilience against these activities.

SOUTHCOM, like NORTHCOM, continues to work closely with the U.S. interagency to support counter-narcotic and counter-transnational criminal organization, or TCO, missions. I am concerned about the growing threats from TCOs and synthetic opioid trafficking, including fentanyl, which are contributing to more than 100,000 overdose deaths each year in the United States. General Richardson, I would ask for an update on SOUTHCOM’s work with partner nations and other U.S. Government agencies in counter-narcotic and counter-TCO efforts, given SOUTHCOM’s limited force posture and resources.

Finally, we know that insecurity throughout the SOUTHCOM area is contributing to the flow of migrants north to the U.S. border. Economic instability, violence, and corruption continue to be a major source of insecurity in much of the region, especially in the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. General Richardson, I would like to know your views on what more can be done to help improve the situation and strengthen border security throughout the region.

Thank you, again, to our witnesses. I look forward to your testimonies.

As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing in room SVC-217.

Let me now turn to my colleague, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank our witnesses for being with us here.

Our adversaries, particularly China and Russia, are actively working to exploit America's vulnerabilities. They are doing so here at home and seeking to expand their influence in this Western Hemisphere.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy establishes homeland defense as its top priority. That was a year and a half ago. But the Biden administration has not matched that goal with action.

Year after year, the Biden administration has declined to fund NORTHCOM's request for the radars and sensors it needs for proper air defense. Numerous bases on American soil remain unable to protect themselves against small drones. This presents a clear and significant vulnerability. On top of it all, our war games continue to ignore crucial domestic resilience problems that would arise in a potential conflict.

The Biden administration also refuses to learn from its homeland defense mistakes. Last year's Chinese surveillance balloon lapse—the lapse of last year's defenses with regard to the Chinese surveillance balloon—is a case in point. Senior Biden administration defense officials responded evasively to congressional oversight, and they leaked classified information selectively to deflect blame. The President's staff declined to conduct an internal review of the major air defense failure. They finally did so when this Committee mandated it in the NDAA, as presided over by our distinguished Chair.

The spy balloon was a significant failure, but the most pressing homeland defense crisis is the one at our southwest border. Approximately 70,000 Americans are dying annually from fentanyl overdoses. Most of the supply is synthesized in Mexico using Chinese precursor chemicals. Then it is trafficked to the United States by Mexico's criminal cartels. The crisis can only worsen as more deadly drugs flood the market.

The cartels are also executing an unprecedented human trafficking operation across our open border, and it is lucrative. The gangs are charging thousands of dollars for each person they traffic. The human tragedy is severe and so is the risk of terrorist infiltration. As CNN reported this past summer, a human smuggling network with ties to ISIS helped more than a dozen individuals enter our country illegally. In October, two Iranians who were on a security threat list were caught as they tried to cross the border from Mexico.

General Guillot, I recognize that many agencies have responsibility at the southwest border, but DOD [Department of Defense] is one of them. I hope you will explain how DOD's border security contributions could be improved.

We also have challenges further south. I remain concerned about the growing Chinese threats in Central America and South Amer-

ica. The Chinese Communist Party continues to use its well-known playbook in the SOUTHCOM theater. It aggressively uses predatory economic and diplomatic practices to influence governments.

Simultaneously, it sets conditions to enhance its military presence, gather intelligence, and limit U.S. access and influence. Great power competition is happening right here in the Americas. We cannot ignore it.

Two quick examples underscore the urgency. Beijing is making Latin America dependent on Huawei for communications technology—something they tried to do in our country—an example of China's economic influence campaign. We see the CCP's military influence in Cuba, where we discovered a large Chinese intelligence collection center.

General Richardson, I look forward to hearing how these practices directly impact the stability of our region. We should understand the threat they pose to our national security. How real is it? How important is it?

Of course, there are other malign influences in this theater. Venezuelan President Maduro recently asserted a provocative, extra-territorial claim of sovereignty over a large, oil-rich portion of the neighboring nation of Guyana. This type of instability so close to our Homeland is troubling. Even more troubling is the consistent mismatch between the requirements SOUTHCOM has and the resources it receives. We need to find cost-effective ways to exert influence in this theater. For example, let's explore the use of the Office of Strategic Capital in the future.

I look forward to General Richardson's candid assessment of SOUTHCOM's most pressing resource and capability shortfalls, and I am eager to learn what Congress can do to help.

General Guillot, I note that your name rhymes with hero. Is that right?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator, it does.

Senator WICKER. Okay, good. Well, we expect both of you to live up to these expectations. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker, and now let me recognize General Guillot, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL GREGORY M. GUILLOT, USAF, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

General GUILLOT. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is a profound honor to command and represent the men and women of North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command. As we speak this morning, American and Canadian military and civilian personnel from both commands are actively defending our Homelands against significant, persistent threats from multiple vectors in all domains.

Although I have only been in command a few weeks, it is readily clear to me that the United States, Canada, and our expansive network of partners are facing an extraordinarily complex strategic environment. Competitors seeking to diminish our military and economic advantage have fielded advanced kinetic systems de-

signed to strike civilian military infrastructure in North America, both above and below the nuclear threshold. Meanwhile, competitors have rapidly advanced and routinely used non-kinetic capabilities targeting our critical infrastructure and our essential networks.

Threats to the Homeland are present in all domains and along all avenues of approach to include the Arctic Region. As stated in the National Defense Strategy, the People's Republic of China remains our pacing challenge as the People's Liberation Army modernizes and grows at a rapid pace. The PRC's expanding nuclear capability and capacity, alongside its development of modern submarines, missiles, hypersonic weapons, all present significant challenges for homeland defense.

While the PRC's capabilities are growing quickly, Russia remains a threat to the Homeland today and is an immediate nation state concern. Russia retains the world's largest stockpile of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons along with significant capacity to strike inside North America with air-and sea-launched precision conventional weapons. Despite heavy losses to its ground forces in Ukraine, Russia has invested heavily in systems that can threaten the United States such as advanced guided missile submarines, hypersonic live vehicles, ICBMs, as well as significant cyber and undersea capabilities, as well as developmental systems such as nuclear torpedo and a nuclear-powered cruise missile.

Meanwhile, North Korea continues its bellicose rhetoric while test launching increasingly advanced long-range missiles and expanding its ties with China and Russia. While Iran currently lacks the capability to strike North America with long-range missiles, it is investing in that capability. Iran also supports violent militant groups in the Middle East and maintains a worldwide network of operational surrogates. The most prevalent and growing threats include cyber and small, unmanned aerial systems that are being employed inside the United States and Canada against civilian and military infrastructure in ways that were not possible even just a few years ago.

With those risks firmly in mind, NORAD and NORTHCOM strive to begin homeland defense well beyond North America. To do so, both commands are working with the services and Congress to improve domain awareness in order to detect, track, and defeat threats, ranging from long-range ballistic missiles to small, unmanned aerial systems.

The defense of North America is an active endeavor that requires NORAD and NORTHCOM to campaign against threats in all domains, along all approaches. That effort requires seamless exchange of information with combatant commands, conventional and special operations forces, the intelligence community, and the spectrum of interagency and international partners.

The importance of collecting and disseminating information quickly cannot be overstated. I strongly support the Department's work to advance the Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control concept as we seek to detect and track potential threats and share information as quickly as possible with analysts, operators and decisionmakers around the world.

Finally, upon taking command, I began a 90-day assessment to inform the Department, the Joint Force, and Congress on NORAD and NORTHCOM's ability to execute assigned tasks and make recommendations on where the commands could or should do more. Once complete I look forward to sharing my findings and updated vision on how NORAD and NORTHCOM will best execute the noble mission of homeland defense.

The challenges facing our Homelands are real, but there should be no doubt about NORAD and NORTHCOM's resolve to deterred aggression and, if necessary, defeat threats to our Nation and our citizens.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to appear this morning. I look forward to working with the Committee, and I am happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Gregory M. Guillot follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL GREGORY M. GUILLOT

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for the honor of representing the men and women of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Since assuming command in early February, my initial actions and priorities have included maintaining our vital homeland defense mission throughout a seamless leadership transition; strengthening USNORTHCOM and NORAD's vital network of Department of Defense (DOD), international, private sector, and interagency mission partners; and conducting a thorough assessment of the Commands' personnel, missions, and resourcing. I look forward to establishing personal relationships with leaders throughout the commands' area of responsibility and across the U.S. Government as those ties are critical to the successful execution of USNORTHCOM and NORAD's no-fail missions.

It is already apparent that the strategic environment facing the United States and Canada—and our allies and partners—presents significant risks to our Homeland, our citizens, and our vital national interests. Across all domains and avenues, competitors are exploiting conflicts and crises around the world to undermine U.S. global leadership and our democratic institutions. Our competitors continue to develop and deploy highly advanced kinetic and non-kinetic weapons systems capable of disrupting or defeating military and civilian targets in North America. These threats are difficult to detect and can strike with limited warning, which reduces the time and response options available to our national leaders and increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation during periods of heightened tension, crisis, and conflict.

As recent events have made clear, overseas crises increasingly carry significant implications for homeland defense. Regional conflicts routinely have the potential to expand into broader crises that directly impact U.S. and allied interests. Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine and the horrific October 7th Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel demonstrate how seemingly isolated events, regardless of whether the United States and our allies are directly involved, have the potential to reach our own shores. Those ripple effects can include competitor information operations directed against the American public and civil unrest and violence within the United States, or attacks directly targeting the United States and our interests.

Competitors like the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are well aware that the U.S. military is the strongest in the world and highly capable of deploying forces anywhere on the planet to deter aggression and de-escalate potential crises. Accordingly, those competitors have sought to hold defense critical infrastructure in the United States at risk with kinetic and non-kinetic systems intended to impede our ability to flow forces overseas. That strategy must be taken into account in planning for the forward deployment of U.S. forces and resources, as moving assets overseas has the potential to affect the availability of assets assigned to homeland defense or force mobilization missions.

The realities of the 21st century strategic environment require a flexible, adaptive global approach that recognizes the fact that our competitors can hold the U.S. Homeland—and the Homelands of our allies and partners—at risk with conventional, nuclear, and non-kinetic capabilities as part of a broad effort to force the

United States to accept increased risk when deploying forces in support of overseas operations. Preserving the full range of options for defending U.S. national interests requires homeland defense to remain a fundamental consideration at every stage of DOD planning, policy, and budgeting.

A globally integrated approach to planning and actions must also extend beyond the Department of Defense and should be embraced by the whole of the U.S. Government. Success in competition, crisis, or conflict continues to rely on a ready, modern, and capable joint force reinforcing the other core elements of our national power. Our diplomatic corps is essential to shaping the strategic environment and cultivating the network of alliances and partnerships that provide the most significant U.S. advantage against isolated and authoritarian competitors seeking to expand their territory and influence at the expense of their sovereign neighbors. The successful execution of USNORTHCOM and NORAD's missions relies on cohesive strategies, integrated planning, and collaboration across the whole of government, and I look forward to working closely with the Members of this Committee as we work together to meet the formidable challenges facing our Nation.

THE THREAT ENVIRONMENT

The threat to the Homeland continues to grow in complexity. Our primary competitors are developing new ways to hold North America at risk, both above and below the nuclear threshold. Designed to constrain our options in a crisis, the capabilities our potential adversaries are pursuing will challenge strategic deterrence and erode strategic stability by limiting our ability to provide actionable warning and narrowing the decision space available to senior leaders. The conflict in the Middle East has also amplified the risk that Iran or a foreign terrorist organization will conduct attacks in the Homeland, either directly or by inspiring homegrown violent extremists to act in their stead.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC remains the Department's pacing challenge as identified in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS). Beijing has embarked on a wide-ranging military modernization program that is advancing the PRC's homeland-threatening capabilities at an urgent pace. At the strategic level, the PRC is pursuing a rapid quantitative and qualitative expansion of its nuclear arsenal, which now numbers over 500 operational warheads and is on pace to exceed 1,000 by the end of the decade. The PRC probably intends to place a significant portion of these weapons—including over 300 newly constructed intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silos—in a launch-on-warning posture that could increase the risk of miscalculation in a crisis or conflict.

Beijing's strategic modernization program includes a variety of novel weapons designed to bolster the credibility of the PRC's strategic deterrent by ensuring its ability to overcome U.S. missile defenses and retaliate following a strike. These weapons include ICBMs equipped with hypersonic glide vehicles, whose high speed, low trajectory, and maneuvering capabilities challenge our ability to detect, characterize, and warn of inbound threats. The PRC is also developing a fractional orbital bombardment system, designed to further challenge our early warning radars and ballistic missile interceptors.

The Department of Defense's annual report to Congress on PRC military developments states that the PRC may also be exploring the development of conventionally armed intercontinental-range missile systems that could allow Beijing to strike targets in Alaska and the continental United States without crossing the nuclear threshold. Such systems, if fielded, would further erode strategic stability by challenging our ability to characterize an inbound attack and complicating our decision-making about an appropriate response.

Turning to the maritime domain, in the last 2 years, the PRC has launched the first two hulls of its new Shang III class of nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines (SSGN). If the PRC arms the Shang III with land-attack cruise missiles, the new SSGNs could provide Beijing a clandestine land-attack option beyond the Indo-Pacific region, potentially holding at risk critical infrastructure in Alaska and the U.S. West Coast. While Beijing's intent for employing these long-range conventional strike capabilities is not fully known, in a future crisis, the PRC could use these weapons—along with its world-class offensive cyber capabilities—to threaten or attack our critical defense infrastructure in an attempt to dissuade or frustrate our force flows across the Pacific and degrade the effectiveness of our forward combat operations.

Meanwhile, the PRC continues to expand its influence and activity in the Arctic. Last summer, Beijing again employed its Xue Long 2 ice-hardened research vessel to conduct the country's 13th scientific expedition to the Arctic. During its voyage,

the vessel deployed autonomous underwater vehicles, floating ice stations, and an acoustic monitoring buoy system in waters off Alaska and Canada to collect data that could inform PLA Navy deployments to the region. Concurrently, the PRC and Russia conducted their second combined naval patrol to the Bering Sea in as many years. More than 10 vessels—including cruise missile-capable surface combatants—participated in the patrol, which included anti-submarine exercises and other combat training near the Aleutian Islands.

Russia

While the PRC's strategic capabilities are growing quickly, Russia remains the greatest military threat to the Homeland today. Despite the degradation of its ground forces resulting from two disastrous years of combat in Ukraine, Russia seeks to rapidly rearm and retains the world's largest arsenal of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and a still formidable capability to threaten North America with precision-strike conventional weapons. Russia has gained extensive operational experience with its most advanced non-nuclear weapons in Ukraine, and has had the opportunity to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures that it could employ in a direct conflict with the United States or our NATO allies. Moreover, Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric have demonstrated to like-minded autocrats that nuclear coercion remains a tool of statecraft in the 21st Century.

Russia's leaders regularly exercise strategic conflict with the West and are investing heavily to develop new weapons to ensure their ability to hold our Nation at perpetual risk. In the last year, Russia has expanded its force of ICBMs armed with the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, designed to evade missile defense radars and interceptors. It is also preparing to deploy the Sarmat heavy ICBM, which Vladimir Putin has claimed will feature a fractional orbital bombardment capability that could enable it to approach North America via a nonstandard trajectory over the South Pole. Russia also continues to develop and test novel experimental weapon systems, like the nuclear-armed Poseidon transoceanic weapon and the Burevestnik nuclear-propelled cruise missile. Russia intends for these systems to challenge US defenses and guarantee Russia's ability to retaliate after a first strike.

Meanwhile, Russia continues to hone a wide range of non-nuclear capabilities—including cyber weapons and conventionally armed air-, sea-, and ground-launched cruise missiles—to provide options below the nuclear threshold. Russia plans to use these non-nuclear capabilities to strike Western economic and military infrastructure in an attempt to degrade our political will and compel negotiations to terminate an escalating conflict. Russian public statements and military deployments near North America over the last several years make clear that, in the event of war with the United States, Moscow's targeting strategy for these weapons would include critical infrastructure in the Homeland.

Despite the heavy commitment of its aviation forces in Ukraine, Russia has continued to fly regular out-of-area patrols with its heavy bombers and other military aircraft in multiple areas around the globe—including numerous flights into the North American air defense identification zone since February 2022. Meanwhile, the Russian Navy has increased its long-range operational deployments of cruise missile-capable surface and subsurface vessels above pre-February 2022 levels. In January, Russia deployed a Gorshkov-class frigate to the western Atlantic, where the Russian Defense Ministry claimed the crew rehearsed “delivering a missile strike against an enemy surface target” using its Tsirkon hypersonic missiles. In September, the Russian Pacific Fleet conducted its Finval-2023 exercise, which demonstrated Moscow's ability to control access to the Arctic through the Bering Strait and included live cruise missile launches by coastal defense units as well as surface and subsurface vessels operating within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska.

Finally, in late 2022, the Russian Pacific Fleet received its first Severodvinsk-class nuclear-powered guided missile submarine (SSGN), introducing a land-attack cruise missile threat to the U.S. West Coast similar to that faced by the East Coast since the first Severodvinsk entered service in the Russian Northern Fleet in 2014. Russian media indicates that Moscow now plans to field a total of 12 Severodvinsk hulls, split evenly between the Atlantic and Pacific, enabling the Russian Navy to pose a persistent conventional threat to critical infrastructure throughout most of North America. The threat will only become more acute later in the decade when Severodvinsk SSGNs are armed with the Tsirkon hypersonic missile.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Over the last 2 years, the DPRK has conducted nearly 100 ballistic missile tests, including 13 ICBM flight tests, as well as three space launch attempts using ICBM-

class boosters. Its most recent space launch in November successfully placed a rudimentary intelligence satellite into orbit—capabilities that could advance quickly if Moscow were to offer space cooperation in exchange for North Korean arms deliveries for the war in Ukraine. Ballistic missiles that the DPRK has successfully tested since 2022 include a new and more capable liquid-propellant ICBM as well as the country's first solid-propellant ICBM, which will further compound warning challenges due to its smaller logistical footprint.

Both systems likely have sufficient boost to deliver a nuclear payload to the entire United States. The DPRK's closed society and robust security apparatus make it one of our most vexing intelligence challenges and prevent us from confidently assessing the number of ICBMs in its inventory. Nonetheless, I am concerned that Kim Jong Un's growing ICBM stockpile could approach our capacity to defend North America—a challenge that will only expand in the coming years if Kim Jong Un looks to add multiple reentry vehicles to his missiles and transition his ICBM program from research and development to serialized production and deployment.

Iran

Iran's materiel support to Russia's war in Ukraine and political support to Hamas before and following its October 7th attack on Israel, along with Iranian support to Houthi forces challenging commercial shipping, underscore Tehran's entrenched hostility to the Western-led international order. Iran remains committed to retaliating for the January 2020 death of former IRGC Qods Force Commander Qassem Soleimani, potentially with attacks against current and former senior U.S. officials. Iran also poses a growing cyber threat to U.S. and allied networks and critical infrastructure. Last November, Iranian cyber actors targeted several U.S. water and wastewater facilities, likely in response to U.S. support for Israel. In the last 2 years, the FBI has disrupted two Iranian plots inside the United States to kill U.S. citizens of Iranian origin that have criticized the regime's autocracy and disregard for human rights. Finally, Iran continues to invest in its nuclear energy and space launch programs, which could provide a potential breakout option should Iran's leaders decide to pursue a Homeland-threatening ICBM.

Violent Extremist Organizations

The likelihood of a significant terrorist attack in the Homeland has almost certainly increased since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Multiple terrorist groups—including ISIS and al-Qa'ida—have leveraged the crisis to generate propaganda designed to inspire followers to conduct attacks, including in North America. The increasingly diffuse nature of the transnational terrorist threat challenges our law enforcement partners' ability to detect and disrupt attack plotting against the Homeland and leaves us vulnerable to surprise. Commercial and general aviation likely persist as preferred targets due to the disproportionate economic and psychological impact such attacks would generate. I also continue to watch the Israel-Hamas conflict for signs that escalation is expanding beyond the region and remain concerned with the threat from Lebanese Hizballah—a group with international reach and a history of conducting attacks in the Western Hemisphere that continues long-term contingency planning in the Homeland.

Regional Security Threats

Transnational criminal organizations in Mexico and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere continue to foster instability and challenge the rule of law, creating potential opportunities for our State and non-State adversaries to expand their access and influence along our southern approaches. Irregular migration through Mexico reached record levels in the last year, and drug-related violence has escalated as rival cartels fight for control of lucrative drug and human trafficking routes. Cartels have also demonstrated a growing willingness to directly engage Mexican military, security forces, and government officials, highlighting the need for continued theater security cooperation with our partners in Mexico.

Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS)

We continue to see a rapid proliferation of sUAS technology and usage in the Homeland, including near our military installations. While most of this activity can likely be attributed to hobbyists, sUAS could be exploited by nefarious actors for surveillance, illicit trafficking, or—in a worst case—attacks on domestic critical infrastructure. Unauthorized sUAS flights over government installations and civilian infrastructure have the potential to disrupt critical services and threaten force protection and mission assurance. Given the growing prevalence of sUAS available for military, commercial, and recreational use, NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and our inter-agency partners face mounting challenges in early detection and threat character-

ization, owner and operator attribution, and—when necessary—mitigation and interdiction.

By all indications, sUAS will present a safety and security risk to military installations and other critical infrastructure for the foreseeable future. Mitigating those risks requires a dedicated effort across all Federal Departments and agencies, State, local, tribal and territorial communities, and Congress to further develop the capabilities, coordination, and legal authorities necessary for detecting, tracking, and addressing potential sUAS threats in the Homeland.

USNORTHCOM and NORAD PRIORITIES

Against the backdrop of expanding and expansive threats, USNORTHCOM and NORAD remain dedicated to defending the U.S. and Canadian homelands today and well into the future. My key priority remains improved domain awareness in the approaches to North America and around the globe. The ability to detect, classify, and track potential threats to the Homeland from the seafloor to space and in the cyber domain is a critical need for USNORTHCOM and NORAD—and for my fellow combatant commanders and international partners. Our core missions, to include defending critical defense infrastructure, require USNORTHCOM and NORAD to see and respond to threats through a globally integrated layered defense extending as far from our shores as possible. That capability is needed to ensure national leaders have as much time as possible to decide the best course of action for deterring, de-escalating, or defeating potential hostile acts.

Investments in capabilities such as Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR) and the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) will significantly enhance domain awareness in the air and maritime domains while limiting competitors' ability to approach North America undetected. Likewise, USNORTHCOM and NORAD's ability to track and defeat inbound DPRK long-range ballistic missiles will be significantly enhanced with the Long-Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR), currently planned for integration into the United States' ballistic missile defense architecture in the near future. I remain grateful to this Committee for your support of these important initiatives, and I urge continued emphasis on improving our Nation's ability to find and monitor potential aggressors well before they could target our Homeland.

The rapid pace of change in the strategic environment, to include advancing kinetic and non-kinetic threats and the increasing exploitation of the information space, give reason to believe that successful defense of the Homeland tomorrow requires new approaches, technologies, and perspectives. As competitors increasingly focus on holding the Homeland at risk in an effort to influence U.S. and allied decisionmaking and limit our options for intervention in overseas crises, USNORTHCOM and NORAD are taking active measures today to ensure the ability of the commands to defend the Homelands in the future.

The United States retains the world's most powerful military and a global network of immensely capable allies and partners. However, information flow between organizations and commands remains stifled by technological and institutional barriers, which too often results in delayed delivery and processing of critical information. Improving global domain awareness is absolutely necessary, but the Department must also expedite the processing and sharing of information between combatant commands, allies, partners, and the interagency community. The Department's prioritization of the Joint All-Domain Command and Control concept highlights the increasing importance of quickly sharing information between sensors, decision-makers, and effectors. For USNORTHCOM and NORAD, the ability to detect potential threats, make well-informed recommendations to leaders, and take appropriate defensive measures is vital, and I will work closely with the Department and the Services to develop this critical capability.

Our Nation must also continue to invest wisely in the military and civilian personnel responsible for planning and executing every one of USNORTHCOM and NORAD's no-fail missions. The demands of defending the Homeland are significant and require an experienced and innovative professional workforce from a broad range of experiences and backgrounds. Our commands continue to prioritize recruiting and retaining exceptional talent from a broad and deep talent pool. Just as our Nation makes substantial investments in cutting-edge technology to outpace our competitors, we must also invest in the dedicated servicemembers and public servants who stand watch over our Nation.

HOMELAND DEFENSE DESIGN NEXT

In recognition of the multi-domain threats to North America, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have prioritized operationalizing the commands and institutionalizing active campaigning in the Homeland. Homeland defense begins well beyond our shores and relies on a layered, integrated defense conducted in full cooperation with

our fellow combatant commands and our allies and partners. Rather than simply reacting to the actions of our competitors, USNORTHCOM and NORAD are taking active measures to assess the emerging threats and associated requirements of the near future in to ensure our ability to defend critical assets and safeguard the Nation's ability to project forces forward.

The actions and ambitions of our competitors require the United States and Canada to demonstrate the capability to fight in and from North America, and the commands' homeland defense design will ensure our ability to defend the Homeland in the coming decades. USNORTHCOM and NORAD's focus on campaigning and operationalizing the commands reflects competitors' growing capability and capacity to hold targets throughout North America at risk and to force U.S. and Canadian leaders to defend the continent while projecting forces overseas.

It is a near certainty that homeland defense in the coming years will rely less on point defense and traditional kinetic defeat mechanisms in favor of area defense and left-of-launch effects that take full advantage of multi-domain capabilities. While the future of homeland defense may look vastly different than the current architecture, it will continue to depend on the pillars USNORTHCOM and NORAD use today—all-domain awareness; information dominance; decision superiority; and global integration. I look forward to working with the Department and Congress on these pillars.

The necessity of campaigning in and from North America has been made clear in recent years as competitors have repeatedly demonstrated the capability, capacity, and intent to hold the Homeland at risk. USNORTHCOM and NORAD will continue to advance the commands' ability to conduct globally integrated joint operations in defense of the Homeland. The commands will also benefit from the recent transition from the legacy USNORTHCOM and NORAD Command and Control Center (N2C2) to a Joint Operations Center (JOC) that mirrors the capabilities of fellow geographic combatant commands and allows for real-time, all-domain communications and coordination with the commands' DOD and interagency partners.

Finally, the success of Homeland and continental defense requires capability and capacity to conduct sustained multi-domain operations in the Arctic. The challenges associated with communicating, operating, and surviving in the Arctic are well documented, and investment by the U.S. Government, the Department, and the military Services reflect the need to compete in the region now and well into the future. I am encouraged by national-level commitments to improving the Port of Nome and building the U.S. Coast Guard's icebreaker fleet; both efforts are visible signs of the U.S. commitment in the region that will support the economic and national security interests of the United States. The DOD and Services have readily acknowledged the importance of operating in far north in their respective Arctic strategies, and further emphasis and investment is necessary to field the Arctic-capable platforms, properly trained and equipped forces, and infrastructure necessary to succeed in a region of enormous strategic consequence. USNORTHCOM's Special Operations Command-North (SOCNORTH), has demonstrated both the value and challenges associated with Arctic operations through Combined and Joint Operations, activities, and investments in the High North. Most recently, SOCNORTH executed Exercise Arctic Edge 24, readily integrating over 600 USSOF, Partner Nation SOF, and LEAs across the entire North American Arctic.

SECURITY COOPERATION

Global alliances and partnerships based on mutual trust and interoperability provide the United States and our allies with a distinct advantage over our competitors. Our competitors continue their relentless efforts to increase presence, economic leverage, and influence in our region, proving the necessity of security cooperation with USNORTHCOM's exemplary military partners time and again. USNORTHCOM's relationships with military partners in Mexico, Canada, and The Bahamas boost our ability to operate, communicate, and share information for common benefit and are integral to homeland defense.

The reputation of the United States and the Department of Defense as steadfast and reliable partners is critical to each of those relationships, and USNORTHCOM security cooperation efforts continue to generate significant benefits for regional security and burden sharing with our neighbors. As instability and conflict arise overseas, it is essential to safeguard the security cooperation investments that have an outsized role in defending our Homelands and vital interests, including through continued attention to the thriving strategic, economic, social, and defense partnerships close to home.

Mexico

It is already apparent the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Mexico is robust and expanding as both nations address the challenges posed by common threats to our citizens and shared interests. The bonds between USNORTHCOM and our Mexican military partners are broad, resilient, and focused on expanding our combined capability to defend and secure North America from myriad State and non-State threats. Countering competitor influence in the region remains a key priority for USNORTHCOM and our Mexican military partners, and as a direct result, the U.S. and Mexican militaries are more operationally compatible than at any point in our shared history.

This burgeoning bilateral defense relationship is a result of focused, direct, strategic-level defense engagement and confidence building measures, to include routine senior-leader dialogs such as the North American Defense Ministers conference, combined training like we have witnessed at the U.S. Army Joint Readiness Training Center, exercises such as EXERCISE AZTEC ALLIGATOR, and longstanding efforts to promote shared strategic interests.

Assisting our partners in meeting shared security challenges will require modernizing Foreign Military Sales and Direct Commercial Sales (FMS/DCS) by improving institutional responsiveness to partner requests and demonstrating greater agility in fulfilling those requests. The demonstration of timeliness and strategic responsiveness serves to reinforce lines of effort in my campaigning while simultaneously presenting opportunity to outcompete revisionist and revanchist powers present throughout the region.

The growing strength of this vital defense relationship has been made evident through our collaborative approach to common defense challenges, and I am extremely proud of USNORTHCOM's bilateral defense partnership with our Mexican military partners. Those efforts and investments have simultaneously strengthened our common security while helping to reduce Mexico's reliance on Russian and PRC equipment and contracts that often come with costly strings attached.

Canada

As has been made clear by the unique NORAD relationship, Canada has been a steadfast ally for decades and remains our essential security partner in the defense of North America. Canadian investments in domain awareness capabilities, advanced air and maritime platforms, and the Canadian Armed Forces' routine participation in multinational efforts such as Operation NOBLE EAGLE and Exercise Arctic Edge provide an unmatched continental defense architecture. This unique and steadfast partnership, based on common ideals and interests, continues to gain strength and will serve both the United States and Canada for generations to come. Canadian commitment to robust support to NORAD and meeting shared security challenges with the United States and our allies, along with investments in a robust continental defense is key to the success of the bi-national alliance that has successfully deterred aggression against the United States and Canadian homelands for over 65 years.

The Bahamas

The Bahamas is a growing and willing partner in maritime security and associated intelligence and information sharing, and USNORTHCOM's programs with The Bahamas improve disaster response and climate resiliency for both nations. The USNORTHCOM bilateral frameworks with the Royal Bahamian Defence Force (RBDF), and with other U.S. partners such as the United States Coast Guard and the Rhode Island National Guard are important to advancing mutual defense and security objectives. USNORTHCOM will continue to work closely with the RBDF to enhance shared maritime domain awareness and cooperation, and I look forward to building further on an already strong and beneficial relationship.

DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES (DSCA)

USNORTHCOM's support of lead Federal agencies in the aftermath of a natural or human-caused disaster remains a core mission that directly bolsters our homeland defense enterprise while delivering rapid relief to American citizens in times of great need. USNORTHCOM works year-round with our interagency partners to ensure plans, communications, and interagency relationships are always ready to deliver the right military-unique capabilities at the right time and place. Whether providing military personnel to supplement Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection's mission along our southwest border, assisting U.S. Federal law enforcement agencies efforts to illuminate illicit trafficking networks, or speeding military-unique capabilities to support Federal Emergency Management Agency-led disaster relief, USNORTHCOM is always ready to support our lead Fed-

eral agencies. I look forward to establishing and maintaining partnerships with the National Guard Bureau, State, local, tribal, and territorial partners in support of vital DSCA roles.

In addition to delivering life-saving capabilities and resolute support to our fellow Americans and interagency partners in times of crisis, USNORTHCOM's DSCA mission also routinely demonstrates a degree of resilience and well-exercised cooperation that should cast serious doubt in the minds of potential aggressors who may be considering kinetic or non-kinetic attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure. Over many years and multiple significant events, USNORTHCOM and our Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial partners have proven the ability of communities and agencies across the United States to recover quickly from major disasters. The same lessons learned in those diverse scenarios would apply following an attack against the United States, and competitors must know that an attack would be certain to fail and result in only limited disruption.

As multi-domain threats to critical defense, transportation, and commercial networks and facilities continue to mount, the United States and Canada will face a growing need for resilient, defensible infrastructure. Following the release of the Department's policy guidance regarding defense of critical infrastructure, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have worked with a host of intergovernmental and industry partners to capture the capabilities and relationships necessary to safeguard national infrastructure from attack. This vital effort will continue to present a significant challenge that requires a whole-of-government approach and strong cooperation with Congress and the interagency community to ensure our national ability to deter, defend, and, if necessary, recover quickly from attacks against key infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

USNORTHCOM and NORAD's activities, operations, and investments directly reflect the reality of the strategic environment and the threats and challenges that will continue to face our Homeland into the foreseeable future. Based on my ongoing initial assessment of the commands and the challenges we must face, I am confident in our Commands' ability to defend North America, but I am extremely mindful of the mounting threats and challenges presented by determined and well-resourced competitors.

It is a profound honor to lead the extraordinary U.S. and Canadian Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians of USNORTHCOM and NORAD in defense of our great nations. Those dedicated men and women continue to work tirelessly to defend our Constitution, our citizens, and our shared values. In return, our warriors rely on the resources and support necessary to succeed in their no-fail missions. There should be no doubt that the United States military is the strongest, most capable professional force in history, and that our men and women stand ready today to vigorously defend our Nation against any threat. Thank you for your support and for the opportunity to serve alongside them. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Guillot. General Richardson, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL LAURA J. RICHARDSON, USA, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

General RICHARDSON. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today with General Guillot. I am honored to represent the dedicated men and women of United States Southern Command to discuss the challenges we share with our neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our national security strategy recognizes the direct link between this region's security and our own security.

We are harnessing the power of partnership from Team USA in support of Team Democracy by leveraging all instruments of national power—diplomacy, information, military, and economics—to expeditiously assist partner nations in addressing the challenges that impact our collective security.

This region, which is our shared neighborhood, remains under assault from a host of cross-cutting, transboundary challenges that directly threaten our Homeland. I have seen these challenges intensify since I met with you last year, and this remains a call to action.

In almost 2-½ years in the command I have made it my priority to meet partners where they are, and to listen and understand the challenges that affect us all. The world is at an inflection point. Our partners in the Western Hemisphere, with whom we are bonded by trade, shared values, democratic traditions, and family ties, are increasingly impacted by the interference and coercion. I have learned that our presence absolutely matters.

The People's Republic of China has exploited the trust of democracies in this hemisphere, using that trust to steal national secrets, intellectual property, and research related to academic, agriculture, and health care. The scope and scale of this espionage is unprecedented. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, the PRC aims to amass power and influence at the expense of the world's democracies.

Here in the Western Hemisphere, Latin America and Caribbean have the potential to feed and fuel the world. Understanding this, the PRC has already, and is already busy extracting and exploiting. Predatory investment practices, construction of megaports and dual-use space facilities, and criminal cyber activities are just a few of the PRC's malign activities that jeopardize the sovereignty and safety of the region.

Russia remains an acute threat and seeks to increase its foothold by bolstering authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. In the last year, China, Russia, and Iran have increased their presence diplomatically, economically, and even militarily in the region. These activities undermine democracies and challenge their credibility.

Both China and Russia exploit the presence of transnational criminal organizations and amplify their destabilizing impacts on democratic governments. TCOs traffic weapons, drugs, people, gold, lithium, rare earth minerals, commodities, and counterfeit goods while contributing to the surge of fentanyl-related deaths here at home.

The good news is working with our very willing partners leads to the best defense. We must use all available levers to strengthen our partnerships with the 28 like-minded democracies in this hemisphere who understand the power of working together to counter these shared threats. The United States remains the preferred and most trusted security partner in the region. We build trust through investment and security cooperation programs that train and equip our partners, our partner military and security forces, a robust joint exercise program to build interoperability, and the development and employment of emerging technologies. Moreover, we maximize the resources allocated by the Department of State's International Military Education and Training Program for military financing, for military sales, to build that interoperability and counterbalance PRC military engagements and investments.

As the National Defense Strategy states, the U.S. derives immense benefit from a stable, peaceful, and democratic Western Hemisphere, that also reduces security threats the Homeland.

USSOUTHCOM continues to innovate and adapt, putting integrated deterrence into action every day. We remain committed to working across all domains with allies and partners, combatant commands, the Joint Force, the U.S. interagency non-Federal entities, and the U.S. Congress to guarantee safety, security, and prosperity throughout the Western Hemisphere.

This is the work and promise of USSOUTHCOM, as part of Team USA, in support of Team Democracy. Thank you for your assistance in resourcing this team.

I would also like to recognize behind me in the audience the Interamerican Defense College class that is here today to see how the power of our U.S. Congress and how the Department of Defense, and us as combatant commanders talk about our regions.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Laura J. Richardson follows:]

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL LAURA J. RICHARDSON
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
BEFORE THE 118TH CONGRESS
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2024



Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished committee members, United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) celebrated its 60th anniversary this past year. Since 1963, USSOUTHCOM, working alongside our Allies and partners, has advanced security and stability throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. For 60 years, the brave men and women of USSOUTHCOM have steadfastly devoted themselves to a cause greater than their own – an *Enduring Promise* to the region – that in the face of tyranny, corruption, pandemic, and natural disasters, the United States of America will always stand beside those who seek and promote peace, prosperity, and the democratic ideals upon which they flourish.

Today, democracy and democratic values are under attack globally. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are strategic competitors who operate without regard for international law or norms. They condone and perpetrate corruption, disinformation campaigns, cybercrime, and human rights abuses that undermine the existing democratic political processes of fragile democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean and bolster the authoritarian rule of regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Meanwhile, Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) fuel violence and corruption throughout the region, enriching themselves while undermining democracy and co-opting the legitimate governance functions of our partners. They traffic drugs, weapons, persons, wildlife, and a range of illicit items, leaving citizen and environmental insecurity, death, and instability in their wake. TCOs bear direct responsibility for the mass quantities of drugs that continue to pose a threat to American lives.ⁱ

In response, and as the 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) outlines, we embrace the opportunity to expand our partnerships and bolster “economic resilience, democratic stability, and citizen security” throughout the region.ⁱⁱ *Integrated Deterrence* means leveraging all

instruments of national power – diplomacy, information, military, and economics – and doing so in concert with Allies, partners, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector. It’s what I call *Team Democracy*. Together, we must step forward and act with a greater sense of urgency to outcompete our adversaries by providing alternatives to PRC-centric solutions. We must remain the region’s most trusted defense and security partner. Our partners need our help, and as one senior leader in the region recently told me, “When you need a rope to grab, you aren’t necessarily looking to see who threw it.” *We* must be the ones throwing the rope, not our Strategic Competitors.

The NSS recognizes the direct link between this region’s prosperity and security to that of our own.ⁱⁱⁱ Over my two-plus years in command, I have made it my priority to meet our partners where they are - to hear and understand firsthand the issues and challenges they face. I’ve learned that presence *absolutely* matters. If we want to win, we must be on the field. USSOUTHCOM’s presence in the region builds the capacity of our partners, helps counter our adversaries’ malign intent, and contributes to our homeland defense. The many challenges this hemisphere faces are a *Call to Action*.

USSOUTHCOM’s strategy focuses on three lines of effort: *Strengthening Partnerships*, *Countering Threats*, and *Building our Team*. We remain committed to coordinating, collaborating, and synchronizing with our Allies, partners, U.S. Interagency, and Non-Federal Entities to outcompete our Strategic Competitors, defeat the pervasive threats, and overcome the challenges within the Western Hemisphere.

Expanding Challenges in the Region

Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China

The United States and the PRC are engaged in geopolitical competition based on opposing views of the value of the international rules-based order. The PRC, through the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), seeks to supplant the United States as the world's leading economic and military power.

The PRC understands the importance of economics and the intertwined role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in achieving its *Chinese Dream* – the PRC reclamation of China's central role in world affairs. In Latin America and the Caribbean, USSOUTHCOM recognizes the opportunity to collaborate with our partners, build their capacity, and increase their resiliency to the pervasive challenges and threats they face. Conversely, the PRC is exploiting a fragile security environment and taking advantage of the region's need for economic investment to gain influence and advance its malign agenda. The PRC knows that economic power is a prerequisite for global military power and it is imperative that we view the PRC's economic activities, particularly in the Americas, as connected to their global political and military desires.

With a population of 1.4 billion people, the PRC must look beyond their shores for the resources to sustain both its large populace and consolidation of power at home. Latin America and the Caribbean offer such resources. The PRC is laying claim to the abundant food, water, and critical earth minerals found in the Western Hemisphere. This region is home to 31 percent of the planet's fresh-water resources and by 2028 will account for 25 percent of global agriculture and fisheries exports.^{iv v} The PRC has not extended itself into the Western

Hemisphere to offer win-win, high-quality investment - they have come to extract, and they intend to gain access and influence by employing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a “natural extension of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.”^{vi vii}

Twenty-two of the 31 countries in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) are now signatories to the BRI, which the PRC portrays as expanding economic, financial, and trade opportunities. The PRC has now surpassed the United States as South America’s top trading partner and is Central America’s second-largest trading partner.^{viii} In 2002, PRC trade with Latin America and the Caribbean was just \$18 million; in 2022 it ballooned to \$450 billion. That number is expected to increase to \$700 billion by 2035.^{ix}

But it’s not just access to resources that the PRC seeks with its investments; it’s the furtherance of political and military objectives to increase isolation of Taiwan. Globally, only 12 countries recognize Taiwan, seven of which are in my AOR. PRC pressure to abandon existing recognition is mounting and is often a precondition for investment. Last year, Honduras, home to Joint Task Force-Bravo, cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan and signed onto the BRI.

The PRC is playing the “long game” with its development of dual-use sites and facilities throughout the region. The PRC messages its investments as peaceful, but in fact, many serve as points of future multi-domain access for the PLA and strategic naval chokepoints. These investments include critical infrastructure such as deep-water ports, cyber facilities, and space facilities. In Panama, PRC-controlled State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) continue to bid on projects related to the Panama Canal – a global strategic chokepoint. Meanwhile, in Argentina, another SOE is attempting to secure the rights to build dual-use maritime installations, which would support sustainment and power projection in proximity to the Strait of Magellan, the Drake Passage, and Antarctica. This would dramatically improve the PRC’s ability to access the

Antarctic region and its fisheries and impact U.S. strategic mobility to an area reserved for peace and science.^x

The PRC blueprint for development and subsequent dual-use of deep-water ports elsewhere in the world is already a matter of public record.^{xi xii} Here in the Western Hemisphere, a Chinese SOE will be the first with majority ownership and control of a country's port infrastructure - the future \$3.6 billion mega-port in Chancay, Peru. The port will serve as a PRC-proclaimed "gateway from South America to Asia."^{xiii}

To shape positive perceptions of both the PRC and the CCP, Beijing pours billions of dollars into foreign information operations.^{xiv} Their approach includes information manipulation using "propaganda and censorship, promoting digital authoritarianism, exploiting international organizations and bilateral partnerships, pairing cooptation and pressure, and exercising control of Chinese-language media."^{xv} A recent Department of State special report on the PRC notes, "the PRC suppresses critical information that contradicts its desired narratives on issues such as Taiwan, its human rights practices, the South China Sea, its domestic economy, and international economic engagement."^{xvi}

Partnering with the PRC and agreeing to the terms of their funded projects leaves some of our partners saddled with debt, exorbitant interest rates, and poorly constructed infrastructure that worsens already dire environmental crises, as is the case with the hydro-power station at the Coca Codo Dam in Ecuador. Some geologists argue that the dam has "so disrupted the Coca River's natural flow and accumulation of sediments" that it accelerated an erosion process that would normally take thousands of years into five.^{xvii}

The PRC's resource extraction is not limited to land. Each year, the PRC subsidizes a distant water fishing fleet of about 200 to 600 vessels operating near the Galapagos and other coastal nations' Exclusive Economic Zones in South America, often engaging in illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing practices. This fleet often exhibits concerning fishing behavior, with some vessels disabling AIS transponders. Illegal fishing in the western hemisphere alone comes at a cost of approximately \$2.7 billion annually in lost revenue.^{xviii xix xx} But it's not just financial cost at play - it's opportunity cost. Our partners' constrained maritime resources are being diverted away from fully engaging in other critical missions to take a leading role in combating these environmental and economic crimes.

The PRC has also taken a keen interest in expanding its access and control of the space domain, viewing it as the "ultimate high ground."^{xxi} There are at least 10 PRC-linked space facilities across five countries in the region, the most PRC space-enabling infrastructure outside mainland China. Despite its public stance against the weaponization of space, the PLA continues to invest and improve its military space capabilities, including a deep space station in Argentina, providing the PLA with global space tracking and surveillance capabilities. These space-based capabilities could translate into global military capabilities "that could support the monitoring, tracking, and targeting of our forces" and affect "conventional and nuclear targeting, ground-air-sea operations, precision conventional strike capacities, and missile defense."^{xxii xxiii}

As Latin American and Caribbean governments and their telecommunication industries seek faster, cheaper, and more inclusive communication coverage, PRC SOEs or associated entities, such as *Huawei* and *ZTE*, penetrate virtually every country through a mixture of funding, equipping, or servicing core and radio access networks. Some partners have privately told us about 'buyer's remorse' for allowing *Huawei* to set up 5G networks in their countries due

to increased potential for PRC exploitation. *Huawei* has built and continues to build a robust network of 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G mobile and internet infrastructure in the region. The company has engaged with our partners for the last 15 years and invests significantly across 24 nations in the AOR.

The PRC's control over *Huawei*, and its funding related to the deployment of telecommunication networks, threatens our partners' national assets, sovereignty, and freedoms.^{xxiv} *Huawei's* 5G infrastructure could contain backdoors that allow the Chinese government to collect and centralize massive quantities of data and give Beijing the necessary access to attack communications networks and public utilities. Ultimately, this could provide the PRC with unrestricted access to information and other capabilities that can be used for espionage, as coercive levers to gain unfair advantage, and to exert malign influence to achieve its goals.

Huawei routinely violates local laws in countries where it operates. The U.S. Justice Department has obtained an indictment against *Huawei* charging fraud, money laundering, violating U.S. sanctions against Iran, and stealing trade secrets from its U.S. business partner, T-Mobile. *Huawei* was linked to the theft of intellectual property from Cisco, and U.S. startup CNEX sued *Huawei* and its deputy chairman alleging conspiracy to steal trade secrets. *Huawei's* opaque operational nature and “mysterious ownership structure, contribute to concerns about the company’s operations and intentions.”^{xxv} As Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Wray has publicly stated, the PRC is the greatest espionage threat that democracy has ever faced.^{xxvi} The scale of its informational theft is unprecedented.^{xxvii}

Russia as an Acute Threat

It has been two years since Russia's unprovoked and unlawful invasion of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin's assault has "disrupted global supply chains, agricultural production, and energy resources," which has slowed Latin America and the Caribbean's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.^{xxviii} Putin's authoritarian hand serves as a model for and bolsters the authoritarian regimes of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Within the AOR, Russia continues its attempts to frustrate United States goals and interests, undermining democratic institutions and the rule of law, and props up problematic regimes in exchange for strategic access and resources.^{xxix} Moscow is working hard to disrupt relations between the United States and our partners to extoll the virtues of a multipolar world.^{xxx} To do so, Russia employs a host of malign activities within the gray zone, including malicious cyber activities, disinformation campaigns, and periodic high-level visits and military force projection.^{xxxi xxxii}

Moscow and affiliated cybercriminal groups seek to destabilize democracies by targeting public institutions and sensitive government frameworks, disrupting critical infrastructure, and stealing information.^{xxxiii} Recently, a Partner Nation fell victim to such an attack which targeted dozens of institutions, including a key ministry.

Russian disinformation in the region is increasing in scope since Russia invaded Ukraine.^{xxxiv} The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, think tanks, and the oligarchy guide the narratives employed by propagandists at state-controlled and regional media providers such as *Actualidad RT*, *Sputnik Mundo*, and *Telesur*. These media outlets spread anti-U.S. messaging across traditional and social media platforms to their millions of followers in

Latin America and around the world.^{xxxv} Their false media narratives commonly blame the United States for creating a global food crisis and supporting Nazism in Ukraine, while portraying the United States as a greedy and imperialist state concerned with maximum extraction of the continent's resources.^{xxxvi}

At the same time, Russia has been leveraging its diplomats and periodic military force projection to maintain and gain regional influence. Last April, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The trip's purpose was to increase cooperation with the countries it views as critical to creating a multipolar world where Russia, China, and others act as a counterbalance to the United States.^{xxxvii} Lavrov again visited Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela at the end of February 2024. In January 2023, the Russian frigate Admiral Gorshkov tested its strike capabilities in the Western Atlantic Ocean, running a computer simulation on hypersonic missiles.^{xxxviii} Then, in July, the Russian Navy training ship *Perekop* docked in Cuba for three days before making stops in Nicaragua and Venezuela.^{xxxix} Russian presence aims to prop up dictatorial regimes who share a common worldview, while expanding authoritarian influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

TCOs remain the primary obstacle to lasting security and stability. Moreover, TCOs imperil the security of the American people and the values at the heart of this hemisphere's democracies. USSOUTHCOM estimates that approximately 200 TCOs and four terrorist groups are operating in the region, including Mexican cartels such as the *Jalisco New Generation Cartel* and the *Sinaloa Cartel*. Through a combination of corruption and intimidation, and outright attacks on government officials and institutions, TCOs undermine the rule of law and disrupt legitimate governmental functions.

The National Liberation Army (ELN), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (FARC-EP), FARC-Segunda Marquetalia (FARC-SM), and Shining Path (SL) are designated terrorist organizations that use criminal activities to fill their coffers. TCOs traffic in weapons, drugs, persons, wildlife, gold and minerals, commodities, and counterfeit goods, resulting in earnings of approximately \$330 billion annually, five times the combined military budgets of every nation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Consequently, TCOs are often better funded, equipped, and manned than the security forces trying to fight them. They are brutal and vicious, setting fire to public transportation, murdering innocent civilians, and exerting control over significant swaths of urban and rural territories. In response, regional militaries are increasingly called on to respond to this threat, further eroding democratic norms, which in turn opens space that the PRC and Russia can exploit.

Mexican criminal groups like the *Sinaloa Cartel* and *Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación* work with primarily PRC-based companies and brokers to source fentanyl, fentanyl precursors, and pre-precursors, which are then mixed into both cocaine and counterfeit prescription medications and trafficked into the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America.^{xi} The result is the deadliest drug epidemic our country has ever faced and an ongoing economic crisis throughout our neighborhoods. TCOs are killing hundreds of thousands of Americans and draining valuable resources from struggling communities and states.^{xli xlii}

Iran

Iran seeks to increase its ideological influence in Latin America with the support of terrorist organizations such as Hizballah.^{xliii} Using Spanish-language media, social networks, and satellites, Iran’s National Ministry of Intelligence and Security is engaging in large-scale psychological warfare to promote its interests in attacking the West and Latin America.^{xliv}

Moreover, “Iran has moved from categorizing and tracking targets for possible attacks...to launching plans, including the attempted assassination of Israeli businessmen in Colombia.”^{xlv} Hizballah continues to leverage the Shi’a diaspora in Latin America to disrupt Western objectives and surveil against enemies of the Iranian regime, to include targets with Jewish heritage.

Additionally, this past year Iran completed a naval deployment that circumnavigated the globe and included a port call in Brazil. Iran also delivered coastal defense missile patrol boats to Venezuela.

Regional Humanitarian Crises

Irregular Migration. TCO-driven violence, economic desperation, political instability, and climate change, are just a few of the cross-cutting challenges that are driving unprecedented levels of irregular migration throughout the region. A significant number of these migrants are from Venezuela, Ecuador, and Haiti, all home to both security and interconnected economic challenges that drive migration. Additionally, a growing number of Chinese migrants are moving through the AOR to the United States. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered approximately 24,314 Chinese migrants along the Southwest Border, a 10-fold increase of migration from the previous fiscal year.

Panama’s Darien Region is a likely route to the north for those whose travel originates in South America. Among the dense jungle, mountains, and swamps, TCOs, such as the *Gulf Clan* and *Tren de Aragua*, facilitate smuggling operations, exploiting the most vulnerable. Migrants are subjected to extortion, robbery, sexual violence, wild animals, and disease, among so many other dangers. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands are willing to brave these conditions, and

the number of people passing through the Darien has more than doubled to 505,674 from FY 2022 to FY 2023.

Haiti. Nowhere is more indicative of the destabilizing effect of criminal groups than Haiti, where gang violence has increased, overwhelming the capacity of the Haitian National Police. Gangs recently coordinated attacks, control an estimated eighty percent of Port-au-Prince and have a significant presence beyond it, dictating many aspects of daily life under their control, including the ability to move freely, seek medical assistance, or attend school.^{xlvi} United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently cited a report that recorded the brutality of these gangs, with 3,758 intentional killings between October 2022 and September 2023.^{xlvii xlviii}

Exposure to severe disease, lack of food, potable water, and sanitation services are just a few of the heartbreaking challenges resulting in the internal displacement of 200,000 Haitians.^{xlix} Moreover, Haiti's geographic location leaves 96 percent of its citizens on the precipice of disaster – from earthquakes and hurricanes to flooding and mudslides.¹ Government agencies lack the capacity and capability to mitigate and then subsequently respond to frequent emergencies effectively. Political instability, unprecedented levels of violence, and tragic poverty have resulted in increased irregular migration, with more than 70,000 Haitians encountered at the United States Southwest Border in FY 2023.

USSOUTHCOM continues to support U.S. Government efforts promoting deployment of a United Nations Security Council-authorized Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti. The MSS mission is to augment and build the capacity of the Haitian National Police to maintain security and counter gangs.

Nicaragua. The Ortega regime maintains an iron grip upon Nicaragua's governmental institutions and its people as it continues to engage in repressive attacks on human rights, fundamental freedoms, and civil society.^{li} Aligned in shared values and interests, Nicaragua and the PRC remain engaged in negotiations on a free trade agreement with PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi.^{lii} Additionally, the Ortega Regime openly supports Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and was the sole Latin American country to participate in 2022's Russian Vostok war games.^{liii}

Cuba. Food, medicine, fuel, electricity, and political freedom remain scarce in Cuba. President Miguel Diaz-Canel and his government continue to repress and disproportionately punish all forms of public dissent. According to reports, during the past two years, more than 400,000 Cubans have fled the island amid an economic crisis.^{liv} Conditions on the island have become so difficult that Russian exploiters have even lured Cuban citizens to join the Russian military in its war against Ukraine.^{lv}

Both the PRC and Russia are taking advantage of the existing conditions within Cuba to deepen cooperation across all elements of national power, with President Diaz-Canel commenting during last summer's BRICS Summit in South Africa that Cuban-Chinese relations were at an all-time high.^{lvi} On 6 November, President Xi Jinping met with Cuban Vice Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz in Beijing, affirming China's willingness to support Cuba's defense of national sovereignty. Havana continues to assert its willingness to carry out the BRI and strengthen ties. We remain focused on monitoring and assessing the PRC's and Russia's malign activities on the island, including defense cooperation, military deployments, intelligence collection, or any other activity that poses a threat to the United States – especially since these activities are occurring just 90 miles from our shores.

Venezuela. Nicolas Maduro presides over an unmitigated humanitarian disaster in Venezuela, as his stewardship of Venezuela's economy has worsened living conditions for desperate Venezuelans who have limited access to food, water, and fuel, spurring many to migrate.^{lvii} Recently, the authoritarian regime held a referendum to "claim sovereignty over the oil- and mineral-rich" Essequibo region in Guyana.^{lviii} We are monitoring this issue and support a diplomatic resolution. Maduro and his representatives have done little to stop drug trafficking and human rights abuses.^{lix} Extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and prosecution without due process have been undertaken by the security forces in Venezuela.^{lx} *Maduro representatives are responsible for the worst ecocide in the history of Venezuela.*^{lxii} ^{lxiii} Consequently, record numbers of Venezuelans are leaving their homes in search of a better life – more than 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled their country since 2013. Venezuelans are now the primary migrant nationality from the SOUTHCOM AOR encountered at the United States Southwest Border.^{lxiv}

Levers: Overcoming Threats and Challenges in the AOR

Today's complex threats and challenges span all domains and the spectrum of conflict. To counter and overcome them, we need an integrated, whole-of-society approach that leverages all instruments of national power. The threats presented by the PRC today are substantially different than those presented by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, where competition centered on military capability.^{lxv} Specifically, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Communist vision offered by the Soviets and their regional acolytes provided little to the populace.^{lxvi} Today's PRC offers our partners the veneer of modernization – airports, railways, deep-water ports, internet access, inexpensive technology, and available financing expeditiously.

To counter, we must expand beyond our traditional mechanisms and increase American economic investment in the region.

After more than two years in command, I am convinced that Economic Security is National Security, and many of the challenges in the Americas are directly tied to a lack of economic investment and opportunity. USSOUTHCOM's support of initiatives like the *Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity* will mobilize high-standard investment in this hemisphere into critical infrastructure and supply chains to expand economic prosperity and opportunity. U.S. investment can enable regional competitiveness, bring transparency to the construction of critical infrastructure, and provide alternatives to PRC SOEs within our hemisphere.

Moreover, with support from the U.S. Government, U.S. companies need to raise their profiles in the region and improve the branding of *Team USA*, both in messaging and advertisement of what good quality U.S. investment brings to the Americas. U.S. companies employ international environmental and labor standards, have strong anti-corruption measures, invest in local communities, ensure the safety of their locally hired workers, and adhere to principles of transparency – a stark contrast to the PRC and the disinformation narratives perpetuated by Russia. Additionally, more legitimate job opportunities for local populations diminish TCO support and reduce opportunities for corrupt practices. Economic Security is National Security – as it drives global influence, prosperity, and reinforces other vital elements of national power.

USSOUTHCOM, with our Allies, partners, U.S. Interagency, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, seamlessly campaigns across all domains to overcome the many challenges to the Western Hemisphere. The safety of our homeland is directly linked to

the resilience, stability, and security of our Latin American and Caribbean partners. As such, USSOUTHCOM is laser-focused on *Strengthening Partnerships* and *Countering Threats*.

Strengthening Partnerships and Countering Threats

Strengthening partnerships means building trust and being present. Trust is an investment and cannot be surged.^{lxvii} Our alliances and partnerships are our greatest strategic advantage. They are directly connected to the region's collective ability to meet its evolving security challenges. In the face of our adversaries' pervasive malign influence, we continue to substantively engage with our Partner Nations to build trust while maintaining our status as their preferred partner. USSOUTHCOM does this through a pre-existing foundation of trust, mutual respect for democratic values, and shared interests in cooperation and interoperability. Our engagements, presence, and policies remain flexible, consistent, and responsive as we campaign in strategic competition. Putting *Integrated Deterrence* into action, USSOUTHCOM works by, with, and through our Allies and partners to improve Partner Nation capability, capacity, and resilience. Every day we leverage Security Cooperation exercises, training, and education activities to build trust.

Concurrently, cross-cutting threats and transboundary challenges put at risk sovereignty, democratic values, and security. USSOUTHCOM aggressively counters threats through campaigning and integrating deliberate multi-domain operations and exercises alongside our Allies and partners. *Team Democracy* can deny our adversaries the ability to expand their presence and influence and increases regional stability, security, and prosperity.

Security Cooperation. In a resource-constrained theater, USSOUTHCOM continues to work with the U.S. Interagency and Allies to maximize efforts in exchanges, training, equipping,

and exercises to build Partner Nation capabilities or capacities and to advance regional Partner Nation interoperability. Building Partner Capacity Programs are the main lever for partner engagement and provide meaningful opportunities to strengthen partnerships and develop military capabilities. In FY 2024, we have planned 1,014 activities by, with, and through our regional partners. We appreciate congressional support of this critical program and will continue maximizing all resources to build our willing partners' capacity.

The Security Cooperation funds provided by Congress are critical to delivering equipment and capabilities to our partners, and these resources have significantly accelerated and expanded the capacity of our efforts to counter the PRC, Russia, and TCOs. Key examples are the contracts awarded to Ecuador and Peru for King Air Maritime Patrol Aircraft. These aircraft will significantly enhance the Maritime Domain Awareness capability by illuminating the current threat of IUU fishing and monitoring and detecting illicit maritime movements.

Department of State Security Assistance. Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programs increase interoperability with our partners while supporting their security requirements. These programs are critical tools to counterbalance PRC military engagement in the region. In December 2023, the Chilean Air Force signed an FMS letter of acceptance for the modernization of their F-16 fleet. This modernization will increase the lifespan of their fleet by 15 years, provide NATO interoperability, and continue to provide access, presence, and influence with a critical partner. Our partners increasingly face a choice between seeking equipment and training from the U.S. or our Strategic Competitors and other malign actors. The superior goods and strong relationships built by our programs enable us to meet the needs of our partners in a timely manner while outcompeting our adversaries.

USSOUTHCOM executes the Department of State's International Military Education and Training (IMET) program that provides professional military education emphasizing professionalism and democratic values to personnel from 28 countries in the region. In FY 2023, our IMET allocation to our Partner Nations provided professional military education for approximately 800 international students in U.S. schools. This opportunity to influence our partners is important, as the personnel attending these schools often become senior military leaders in their countries. Currently, three ministers of defense and 13 chiefs of defense have attended IMET-funded courses at U.S. institutions.

Additionally, regional educational institutions such as the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Inter-American Defense College provide executive-level education and help cultivate lasting relationships, improve regional understanding of U.S. policy, and ensure the sustainability of U.S. Security Cooperation investments. These institutions' influential alumni networks foster whole-of-hemisphere collaboration in resolving top security and defense challenges in the Americas.

Joint Exercise Program. Our Joint Exercise Program continues to provide an outsized return on investment to strengthen partnerships and interoperability among our Allies, partners, U.S. Interagency, and Non-Federal Entities. Over 13,500 participants from 36 Nations were integrated into our exercises this past year. I traveled to Colombia in July for the 64th annual UNITAS, the world's longest-running multinational maritime exercise. There, I saw firsthand how 7,000 people from 27 countries across the globe collaborate, innovate, and experiment with emerging technologies and naval concepts – including the integration and management of unmanned systems – to deter Malign State Actors and foster security and stability across the global commons. Honing our warfighting skills has primacy in all we do.

Last August, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States put *Integrated Deterrence* into action during Exercise SOUTHERN STAR, a multi-lateral special operations exercise hosted throughout Chile that focused on countering threat networks in the AOR. Through subject matter expert exchanges, tactical operations, and command and control exercises, over 1,100 Chilean, 500 U.S. service members, and dozens of Allies and partners came together to enable global collaboration and interoperability while building Allied and Partner Nation capacity to conduct contingency operations.

USSOUTHCOM's exercises CENTAM GUARDIAN and TRADEWINDS focus on countering TCOs and bringing together the Department of State, Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security, along with our Allied and Partner Nation military and security forces, to enhance readiness, domain awareness, interoperability, and intelligence and information sharing.

Through training on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HA/DR), Human Rights, and Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), these exercises not only provide year-long engagement opportunities throughout the AOR but also serve as forums to enhance force professionalism and underscore democratic principles.

Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative. The Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative (TMPI) builds partner capacity from the tactical level (operator maintenance) to the operational level (Ministry of Defense logistics and sustainment functions). Maintenance and sustainment are hard for our U.S. military, and TMPI invests in our partners by teaching and building a culture of maintenance readiness. TMPI is a seven-year program and will build capacity through education by establishing nine Maintenance Centers of Excellence in the AOR. It will also address maintenance requirements of U.S.-provided defense articles our partners

utilize. Fostering an integrated approach to logistics, TMPI will improve readiness and readiness reporting so that Allied and Partner Nations can visualize materiel readiness, apply resources, communicate challenges, and request needed support. Additionally, USSOUTHCOM is working to create Multinational Logistics Courses to promote NATO standardization, Life Cycle Management, and the conduct of logistics at the Operational and Strategic levels. TMPI will enhance interoperability, self-sufficiency, and resiliency among Allies and partners, leading to sustainable readiness improvements that increase regional stability.

CONTINUING PROMISE. This past year, from August to September, the USNS BURLINGTON and 120 crewmembers embarked upon a 52-day humanitarian assistance (HA), readiness building, and goodwill mission that touched Colombia, Grenada, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago. This evolution marked the 13th CONTINUING PROMISE mission to the AOR since 2007 – a joint military and civilian effort that provides expeditionary medical care, veterinary care, training, and subject matter expert exchanges with our Partner Nations. While CONTINUING PROMISE missions typically feature the USNS COMFORT hospital ship, which is currently undergoing maintenance, the mission relied on the USNS BURLINGTON as the deploying platform. The “fast, flexible, and maneuverable” ship served as a proof of concept for transporting personnel and equipment in support of regional disaster relief and humanitarian operations.^{lxviii}

During the mission, CONTINUING PROMISE personnel delivered medical care to 6,100 patients, administered 950 vaccinations, dispensed 8,750 prescriptions, and repaired \$500,000 worth of Partner Nation medical equipment. Additionally, U.S. Navy Seabees led construction and engineering projects benefiting schools, hospitals, and local communities. The CONTINUING PROMISE mission is a critical soft power asset that creates and sustains an

immeasurable amount of goodwill from our partners and their people, offsetting PRC influence in the region while building the legitimacy and capacity of our Partner Nations.

Key Leader Engagements. The importance of maintaining and cultivating relationships with senior leaders within my AOR cannot be overstated. Since taking command in October 2021, I have been to the region 48 times, visited 17 countries, and conducted over 150 Key Leader Engagements with Allied and Partner Nation ministers and chiefs of defense. Additionally, I have met with 17 heads of state, three vice presidents, and three prime ministers. These engagements and the enduring Congressional and Staff Delegations to the region assist in establishing and successfully executing our shared security objectives while generating mutual trust and understanding. Moreover, they reinforce diplomacy and U.S. Interagency initiatives. After many discussions with the region's leaders, it remains apparent that our partners need our assistance in combatting their many challenges.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) continues to provide vital support to the USSOUTHCOM AOR by executing an extremely diverse program that not only builds infrastructure and capacity, but also ensures that considerations for environmental sustainability, climate resiliency, and at-risk indigenous populations, are factored into their projects. Wherever we have a USACE effort, we are facilitating presence and access. USACE currently has activities in 17 countries within the AOR and has some form of full-time presence in eight of them. For example, they are managing large construction efforts in Colombia and Peru, providing humanitarian assistance projects in Guatemala and Belize, and executing technical assistance in agreements with the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Ecuador. USACE builds projects in support of our exercises, incorporates work with Allies and the U.S. Interagency, executes exchanges with partners having complex engineering challenges, and

works to select contractors internal to that country or region to enable investment in the local economy. The quality work and the transparent nature in which they do business are providing an environmentally conscious and more technically sound alternative to outcompete the PRC. These projects, programs, and *Integrated Deterrence* efforts increase our regional competitiveness, facilitate interoperability, and build Partner Nation resilience.

National Guard State Partnership Program. 2023 marked the 30th anniversary of the State Partnership Program and 30 years of the National Guard assisting our Partner Nations' military and security forces to build capacity and meet ever-evolving security challenges. USSOUTHCOM has the largest State Partnership Program of all the Combatant Commands, spanning 30 countries. Since 2010 our program has completed 3,629 events, with 426 events completed in FY 2023 and another 328 planned for FY 2024. Improving regional interoperability and the readiness of both Partner Nations and U.S. forces to respond to crises and threats, the State Partnership Program is instrumental in the conduct and success of not only our operations, but also our enduring relationships throughout the region.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response. Regional geography and climate change leave our Partner Nations vulnerable to extreme weather events and natural disasters. Before, during, and after a catastrophe, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our partners to provide assistance. USSOUTHCOM engages regularly with our Partner Nations, encouraging and assisting them to take the necessary steps toward preparedness, mitigation, and resiliency. In FY 2023, USSOUTHCOM completed 256 HA and three Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) projects in 29 countries.

HA activities address the basic needs of civilian populations and build partner capacity by improving Partner Nation disaster preparedness and risk reduction, health, education, basic

infrastructure, and HMA activities. Over the last year, USSOUTHCOM planned and conducted 25 medical civic-action projects, constructed or renovated nine medical and dental clinics and 14 schools, executed 18 projects to provide potable water to towns and villages, and constructed and equipped four Emergency Operations Centers/Disaster Relief Warehouses. Moreover, we conducted 22 projects to provide local firefighters with equipment, radios, and personal protective equipment during the outbreak of wildland forest fires in Chile. Of note, USSOUTHCOM conducted 18 projects to support the governments of Colombia and Panama in their efforts to provide humanitarian services to mitigate the suffering of migrants in the Darien region. These projects demonstrate our commitment to building Partner Nation capacity and meeting humanitarian needs, while simultaneously increasing the United States' access, visibility, and influence in a time of strategic competition throughout the region.

Countering PRC Malign Efforts. The PRC is America's pacing threat; countering their aggression and malign influence requires a whole-of-society approach. USSOUTHCOM continues to coordinate with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia, and the U.S. Interagency, including both the Department of State and the Department of Commerce, to source U.S. and Allied solutions as alternatives to PRC offerings in critical infrastructure, cyber, and telecommunications. By methodically identifying and synchronizing separate initiatives, from building cyber capability to exposing PRC malign activities, we can strengthen critical infrastructure to improve our collective ability to operate in the face of the PRC's multi-domain threats.

The PRC is working overtime to expand its network of port access and space infrastructure. As such, we remain focused on building our relationships and interoperability with our partners and Allies through sustained Security Cooperation engagement and investment.

Moreover, we continue to illuminate and expose the malign intent and dual-use nature of PRC infrastructure and space sites. Information sharing with our partners paints a vibrant portrait of the PRC's past, present, and future steps to undercut our partners' sovereignty while expanding theirs. Armed with the facts and U.S. and Allied investment alternatives, our partners are better able to make informed decisions regarding engagement with the PRC.

We will WIN this strategic competition by emphasizing and seizing upon our strengths. A global network of Allies and partners guided by democratic values and principles gives the United States an unrivaled advantage over the PRC. We continue to campaign across all domains and the conflict spectrum while instituting *Integrated Deterrence* into all our activities, operations, and investments. By doing so, USSOUTHCOM demonstrates its commitment to the region, forges stronger partnerships, and enhances regional resilience, stability, and security across the Western Hemisphere.

Countering Russian Malign Influence. We remain postured for competition with Russia through the coordination and application of information-related capabilities. Russian malign activities are ever present, and the associated fallout continues to plague the region. USSOUTHCOM's approach empowers our partners and exposes Russian disinformation and malign activity to limit its reach and effectiveness.

Our Allies and partners support efforts that impose costs on Russia, and this past year, we have successfully collaborated with partners to counter Russian malign activities occurring in the information environment. Additionally, we continue to work with our partners to exchange Soviet-era equipment for newer NATO-interoperable, U.S.-made equipment in the future. We must continue to coordinate and collaborate expeditiously with our partners, especially when assisting them in replacing antiquated equipment and maintaining operational readiness. The

stakes are too high; we cannot allow Strategic Competitors or other malign actors to fulfill the needs of our partners due to self-imposed inefficiency.

Countering TCOs. Utilizing a whole-of-government effort, Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South) monitors both the air and maritime domains in our region to detect deadly drugs and contraband headed toward the shores of the United States. In FY 2023, this statutorily directed mission saved 3,030 American lives and resulted in the disruption of 361 illegal smuggling events, including the disruption of almost 308 metric tons of cocaine and 78 metric tons of marijuana, with a combined wholesale value of \$7.7 billion. Additionally, evidence and information gathered from these disruptions assist U.S. Interagency and international law enforcement in prosecution efforts that further degrade TCOs.

Our Partner Nations continue to be critical enablers in countering TCO smuggling operations. In coordination with JIATF-South, our Partner Nations have participated in 79.5% percent of operations, resulting in the removal of 240.675 metric tons of cocaine routed toward the United States. The success of these operations relies upon Partner Nation collaboration, which we systematically nurture and support throughout our routine military-to-military engagements, training, and exercises. A key investment in this shared fight is the contracted Ship Special Mission (SSM), an afloat forward staging base embarking Partner Nation Navy and Coast Guard interceptor teams, extending their reach hundreds of miles offshore where TCOs traffic their illicit commodities. In FY 2023, the SSM embarked teams from six Partner Nations in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic Oceans while conducting nine separate counter-TCO operations. Our partners operating from the SSM seized over 12 metric tons of cocaine and 10 thousand pounds of marijuana, with a combined street value of approximately \$500 million.

U.S.-led, multinational counternarcotics operations ultimately result in our partners taking the lead on their own operations, as Peru recently did during Operation MAR DE GRAU. This operation showcased the value of *Integrated Deterrence* and resulted in 2.897 metric tons of cocaine seized or disrupted in three separate cases. This level of success is directly tied to continued U.S. investment in training and equipping our military and security partners.

Moreover, USSOUTHCOM works hand-in-hand with the Department of Treasury to counter malign actors' ability to generate, store, move, and use funds. This includes revenue from corruption, drugs, weapons, human trafficking, and illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife. During the past year, USSOUTHCOM supported Treasury's designation of *Los Huistas*, who facilitated the importation of precursor chemicals from China to manufacture methamphetamines, as a Drug Trafficking Organization.

Notwithstanding our significant achievements over the decades in this mission space, there is still more to do, especially in support of efforts to combat TCOs who directly threaten the democratic stability of the region. As U.S. resources against this threat decline, we will continue to innovate by re-examining and creatively leveraging current authorities and unconventional tools, like contract assets, commercial data, and artificial intelligence and machine learning. We are also working to better align counternarcotics efforts with our larger campaign focus on strategic competition, such as supporting U.S. law enforcement efforts to sever state-crime alliances related to illicit finance, cybercrime, and the use of proxies.

Confronting Climate Change. Climate change and environmental degradation reduce military readiness by expanding requirements and diminishing resources. This AOR is disproportionately affected by extreme weather events and natural disasters, conditions that impact the region's access to food, water, healthcare, and energy. El Niño and other naturally

occurring phenomena are exacerbated by elevated surface temperatures, which dry out soil and render farmland less productive, further contributing to irregular migration. This weather pattern also results in less rainfall in Central America and Northern South America, which affects the water levels required to operate critical infrastructure such as the Panama Canal, through which five percent of global commerce passes through annually. Low water levels have limited the number of vessels able to transit each day, at a time when global shipping is further challenged by threats in the Red Sea.

Alongside our Partner Nations, USSOUTHCOM builds resiliency and increases capacity to respond to extreme weather events and environmental disasters by holding subject matter expert exchanges and incorporating energy and climate security scenarios into our major exercises. We also leverage an integrated approach with the Pacific Disaster Center in Hawaii and other civilian partners, who facilitate HA/DR training and assessments with our Partner Nations.

USSOUTHCOM is executing a program to assist partners in the Western Hemisphere to provide training to defense and security partners in how to plan against, prepare for, and respond to climate contingencies, leveraging data-driven decision making and analytic tools. The program will fund additional bilateral and multilateral research on climate security in the Western Hemisphere. In 2024, USSOUTHCOM will co-host sub-regional symposia and a region-wide Capstone Conference on addressing the impacts of climate change. The program's goal is to catalyze regional collaboration and response mechanisms leading to climate-resilient outcomes.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing. The increasing urgency to address the severity of the economic, human, and environmental consequences of IUU fishing and associated

labor abuses continues to grow throughout the globe. President Biden has cited IUU fishing as one of the greatest threats to the world's oceans.^{lxix} It contributes to the "collapse or decline of fisheries that are critical to the economic growth, food systems, and ecosystems" of our Partner Nations.^{lxx} Additionally, it can "undermine port and maritime security, as criminal elements may use similar trade routes, landing sites, and vessels...for trafficking arms, migrants, drugs, and other contraband."^{lxxi}

In partnership with other U.S. Government initiatives, USSOUTHCOM is promoting a whole-of-society effort to better use commercial data, analytics, and emerging technology to improve maritime domain awareness. Through Enhanced Domain Awareness, a secure, unclassified, virtual environment, we provide partners with a consolidated, near real-time picture of IUU fishing activities, trends, and reports that contribute to counter-IUU fishing operations as well as other issues such as migration, human trafficking, and illegal mining.^{lxxii} Our decisive actions are a bulwark against unsustainable PRC resource extraction. Simultaneously, they reduce lost Partner Nation revenues and impede the ability of our adversaries to engage in nefarious activities in the region. Countering IUU fishing is one more way to bolster our partners' national and economic security.

Cyber. Cyber is an all-encompassing domain that links every facet of society, including defense. The interconnectedness of the cyber domain continues to grow exponentially with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. This means cybersecurity and cyber defense are challenges confronting more than just information technology specialists. These difficulties span the full spectrum of government and society, from presidents to average citizens. Successful plans for countering adversary activities in the cyber domain require

allocating increased resources and integrating whole-of-government solutions to deliver the required support quickly and in sufficient quantity.

We support our partners' advancement of their defensive cyber capabilities and develop cyber resiliency through cybersecurity defense training, software, and equipment with the *Joint Combatant Command Cyber Assistance Teams* – USSOUTHCOM's cyber quick reaction force – and *Defend Forward Operations*. Latin America suffered about 12 percent of global cyberattacks even though it only accounts for eight percent of the world's population.^{lxxiii} Over the last year, *Team Democracy* came together to help a requesting Partner Nation recover from a massive Malign State Actor-supported cyberattack against government ministries that resulted in over \$10 million in losses. We successfully leveraged internal and external resources through multiple engagements to support recovery and fortify their cyber resiliency. As a result, this partner pursued telecommunications solutions that conform to the *Budapest Convention on Cybercrime* and eliminated certain Malign State Actors from competition.

Competing in the Information Space. Democracy's adversaries continue to flood the information space with disinformation, seeking to advance their malign narratives and agendas upon the "smokeless battlefield."^{lxxiv} USSOUTHCOM's information operations team works tirelessly to shape pro-U.S. and pro-democracy narratives that "tell our story" and highlight the truthful, positive outcomes in the region from our collective efforts. By synchronizing and coordinating with our Allies, partners, and the U.S. Interagency, we aggressively pierce the information space to expand our partnerships, underscore the enduring value of human rights and the rule of law, and retain the offensive in exposing and countering the harmful activity and disinformation generated by the PRC, Russia, and other malign actors.

Agile Processes. The window to seize the strategic initiative is now. We must continue to innovate and support our partners at the speed of relevance. Our adversaries work in an authoritarian system that is not checked by transparent processes or accountability, offering our partners equipment, services, and education on an expedited basis. Our status as the preferred partner is jeopardized by bureaucratic inefficiencies that result in overpromising and underdelivering. Our Strategic Competitors fill this void.

The United States must use all the instruments of national power to propel innovation and operate at the cutting edge of technology. Through collaboration with academic and private industry partners, this command seeks to take innovative technologies from a controlled laboratory environment to a permissive practical application environment, establishing the USSOUTHCOM AOR as an innovation hub. In October, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet held its Hybrid Fleet Campaign Event, hosting 47 Department of Defense Commands, 10 foreign partners, and 18 industry partners to foster innovation and experimentation to inform the Unmanned Campaign and Hybrid Fleet. Over the course of the week, unmanned systems were evaluated in advanced kill chains, contested operations, survivability, and sustainment at sea. Additionally, USSOUTHCOM has focused on striking bilateral agreements with our Partner Nations to mutually advance military technologies so that we can work together quickly to create new beneficial capabilities.

I have made it a priority to integrate tomorrow's technology into our operations and exercises today. Continued investment and advancements in the areas of robotics, cyber technology, and artificial intelligence and machine learning will overmatch our adversaries and assist the region's democracies to emerge as global leaders in science and technology.

Coast Guard Support. The U.S. Coast Guard remains a key partner and enabler of USSOUTHCOM's priorities and missions. The U.S. Coast Guard maintains unique authorities and capabilities, which, in coordination with the Joint Force, our Allies, and Partner Nations, disrupt TCOs, IUU fishing, terrorism, and irregular migration. Moreover, they support USSOUTHCOM Theater Security Cooperation initiatives and conduct a variety of lifesaving and HA mission support across the region by delivering critical aid in the wake of a disaster. Jointly with the U.S. Army, the U.S. Coast Guard, as part of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative - Technical Assistance Field Team, bolsters the capabilities of Caribbean Partner Nations' maritime assets in support of regional security and counter-trafficking while simultaneously displacing PRC influence. As always, USSOUTHCOM can faithfully rely on the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure the safety, security, and stewardship of the region's waters.^{lxxv}

Building Our Team – People First

“People execute the strategy.”^{lxxvi} USSOUTHCOM continues to invest in its people to *Build Our Team*. With their trust being the foundation of our profession, the health, safety, and welfare of our people remains paramount. USSOUTHCOM maintains a professional atmosphere that offers educational opportunities, leverages broad expertise, and fosters diverse and innovative thought to generate solutions to the dynamic problem set in the Americas.

Housing, Cost of Living Allowance, and Locality Pay. Service members, civilians, contractors, and their families are the heart and soul of USSOUTHCOM. Our success is tied to the welfare of our team. While South Florida is the geographic gateway to the Americas, living and working in the area has many economic challenges that have affected our command, especially as it relates to the cost of housing. Through the hard work of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of the Army, along with the support of federal and

state officials and local leaders, we have physically broken ground on the USSOUTHCOM privatized housing project and expect phased completion between the summers of 2026 and 2027. This project will house nearly 200 service members and their families.

Our service members and civilian teammates continue to be negatively impacted by the rising cost of living in the South Florida area. Miami has recently been identified by U.S. News & World Report as the fourth most expensive city in the United States, with a 5.7 percent increase in basic goods and services and a 10.1 percent increase in rent of primary residence over the course of CY 2023 - while car insurance rates in Florida have increased 55 percent over the 2023 national average.^{lxxvii lxxviii lxxix lxxx} USSOUTHCOM remains in contact with state and federal officials, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of the Army, as well as policymakers, to voice concerns and advocate on behalf of our team.

Joint Interagency Task Force-South Resiliency. JIATF-South is currently spread across four buildings that are 70-plus years old and do not meet requirements to support their important mission. Design for a new and consolidated facility will be completed in July 2024. We appreciate the continued support as we look to build a resilient facility for this critical mission of our nation.

Women, Peace, and Security. USSOUTHCOM's WPS program promotes women's meaningful participation, leadership, and engagement in decision-making at all levels throughout the AOR. USSOUTHCOM integrates gender perspectives within our operations, activities, and investments to maximize the talents of women in the force through their recruitment, retention, training, and advancement. In May 2023, USSOUTHCOM and 14 Partner Nations gathered in Colombia for the 6th Senior Enlisted Leader Women, Peace, and Security Seminar. With over 300 in-person and 1000 remote attendees, this three-day seminar featured panel discussions,

working group sessions, and a forum to highlight the professional growth, capability, and integrity of women filling the Senior Enlisted Leader ranks.

Through our ongoing WPS engagements, we build the capacity of our Partner Nations and better enable their military and security forces to engage with local populations, gain gender perspectives, and better assess the needs of all the citizens they proudly serve. I have made it a priority to incorporate WPS events into all my travel within the region, hosting events this past year in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay – showcasing the power of example. Our partners continue to make historic strides. In Colombia, the first female naval officer was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral and the first 72 female Marines graduated from Infantry boot camp. In Uruguay, the Uruguayan Senate approved, for the first time, the promotion of three female military officers to the rank of Colonel this past September. Women play an important role in increasing readiness and sustaining regional stability, security, and prosperity, and so we must redouble our efforts to integrate and institutionalize Women, Peace, and Security initiatives internally and among all our partners.

Total Force. The trends in the Latin America and Caribbean region require a total force approach that maximizes the integration and strong relationships between the National Guard, Active Component, and Reserve forces. This approach is exemplified by the Navy Reserve Joint Intelligence Operations Center 0174, whose reserve sailors supported the intelligence and evidentiary package that led to sanctioning action on *Pingtán Marine Enterprise, Ltd.*, along with eight other affiliated entities involved in IUU fishing. Our Reserve Component is integrated into our daily operations, including staffing our Joint Operations Center, planning and participating in joint exercises, and managing the State Partnership Program.

What Resources Does USSOUTHCOM Need?

In this region, a small investment – whether in time, physical resources, funding, or collaboration – goes a long way. We don’t have to outspend the PRC to outcompete, but we must be present on the field and deliver at the speed of relevance. This requires having a timely budget – continuing resolutions are disruptive to U.S. and Partner Nation efforts to defend against threats. The PRC and Russia are already here in the Western Hemisphere; time is of the essence.

Security Cooperation. USSOUTHCOM has adopted a proactive approach to identify opportunities to expedite delivery of equipment from Security Cooperation and Security Assistance programs. The command maintains frequent communication with all Security Cooperation stakeholders to anticipate or recognize factors that might generate delays on FMS, FMF, and Section 333 cases. We then engage with the organizations involved at a senior level to ensure all teams pre-emptively take actions to mitigate risk and accelerate deliveries to build necessary partner capacity to address mutual security threats. We appreciate Congress’ support for USSOUTHCOM’s security cooperation activities, as these engagements are our main lever in maintaining strong partnerships that help us edge out the PRC in the region.

Intelligence. Congress has also supported innovative pilot programs that increase domain awareness in the theater. Given the Department’s demand for and limited availability of exquisite Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets, USSOUTHCOM aims to mitigate our ranking priority in the collection posture with Commercial Imagery. Commercial Imagery bypasses the task-saturated national system and provides expedited, relevant, and unclassified data that has proved crucial during a recent high-profile Haitian Kidnap for Ransom incident, increased irregular migration, and in monitoring the malign behavior of PRC, Russia,

and Iran as tension in the region continues to rise. We also rely heavily on intelligence gained through the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Section 702 authorities. Without a reauthorization of Section 702, we would lose significant domain awareness and insight into the threats and challenges in our own hemisphere.

Technology and Innovation. I have made it a priority to integrate tomorrow's technology into our operations and exercises today. Continued investment and advancements in the areas of robotics, cyber technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning will overmatch our adversaries and assist the region's democracies to emerge as global leaders who feed and fuel the world. Additionally, we must improve our information networks, cybersecurity posture, and interoperability. Improving our networks enhances situational awareness, accelerates decision-making, and ensures communication readiness across all echelons and with mission partners operating throughout the USSOUTHCOM AOR. Investments in Mission Partner Environment and Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control will underwrite these and future objectives. Moreover, continued Congressional support of exercises in the Western Hemisphere will ensure the United States' ability to evaluate cutting-edge technologies in operationally relevant environments. These activities operationally refine future warfighting capabilities and accelerate technologies for deployment to meet military requirements. USSOUTHCOM's operational experimentation helps transition research and development from concept to implementation across all Combatant Commands and domains and, in the end, strengthens *Integrated Deterrence* and *Team Democracy*.

Ambassadors. The United States has nine posts operating without an Ambassador, our number one diplomat who coordinates and synchronizes *Team USA's* in-country ground game. These absences are a national security issue and send the message to our Partner Nations that

they are not a priority to the United States at a time when the PRC continues to elevate its presence throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Senate could take action on the five WHEM nominees for Ambassadorial positions that have already been sent to Congress.

Economic Engagement in the Region. USSOUTHCOM is aware of multiple legislative efforts to encourage economic engagement and investment in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. National security rests on economic security, and any increases in economic opportunities for the countries and people of this neighborhood will mitigate many of the challenges we face as a hemisphere. If people have jobs to sustain their families, they will be less likely to consider illegally migrating to the United States for opportunities or working with the TCOs to make ends meet. If governments in the region have the option to work with U.S. or other Western companies, they are less likely to choose to work with the PRC. Legislative efforts that responsibly incentivize U.S. and Western investment in the region could greatly add to a whole-of-society approach to national security.

Beijing Convention. Ratification of the *Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation*, otherwise known as the *Beijing Convention*, would expand our ability to cooperate with Partner Nations for the prevention and prosecution of certain criminal activities, including certain criminal uses of civil aviation.

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School. We appreciate Congress' support of the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) in FY 2024 and look forward to working closely with the Department of the Navy, U.S. Special Operations Command, and Congress to keep this important facility operational for years to come. The rivers and littorals are critical pathways in securing the

hemisphere, and NAVSCIATTS is uniquely positioned to train our Partner Nations on how to secure this domain as it has for the past 54 years, training 13,000 personnel from 123 countries.

Conclusion

This is a *Call to Action*! Our adversaries' malign actions and intent, coupled with the numerous transboundary threats, are a growing challenge – replicating the first and second island chain – to our homeland. USSOUTHCOM, alongside our Allies and partners, stands ready to defend the democratic values, ideals, and institutions that will continue to enable this vibrant region to feed and fuel the world. Through *Integrated Deterrence* and utilizing all instruments of national power, we will ensure that the safety, security, and prosperity of Latin America and the Caribbean endure for this generation and all those to come.

- ⁱ Congressional Research Service, *China Primer: Illicit Fantasy and China's Role*, IF 10890, Barrios, Ricardo; Lawrence, Susan V., and Rosen, Liana W., Congressional Research Digital Collection, September 28, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10890>.
- ⁱⁱ "The Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy," *The White House*, 12 Oct. 2022, p. 12, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Id.* at 40.
- ^{iv} "World Water Day: Latin America Leads in Water Management but Inequalities in Access Remain," *World Bank*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/03/22/world-water-day-latin-america-achievements-challenges>.
- ^v Latin America and the Caribbean will account for more than 25% of global agricultural exports by 2028, says FAO - Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce (brazilcham.com)
- ^{vi} Wang Yi, "The Belt and Road Initiative Becomes New Opportunity for China-Latin America Cooperation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, September 18, 2017
- ^{vii} "Belt and Road in Latin America: A Regional Game Changer?" *Atlantic Council*, 9 Oct. 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/belt-and-road-in-latin-america-a-regional-game-changer/>.
- ^{viii} "How Should the U.S. Respond to China's Influence in Latin America?" *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/how-should-us-respond-chinas-influence-latin-america>.
- ^{ix} "China's Engagement in Latin America: Views from the Region," *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/chinas-engagement-latin-america-views-region>.
- ^x Brady, Anne-Marie. *China's Expanding Antarctic Capacity and Interests*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2017, pp. 7-7. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04257.6>.
- ^{xi} Berg, Ryan C. *Combating Chinese Dual-Use Infrastructure: Bringing In the Private Sector*. Dec. 2022. www.csis.org.
- ^{xii} <https://www.csis.org/analysis/combating-chinese-dual-use-infrastructure-bringing-private-sector>.
- ^{xiii} Phillips, Michael M. *China Seeks First Military Base on Africa's Atlantic Coast, U.S. Intelligence Finds*, *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 Dec. 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/china-seeks-first-military-base-on-africas-atlantic-coast-u-s-intelligence-finds-11638726327.
- ^{xiv} "Chinese-Backed Port Project in Peru to be the 'gateway from South America to Asia,' Official Says," *AP News*, 23 Aug. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/peru-chancay-china-port-construction-d13e8e8fe19289a6ab976281708bc671>.
- ^{xv} "How the People's Republic of China Seeks to Reshape the Global Information Environment," *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/gec-special-report-how-the-peoples-republic-of-china-seeks-to-reshape-the-global-information-environment/>.
- ^{xvi} *Id.*
- ^{xvii} *Id.*
- ^{xviii} Dube, Ryan and Steinhauser, Gabriele. "China's Global Mega-Projects Are Falling Apart," *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 Jan. 2023, www.wsj.com/articles/china-global-mega-projects-infrastructure-falling-apart-11674166180.
- ^{xix} "The Impact of IUU Fishing," *Diálogo Américas*, 24 Oct. 2022, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/the-impact-of-iuu-fishing/>.
- ^{xx} Fisheries, NOAA. "Countering IUU Fishing: Partnership for Sustainably Managed Fisheries | NOAA Fisheries." *NOAA*, 14 Mar. 2023, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/enforcement/countering-iuu-fishing-partnership-sustainably-managed-fisheries>.
- ^{xxi} Center for Advanced Defense Studies; 1 May 2019; *Following IUU Fishing Networks Onshore: Leveraging Open Source to Identify Convergence and Facilitators of IUU*
- ^{xxii} *China Dream, Space Dream: China's Progress in Space Technologies and Implications for the United States | U.S. - CHINA | ECONOMIC and SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION*, <https://www.uscc.gov/research/china-dream-space-dream-chinas-progress-space-technologies-and-implications-united-states>. P. iv.
- ^{xxiii} Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023, Annual Report to Congress, Department of Defense, p. 89 (<https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>)
- ^{xxiv} Cordesman, Anthony H. and Kendall, Joseph, "Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2016," Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, D.C., 2016), 435.
- ^{xxv} "The Dragon Chases Its Tail," *Diálogo Américas*, 4 Oct. 2023, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/the-dragon-chases-its-tail/>.
- ^{xxvi} "Securing 5G Networks," *Council on Foreign Relations*, <https://www.cfr.org/report/securing-5g-networks>.
- ^{xxvii} Pelley, Scott. *China Stealing Technology Secrets, "Five Eyes" Intelligence Leaders Warn | 60 Minutes - CBS News*. 22 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-stealing-technology-secrets-five-eyes-intelligence-leaders-warn-60-minutes-transcript/>.
- ^{xxviii} *Id.*
- ^{xxix} Torres, Guido L., The Impacts of the Russo-Ukrainian War on Latin America in the Age of Strategic Competition, Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, March 2023, P. 2, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/impacts-russo-ukrainian-war-latin-america-age-strategic-competition>
- ^{xxx} "Lavrov in Latin America: Russia's Bid for a Multipolar World," *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/lavrov-latin-america-russias-bid-multipolar-world>.
- ^{xxxi} "Countering China and Russia's Asymmetric Activity in Latin America," *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/countering-china-and-russias-asymmetric-activity-in-latin-america/>.
- ^{xxxii} *Id.*
- ^{xxxiii} "China and Russia Step Up Cyber Presence in Latin America," *Diálogo Américas*, 26 Aug. 2022, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/china-and-russia-step-up-cyber-presence-in-latin-america/>.
- ^{xxxiv} Countering China and Russia's Asymmetric Activity in Latin America.
- ^{xxxv} "Russian Influence Campaigns in Latin America," *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/10/russian-influence-campaigns-latin-america>. P. 19
- ^{xxxvi} *Id.* at 12.

- xxxvi Id.
- xxxvii “Lavrov in Latin America: Russia’s Bid for a Multipolar World.” *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/lavrov-latin-america-russias-bid-multipolar-world>.
- xxxviii “Russia Defence Ministry Says Frigate Tests Strike Capabilities in Atlantic.” *Reuters*, 25 Jan. 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-defence-ministry-says-frigate-tests-strike-capabilities-atlantic-2023-01-25/>.
- xxxix “New Era of Cuba-Russia Relations Threatens Latin America.” *Diálogo Américas*, 30 Aug. 2023, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/new-era-of-cuba-russia-relations-threatens-latin-america/>.
- xl “Readout of Secretary Blinken’s Event, ‘Addressing the Public Health and Security Threats of Synthetic Drugs Through Global Cooperation.’” *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/briefings-foreign-press-centers/readout-of-addressing-the-public-health-and-security-threats-of-synthetic-drugs/>.
- xli “How Is China Involved in Organized Crime in Mexico?” *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-is-china-involved-in-organized-crime-in-mexico/>.
- xlii *Office of Public Affairs | Justice Department Announces Charges Against Sinaloa Cartel’s Global Operation | United States Department of Justice*, 14 Apr. 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-charges-against-sinaloa-cartel-s-global-operation>.
- xliii “Iran Increasingly Turns to Latin America.” *Diálogo Américas*, 30 Oct. 2023, <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/iran-increasingly-turns-to-latin-america/>.
- xliv Id.
- xlv Id.
- xlvi “UN Human Rights Official Is Alarmed by Sprawling Gang Violence in Haiti”, *PBS News Hour*, 31 Oct. 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/un-human-rights-official-is-alarmed-by-sprawling-gang-violence-in-haiti>.
- xlvii “Gang Violence in Haiti Is Escalating and Spreading with a Significant Increase in Killings, UN Says.” *AP News*, 28 Sept. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/haiti-gang-violence-un-report-killings-5d37f1272b7303852869dfc67692a23>.
- xlviii “UN Human Rights Official Is Alarmed by Sprawling Gang Violence in Haiti.” *AP News*, 31 Oct. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/haiti-un-human-rights-oneill-gangs-d75361f059fbc6b6457b3d7d1cedda6e>.
- xlix *Haiti: PAHO’s Humanitarian Response amid Escalating Violence - PAHO/WHO | Pan American Health Organization*, <https://www.paho.org/en/news/15-9-2023-haiti-pahos-humanitarian-response-amid-escalating-violence>.
- l “Overview.” *World Bank*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>.
- li “Promoting Accountability for Nicaraguan Officials for Restricting Freedoms.” *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/promoting-accountability-for-nicaraguan-officials-for-restricting-freedoms/>.
- lii *A Warm July in China-Nicaragua Relations*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/08/a-warm-july-in-china-nicaragua-relations/>.
- liii Arturo McFields, Opinion Contributor, “Nicaragua’s Dictatorship Again Embraces North Korean, Russian Terror.” *The Hill*, 1 Aug. 2023, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4122078-nicaragua-dictatorship-again-embraces-north-korean-russian-terror/>.
- liiv https://www.wsj.com/world/small-businesses-become-a-lifeline-for-cubas-floundering-economy-4d49e562?mod=Searchresults_pos1l&page=1.
- li v “How Russia Is Recruiting Cubans To Fight in Ukraine.” *TIME*, 18 Sept. 2023, <https://time.com/6314093/russia-recruiting-cubans-ukraine-war/>.
- li vi “China’s Xi Vows to Support Cuba in Defending Its National Sovereignty.” *Reuters*, 24 Aug. 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/chinas-xi-vows-support-cuba-defending-its-national-sovereignty-2023-08-24/>.
- li vii Arturo McFields Yescas, opinion contributor, “Venezuela’s Dictator Mocks International Community ... Again.” *The Hill*, 17 Nov. 2022, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3740965-venezuelas-dictator-mocks-international-community-again/>.
- li viii “Venezuela Referendum Result: Voters Back Bid to Claim Sovereignty over Large Swath of Guyana.” *The Guardian*, 4 Dec. 2023. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/04/venezuela-referendum-2023-results-guyana-region-claim-succeeds-sovereignty-essequibo>.
- li ix *Southern District of New York | Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Narco-Terrorism Charges Against Nicolas Maduro, Current And Former Venezuelan Officials, and FARC Leadership | United States Department of Justice*, 26 Mar. 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/manhattan-us-attorney-announces-narco-terrorism-charges-against-nicolas-maduro-current>.
- li x Human Rights Watch, “Venezuela: Events of 2021.” *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/venezuela>.
- li xi “Report: Venezuela Security Forces Continue Killings, Torture.” *AP News*, 5 July 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/caribbean-united-nations-venezuela-c84d79516c08a1121edf25f3b5585b97>.
- li xii Arturo McFields Yescas, “Venezuela’s Dictator Mocks International Community ... Again.” *The Hill*, 17 Nov. 2022, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3740965-venezuelas-dictator-mocks-international-community-again/>.
- li xiii Tahtinen, Ryan C. Berg, Lauri. “Venezuela’s Maduro Should Be Tried for Ecocide.” *Foreign Policy*, 1 Feb. 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/14/venezuela-ecocide-maduro-ico/>.
- li xiv “U.S. Needs to Invest More in Latin America to Counteract China in the Region.” *United States Institute of Peace*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/10/us-needs-invest-more-latin-america-counteract-china-region>.
- li xv Id.
- li xvi “Looking Back for the Way Ahead: An Interview with Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin”, https://www.army.mil/article/198441/looking_back_for_the_way_ahead_an_interview_with_retired_gen_lloyd_austin.
- li xvii Sykes, Lashawn. “Burlington’s Top-Tier Completes First-Ever Continuing Promise Mission.” *Military News*, 26 Oct. 2023, https://www.militarynews.com/norfolk-navy-flagship/news/topstories/burlington-s-top-tier-completes-first-ever-continuing-promise-mission/article_4a42db44-7359-11ee-8880-b3cc818ef90a.html.
- li xix “Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses.” *The White House*, 27 June 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/27/memorandum-on-combating-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-and-associated-labor-abuses/>.
- li xx Federal Agencies Release Joint U.S. Strategy for Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing. <https://www.uscg.mil/iuufishing/>.

¹⁰⁵¹ “Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing,” *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-office-of-marine-conservation/illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing/>.

¹⁰⁵² Vincent, Brandi. “As It Helps Combat Unlawful Fishing Internationally, NGA Is ‘Posturing’ for an AI-Driven Future.” *DefenseScoop*, 10 May 2023, <https://defensescoop.com/2023/05/10/as-it-helps-combat-unlawful-fishing-internationally-nga-is-posturing-for-an-ai-driven-future/>.

¹⁰⁵³ *Americas Quarterly*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2023, at 22.

¹⁰⁵⁴ “Why Do Young Americans Support Hamas? Look at TikTok,” *The Free Press*, 2 Nov. 2023, <https://www.thefp.com/p/tik-tok-young-americans-hamas-mike-gallag>.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Coast Guard Roles and Missions,” *United States Coast Guard Academy*, <https://uscga.edu/careers/roles-and-missions/>.

¹⁰⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2022): 20, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Most Expensive Places to Live, Ranked*. U.S. News and World Report, <https://realestate.usnews.com/places/rankings/most-expensive-places-to-live>.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Rent of Primary Residence in Miami Area Rose 10.1 Percent over the Year Ended December 2023: The Economics Daily: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2024/rent-of-primary-residence-in-miami-area-rose-10-1-percent-over-the-year-ended-december-2023.htm>.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Consumer Price Index, Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach — December 2023: Southeast Information Office: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, https://www.bls.gov/regions/southeast/news-release/consumerpriceindex_miami.htm.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Machado, Alina. “Why Are We Paying More for Car Insurance in Florida?” *NBC 6 South Florida*, 21 Jan. 2024, <https://www.nbcmiami.com/responds/why-are-we-paying-more-for-car-insurance-in-florida/3211024/>.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you very much. At the suggestion of my colleague, would all the students please stand to be recognized.

[Applause.]

Chairman REED. On behalf of my colleagues let me say bienvenidos, gracias.

Please be seated.

General Guillot, we have had widely reported penetrations of our airspace by unmanned vehicles. Has DOD developed defined stand-

ard operating procedures for individual base commanders in dealing with these vehicles, because they could show up and be detected minutes before they would be penetrating the space. Do we have a system or SOPs to deal with them?

General GUILLOT. Chairman, shortly after taking command and beginning my 90-day assessment I realized that the challenge of the large increase in the number of incursions by UASs was something that was going to drive and change probably the direction of my first year in command because of that acute number.

The services do have authorities, but work remains to be done to ensure that they are resource equipped, and that we have standardized operating procedures to address those threats. Also work remains to be done, Chairman, to be able to use especially the non-kinetic capabilities that can bring down those systems safely without interfering with our airspace structure.

At this present time, NORAD and NORTHCOM do not have a designated role in that, but in my recommendations at the end of the 90-day assessment I will point out ways that I think that NORAD and NORTHCOM could and should play a role in bringing that standardization that you mentioned.

Chairman REED. This process would involve other agencies such as the Department of Justice, the FBI, Homeland Security? Are we working at that joint agency level?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Chairman. They have some authorities now, and then as you alluded to, we would need to bring them all together. So we are bringing each capability together against the same incursion threat.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Richardson, the situation in Haiti is deteriorating rapidly. On March 10th, we sent in augmentation forces to the embassy. There has already been some extractions of personnel from the embassy in Haiti, and then on March 11th, the Secretary of Defense increased DOD's contribution of up to \$200 million to provide logistics support for a security force to come in to Haiti.

Could you just give us your sense of the implications of the situation in Haiti for the United States and the region?

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, Senator and Chairman. Thank you for the question. So certainly USSOUTHCOM has a wide range of contingency plans, so we are ready for whatever would be required for a Department of Defense response. We have conducted two missions that have been widely publicized of increasing security, and it is routine actions that would take place for any of our embassies across the globe.

The situation in Haiti has been deteriorating over the past couple of weeks. So with the announcement that has come and the political negotiations that have been happening and occurring, the violence has been tamped down somewhat over the past couple of days. So certainly the political solution seems to be working, and hopefully that continues on a positive path. But if not, we have, as I said, the contingency plans ready to respond from USSOUTHCOM.

Chairman REED. Thank you. You pointed out the penetration of your AO by China and Russia. It seems that one of the leading edges of China's activities is economic—buying ports, getting the

Belt and Road project underway. There is one other area too, and that is their willingness or their eagerness to acquire more interest in the Inter-American Development Bank. I understand that Congress must pass legislation to authorize the United States to buy the shares before the Chinese do. Is that accurate? If the Chinese beat us out, would that be a problem?

General RICHARDSON. That would be a problem, Chairman, and I think through the United States Government's initiative with the American Partnership for Economic Prosperity, APEP, where the Administration hosted 11 Latin American heads of State in Washington, DC, in November 2023, and this would be part of that, our ability to invest in critical infrastructure through the Inter-American Development Bank and the Development Finance Corporation, DFC. So these shares that are coming up, \$75 million in shares for the U.S. to purchase those shares in the Inter-American Development Bank. This bank has been established in 1959, to do exactly these things, to invest in critical infrastructure within the region.

Chairman REED. If we do not do it, the Chinese will.

General RICHARDSON. Exactly right, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Thank you. Let's just stay in SOUTHCOM. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro took unprecedented steps to establish control over the contested Essequibo region of neighboring Guyana. This violated an International Court of Justice ruling. The region accounts for two-thirds of Guyana's territory and extensive offshore oil riches.

How has this impacted the security of the region, and particularly the fact that Venezuela has deployed light tanks, armored carriers, and missile-equipped patrol boats along the affected border?

General RICHARDSON. So, Senator, it absolutely has, and in terms of our relationship with Guyana, who is a very willing partner and a democracy in the region, very important partner, and we see that what the Maduro regime and Venezuela are doing and the activities they are taking against this democracy with an unjustified claim. Our support for Guyana, we have shown that from the U.S. Government, and through all the instruments of national power, the diplomacy, the military, and certainly—

Senator WICKER. Do you have directions from the White House or from your superiors in the Department as to what we should do?

General RICHARDSON. So as we work my engagements and what we do with security cooperation we have a very robust plan with Guyana, and we have continued on that plan, and that has been coordinated with our U.S. Government.

Senator WICKER. Can you briefly describe the plan?

General RICHARDSON. So it consists of visits by folks within my command and the engagements that we do, the exercises, the subject matter exchanges. We have continued with all of those. Not trying to exacerbate the situation but continued on path with our regular engagements that have been scheduled, and we have not halted any of that.

Senator WICKER. Is the international community assisting us in that regard?

General RICHARDSON. The international community is very much assisting, and I would say our allies, as part of our Western Hemisphere Framework that we signed in USSOUTHCOM with our allies that work in the region—the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, and also France. So as we work together to coordinate our activities they also have activities and engagements that they do in the region and are doing in Guyana, and those are also coordinated.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much.

Let me switch to General Guillot, deployment of National Guard troops on the border. I think maybe a lot of American's do not understand how often we do this. But it has worsened considerably. The problem is not the lead agency but it has deployed troops there in 18 of the previous 21 years. They are called temporary deployments, but it is beginning to look like permanent.

There is a difference in the way we deploy and notify those units, is there not, in the sense that if it is a temporary deployment they get 180 days' notice in advance. If it is regular deployment it is a year and a half. So could you discuss that with us, and is my understanding correct there, General?

General GUILLOT. Senator, your understanding is correct. The primary difference that we see in Northern Command is we are in support, as you mentioned, so therefore we wait for the request from the lead agency—in this case Customs and Border Protection—and a request for assistance that is reviewed and then has ultimately been approved by the Department of Defense. Then at that point we can start trying to match, through the joint staff, and the National Guard, the correct unit to support that, based on the needs that are in that request for assistance.

As you alluded to—

Senator WICKER. Would it be helpful if we treated it as a permanent deployment?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I think more than treating it as a permanent deployment would be earlier notification of the requirements. Since those change that allows us to tailor the National Guard force to meet the changing requirements of the Customs and Border Protection, whereas if we had a permanent force we might have permanently the wrong type of unit to support.

However, to your point, what we have established, and we must maintain, is having a permanent command and control structure over there so we have continuity and predictability in how we present the forces and work with the Customs and Border Protection.

Senator WICKER. Do we need to give you different authority in that regard, or is it just a matter of the Department—

General GUILLOT. Senator, I think we have the—I am sorry.

Senator WICKER. Okay.

General GUILLOT. Senator, we have the authorities that we need. The thing that we would most benefit from, as you alluded to, is time, time to pick and train and prepare the National Guard units that are going to go down there and support the CBP.

Senator WICKER. Well, to both of you, tell us what you need and we will try to get it for you. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my notes, since you have been talking, I have written the word “gap” about five times, so I am going to talk about gaps. General Guillot, do we have a censor gap at NORAD? We learn more from failures than we do from successes. What did we learn from the balloon incursion about the adequacy of our sensors, which is essentially the basis of NORAD?

General GUILLOT. Senator, we learned a great deal. To the gaps, what we have is we had some gaps in the layered approach, where we want to be able to detect with domain awareness from satellites down to traditional air——

Senator KING. One of the problems is low altitude, isn't it?

General GUILLOT. That is right, sir—all the way down to the surface, and then even in the undersea.

We were able to address many of those on initiatives that were started by my predecessor, General VanHerck, by changing the sensitivity of the radars that we do have, and that has allowed us to have better domain awareness in that regime that you mentioned.

However, there are some gaps that will be manifesting in the near future. Those are currently scheduled to be addressed by the over-the-horizon radar, by the HPTSS, which is the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor system. Those capabilities are essential to fill gaps that are growing because of the increased capability of the adversaries.

Senator KING. I would suggest that that is an urgent need, given the experience that we have had but also given the incredible militarization of the Arctic coast by Russia and the development of drone by. All those things added together create a significant risk. I hope you can come to us with what you need because this is something we need to do in a hurry. We can't wait 5 years to develop this capacity.

General GUILLOT. Senator, we will.

Senator KING. We also have an icebreaker gap——

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir.

Senator KING.—in terms of our ability to operate in the Arctic. As the Arctic Ocean opens up it is becoming, as I mentioned, more militarized by the Russians, and a much more important body of water. It is like we have suddenly discovered the Mediterranean Sea. Talk to me about icebreakers. We only have one and a half icebreakers, heavy icebreakers in the Arctic.

General GUILLOT. That is correct, Senator, and we are severely outnumbered. We appreciate the Coast Guard——

Senator KING. Yes, I would say 40 to 1 is outnumbered.

General GUILLOT. Yes.

Senator KING. That is the approximate number that the Russians have.

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator, and the Chinese declaring themselves a near-Arctic nation, they intend to bring more.

Senator KING. Yes, I noticed when the Chinese declared themselves a near-Arctic nation my position is that Maine is a near-Caribbean State.

[Laughter.]

General GUILLOT. I share your view, sir. We do appreciate that the Coast Guard is procuring more icebreakers, but even with those we will be severely outnumbered, and that does limit our freedom of maneuver in that region.

Senator KING. It is basically like not having a road to get where you need to get.

General GUILLOT. Yes.

Senator KING. General Richardson, let's talk about another gap—drugs. Since we have been sitting here about 10 Americans have died of drug overdoses, just since we began this meeting 45 minutes ago. One person a day is dying in my home State of Maine. Do you have the capacity to interdict drug shipments coming in by sea, that we know of? I have asked this question every year for about the past 10 years and I am afraid I know the answer.

General RICHARDSON. Senator, so in USSOUTHCOM we have detection and monitoring mission, and that is to gain the intelligence for drug shipments—

Senator KING. I should not have said do “you” have the capacity. Do we, does the country? You have the terrific capacity for intelligence and identification. My concern is once we know about a dangerous shipment then do we have the capacity to interdict it?

General RICHARDSON. We pass that intelligence over to law enforcement, or our partner nations, and it depends on who is close enough to do that. So in terms of the capacity, we anticipate that we are able to, of what we know is out there, interdict about 10 percent of the known problem, with the resourcing and capabilities that we currently are given.

Senator KING. I would emphasize that figure to our colleagues. We can interdict 10 percent of what we know of. That is inexcusable. I do not mean it is inexcusable for you. But one of the problems, it strikes me, is when everybody is in charge, nobody is in charge. You have got yourself, DEA, DHS, the intelligence community, and the problem is Americans are dying. In about every 10 days we have September 11th. Three thousand people die in this country every 10 days. You used the word, in your testimony, “assault,” and that is what it is. It is an assault. But we are treating it as a kind of domestic law enforcement problem when it is an assault, and most of it is coming from outside of our country.

So I hope that you will work with your colleagues, perhaps form a task group to get after this problem of interdiction, and if we do not have capacity, if we do not have enough Coast Guard cutters or DHS does not have the capacity, tell us. Tell us, because we cannot solve a problem if we do not know what it is. We know the general shape of the problem, but you are in a position to tell us what is missing and what you can do in order to help protect this country.

General RICHARDSON. Senator, I would offer that we cannot interdict our way out of this problem, and we have got to be able to go after the networks. We have got to be able to go after the drug labs. We have got to be able to follow the money and the money laundering, which is fueling this very rich environment that the transnational criminal organizations—

Senator KING. Well, we agree, and we have to talk about the demand side here, and treatment, and prevention. I totally agree

with that. But this is a discrete problem that I think we do have some capacity to deal with.

Final question, and this is not about a gap. What is your overall assessment of the Chinese incursion into Latin America, specifically they have been doing this for some time, doing infrastructure projects. In other parts of the world there is some development of buyer's remorse, that the Chinese have not performed as they were expected, that the debt colonialism is becoming a problem. Is that occurring in Latin America, in your view?

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely, Senator, and my concern, as a combatant commander for the region, and 22 of 31 countries in the region have signed on to the Belt and Road Initiative, but it is all investment, a lot of investment in critical infrastructure where the big money projects are. That is deepwater ports, 5G, space, safe city smart city technology to be able to spy on the populations.

So with these state-owned enterprises from the RPC, and my concern is being able to use those for military application, if required, and it is in all of the critical infrastructure.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today.

General Guillot, I have appreciated our discussions on the challenges of detecting, characterizing, and tracking potential threats to our Homeland. Most Americans are fully aware of the incident with the Chinese balloon, but NORTHCOM has other responsibilities as well, especially with protecting the Homeland from the more advanced threats that are out there, which would include ballistic and cruise missiles.

Why is having that improved domain awareness, which is the ability to detect and track the threats and also to provide a clear threat picture of what is out there and to be able to discriminate what you are seeing, why is that so important to defending our Homeland?

General GUILLOT. Senator, it is important because it gives us time, time to inform leaders, make decisions, and enact defeat mechanisms to defeat these threats that are coming in. You mentioned the discrimination capability. As the threat becomes more advanced and they can put out decoys, we could needlessly shoot interceptors at objects that are not a threat, but having the discrimination radar makes sure that we can actually shoot and kill the warhead that would be a threat.

The other thing I would quickly say, Senator, is the capabilities are growing so much by the adversary that domain awareness that you mentioned needs to push out further away from our shores, detect earlier, characterize them earlier, as you mentioned, so we have more time to employ the defense capabilities that we have.

Senator FISCHER. Are we moving quickly enough?

General GUILLOT. Senator, we are right on the edge. I think that we are moving quickly, and I appreciate all the support from this body and the services. But we cannot pause at all because the adversary, and multiple adversaries, not just one, are growing very, very quickly, and it really is at an alarming rate.

Senator FISCHER. I am concerned about what we are seeing in the President's budget request for fiscal year 2025. The Administration decreases spending for the glide-phase interceptor program, and it is stating that it is going to be delivered in 2035. Yet in the NDAA of fiscal year 2024, in Section 1666, that requires the Missile Defense Agency to achieve an initial operational capability of that program by December 31, 2029. How do you respond to my concerns?

General GUILLOT. Senator, my response is that I view hypersonics as perhaps the most destabilizing threat that we have out there because of the fast speed, and more than that, the maneuverability and the unpredictability on where it will impact, as opposed to a ballistic missile which is fairly predictable.

I have worked very closely, in my short period of time, with MDA. I am pleased with some of the efforts that they are doing to intercept in the glide phase, and then also using existing systems such as the SM-6 to adapt against that threat. Then I am also very pleased with what MDA is doing with the HBTSS, the satellite capability to detect and track hypersonics.

Senator FISCHER. You know, just yesterday we heard from a senior analyst with the National Air and Space Intelligence Center. He told Congress that, quote, "China now has the world's leading hypersonic arsenal." So given the pace that we are seeing with Russia and with China as they advance their hypersonic weapons programs, should the Department accelerate the development of those hypersonic defense systems, really, when it is technically feasible to do so?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I support moving all of our capabilities against the strategic threats that you mentioned as far left as possible, based on the growing and consistently growing capabilities of our adversaries.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. General Richardson, thank you for all the work that you have done and your service to this country. When we talk about China and the Belt and Road Initiatives, you answered Senator King on that. But when you are looking at the longer-term strategies that China has in the buying that they continue to do in your area of responsibility, how serious a threat is it?

General RICHARDSON. I look at it as a serious threat because of the ability of these state-owned, controlled by the government, companies. If I just take the Panama Canal and the five state-owned enterprises that are along either side of the Panama Canal, and that is a very important, strategic line of communication. So there are a lot of large implications there in terms of all the critical infrastructure, the deepwater ports, the 5G space, safe city smart city technology. So very concerning.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, and thank you, General Guillot. You made comments, I think it was yesterday, before the House committee, or 2 days ago, before the House Armed Services Committee, about the possibility of seeing, in the very near future, Chinese aircraft's closeness to our Homeland. I thank you for bringing that to our attention.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here.

General Guillot, I remain concerned about the DOD's missile defense posture, I guess you can call it, and that the DOD does not have a plan to address the current and future missile defense needs of Hawaii. It is an issue that I have brought up with just about everybody who comes to testify from the DOD. The 2024 NDAA directs a plan for the missile defense of Hawaii, which INDOPACOM is leading.

General, your predecessor told me last year that NORTHCOM is responsible for protecting Hawaii against ballistic missile threats from North Korea, but of course, we also need to concern ourselves with the missile threats, cruise missiles and hypersonics. Have you been coordinating with INDOPACOM regarding the development of the missile defense plan?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I have. We work very close with INDOPACOM on all defense of our entire Homeland. I also agree with the characterization that General VanHerck did on our specific role in that.

Senator HIRONO. So I have some concerns that there are so many different commands involved in the missile defense of Hawaii and missile defense, in general. So we have you, well NORTHCOM, INDOPACOM, SPACECOM, STRATCOM, Missile Defense Agency. Do you have some concerns about how all of you are coordinating and coming up with the kind of plan that we need for missile defense?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I think that we communicate very well with each other. I think that we all understand the priorities. So I have not seen any place where having multiple agencies responsible for a common area presenting a seam or a challenge. But I am very acutely aware of the potential, and I watch for that very closely.

Senator HIRONO. The 2024 NDAA, as I mentioned, directs a plan from INDOPACOM. So that plan is going to be presented to us, I hope, by next month, which is the timeframe for that plan. So I assume that plan will reflect the coordinated input from all of you.

General Richardson, China is building a deepwater port in Peru that is expected to open this November, and it will be the first South American port controlled by China. This is just one example of China's growing influence in Latin America through economic ties, controlling critical minerals, and establishing port and space facilities. This presents unique strategic risks to U.S. national security and global order.

General, what changes are you seeing in the region as a result of the growing influence of the PRC, and what steps are you taking to counter China's influence in Latin America?

General RICHARDSON. So thank you, Senator, and we have doubled down, and with the increase of funding last year from the U.S. Congress, us and SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM received some funding that went to secure the cooperation of programs, and then also with flexible authority. So that was extremely helpful, and it allows us to be very responsive in terms of being able to help our partner nations to counter the influence of China. So I want to thank you for that.

Our ability to be able to respond and be responsive, these heads of State are generally in the seat for one term of 4 years so they are working on a stopwatch, not a calendar, and they are trying to show progress within months, not years. So we really appreciate that resourcing.

Senator HIRONO. So you mentioned that we have provided additional resources. Do you think that we are doing enough to counter? Because China is, from my perspective, everywhere, and especially, of course, in the Indo-Pacific area. We know what their influences are with the Pacific Island nations, for example. So now they are in Latin America. Are we doing enough to really address all of the kind of long-term focus that China has throughout your part of the world?

General RICHARDSON. Senator, through all of the instruments of power of Team USA, and bringing those together, and synchronizing and integrating better, the Chairman brought up the APEP, the American Partnership for Economic Prosperity, and the IDBM Invest program, that through that initial program to invest in the Western Hemisphere is huge. It is just a start, and I would recommend that that is something very similar, this program, to the Economic Recovery Act of 1948, which was so instrumental in terms of the economic recovery. I see that this economic recovery for the region, due to the impacts of COVID, what it did to the economies of the region, and now the transnational criminal organizations taking advantage of this.

So this is a first start with these 11 heads of State from Latin America that were here in Washington, in November •23, for this program that was rolling out billions of dollars for critical infrastructure investment by the U.S. Government. So we are on a very good path with a third of our Latin American leaders with this economic investment. I would say that national security rests on their economic security, and we can do more, and through this program, if we can build this out, we would be on a good path with our partners in our shared neighborhoods so close to our Homeland.

Senator HIRONO. Well, that aspect of working with our Latin American allies I think is really critical because that is what we are doing in the Indo-Pacific area.

Could I just ask one more question relating to some questions from Senator King?

Chairman REED. Yes. Keep it short.

Senator HIRONO. Keep it short. I will keep it short.

You mentioned that regarding the interdiction of drugs that it requires us to really pay attention to some other aspects such as going after these criminal forces. Is there an intergovernmental task force of some sort that you are all working together that would include DOD, DOJ, Coast Guard to counter the drug threat?

General RICHARDSON. We are working together. I would say that there needs to be more focus, more resourcing on this particular grouping to get after the problem sets. I would say from the money laundering to the drug labs, and following where not just the small, semi-submersible that is loaded with counter-narcotics, but actually getting to where it is produced and getting in there.

The work that we have done in Colombia has been very effective, but the amounts are only increasing, and so we have got to figure

out, we have got to follow this money, and we have got to get after the TCOs as a holistic, more filled-out, robust program.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds has yielded to Senator Budd. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Senator Rounds, for yielding. Senator

[sic] Guillot, thank you both for being here, by the way.

It is my understanding there have been a lot of drone incursions along our southern border. How many drone incursions have we had, and what are they doing?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the number of incursions was something that was alarming to me as I took command last month. I do not know the actual number. I do not think anybody does. But it is in the thousands. I have talked to Customs and Border Protection, who are responsible for the UAS incursions and the border, along with DOJ, and they put the number at thousands.

Senator BUDD. Over what period of time is that thousands?

General GUILLOT. I would say in probably over a month. We could probably have over 1,000 a month.

Senator BUDD. General, do they, in your view, represent a homeland defense threat?

General GUILLOT. Senator, they alarm me, from being the person responsible for homeland defense. I have not seen any of them manifest in a threat to the level of national defense, but I see the potential only growing.

Senator BUDD. General, continuing on with a different topic. Do you consider the F-15E Strike Eagle to be a capable aircraft, and are there particular characteristics for the F-15 that make it ideal for homeland defense?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I think the F-15E Strike Eagle is a phenomenal aircraft. What makes it applicable in our theater is the same thing that makes it applicable around the world, is its versatility. It is, in many ways, unmatched air to ground, and in many ways it is unmatched air to air. It has a phenomenal radar. It is an AESA radar, electrically scanned, which allows it to pick out low, slow, moving, and also low radar cross-section such as drones or other threats like cruise missiles. So the Strike Eagle is a fantastic aircraft.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. So in its fiscal year 2025 budget, the Air Force plans to divest 26 F-15 Strike Eagles at the same time that it is buying less than expected F-35s, F-15EXs, and other fights. So it has got me very concerned, not just for homeland defense, and the descriptions that you shared a moment ago, but including potential conflict with China, and also for responses to crises in other geographic combatant commands.

So if you would agree to keep your eye on that and share with us concerns as they arise related to the F-15.

General GUILLOT. I will, Senator.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. Changing topics, General Richardson and General Guillot both, you mentioned TCOs just a minute ago, General Richardson, like the Mexican drug cartels. They often move not just drugs and lethal fentanyl but they move people.

Many of these activities proceed without interruption in both of your areas of responsibility.

Section 1068 of the fiscal year 2024 NDAA requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a plan for coordinating with defense partners in North and South America and supporting interagency departments and agencies to counter human trafficking, including human trafficking by these TCOs.

So have either of you been consulted on developing that plan? General Richardson, we will start with you>

General RICHARDSON. So, Senator, we work migration every day in United States Southern Command, and for this past year with the trilateral agreement that the U.S. Government signed with Panama and Colombia, so we are very aware of the migration.

Senator BUDD. General, if I may, beyond just general awareness, the Secretary of Defense is required to submit a plan for coordinating with defense partners. Are you working on that plan?

General RICHARDSON. I am not specifically working on that plan for the Department of Defense. The OSD and the Joint Staff will be working on that.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. General Guillot?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the same answer. We are not working directly. We are in support of the Department.

Senator BUDD. You know, not to you but to the Department of Defense and the Secretary, that is disappointing. So I would like to followup with both of you and the Department on this to make sure that begins to get implemented so we can begin stopping the illegal flow of deadly fentanyl and other drugs and the tragic trafficking of humans.

You know, that is big business for the cartels, and it is contributing to instability in countries across our hemisphere. So what efforts, beyond that plan since that is not yet being developed, what efforts are already underway, with you or your partners, to address human trafficking? General Richardson?

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, Senator, and I am not aware that the report not—the report could very well be well along its way. We are just not actively working on it from our levels. A lot of times the Joint Staff and OSD will work those things to allow us to continue to execute our daily missions.

But we are working very closely, because I have the Darién in my AOR, which is a huge human trafficking area, and you are exactly right in terms of the transnational criminal organizations have only gotten more powerful. Over \$300 billion annual revenue business. They traffic humans, drugs, gold, lithium, all kinds of counterfeit goods, and so only getting more powerful.

So the work that we do, the Colombian military and their operation, Hefesto, to go after the criminal networks that are doing these criminal activities as well as the Panama SENAFRONT and SENAN border forces that are going after the criminal networks in Panama.

Senator BUDD. In the interest of time, Chairman, I will yield, but I would love to continue discussions, perhaps offline, about your efforts in regard to human trafficking in NORTHCOM. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Guillot, General Richardson, great to see both of you.

General Richardson, yesterday we were talking a little bit about Haiti and the situation on the ground being chaotic, gangs running rampant in their capital. This week the prime minister of Haiti announced he would resign, and then Kenya paused the agreement to send 1,000 police officers until a new government would be put into place.

SOUTHCOM has successfully airlifted embassy staff out of the country, but a number of Americans still remain in Haiti, and some may be looking to leave. Some are concerned that the U.S. has not initiated a noncombatant evacuation order, a NEO, to get Americans out of Haiti.

General, have you been tasked to operate an evacuation?

General RICHARDSON. So, Senator, as part of the wide range of contingency plans that USSOUTHCOM has we are ready for a NEO activation, if required, and have other plans ready to go, as we always do, and keep those plans refreshed over and over. So we are ready at any time for any type of crisis.

Senator KELLY. You say you are ready now, but are there any additional preparations in the event that this becomes a necessity?

General RICHARDSON. I think the two missions of increasing the security at the embassy and a little bit of my capability as well, expanding that, is the platform that we would use if we need to expand from there. So we put in all of the necessary measures that are necessary for any of the plans to be activated.

Senator KELLY. So it would be true to say that there is mission planning currently underway in case you have to do this.

General RICHARDSON. Senator, we always do mission planning in the military, so absolutely.

Senator KELLY. Well, thank you. Thank you, General.

General Guillot, just on Monday morning I got back from a trip to the Arctic, where I was able to see firsthand some of the efforts by the Navy to pursue our Arctic strategic objectives. The Arctic is an area of concern and a great example of the intersection between defense policies, climate, and strategic partnerships. Melting ice is making the Arctic more accessible to everyone, including Russia and China. It is rich with oil, minerals, fishing, other natural resources, and we have to ensure that a free and peaceful Arctic benefits the United States and our partners and allies.

Russia seeks to use the Arctic as a staging ground for power projection in addition to it being a critical defense and deterrent for their homeland. But they also seek to control the region.

We have made real progress in combating Russian influence in the Arctic over the last year, with Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Now every country with a border on the Arctic is part of NATO, with the exception of Russia, and we must not miss this opportunity to advance our interests in the Arctic while Russia is focusing on their illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

General Guillot, I would like to hear, in more detail, what you think the U.S. and NATO's strategy should look like in the Arctic.

General GUILLOT. Senator, first thanks for visiting our forces up there during Ice Camp. As you alluded to, it is an extremely impor-

tant operation that demonstrates our capability up there with the submarines and the LC-130's, and all the other aircraft and forces.

As far as what we could do, or should do, with NATO in the Arctic, you described exercises that we are doing on the, what I will call the Alaska side, or the ten o'clock approach. We have also had some success working with NATO and European command on the two o'clock, the northeast approach. Just last week, for the first time in over 2 years, the Russians sent two Bear bombers down along that avenue through what we call the GIUK gap, Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom, approaching the Canadian and the United States air defense identification zones. I have not seen this activity in over 2 years.

We were able to track them the entire time, thanks to the radar network and the information sharing between countries within EUCOM—Norway is one that I will point out—and Northern Command. So we were able to track this activity—

Senator KELLY. What range were you able to intercept them?

General GUILLOT. Senator, we did not have to intercept them because we had aircraft flying to the point where we would intercept them before they crossed the identification zone, and the Russians turned around prior to reaching that zone. So we had aircraft, both Canadian and U.S. fighters, postured along the line, which I think is probably disheartening to the Russians to fly all that way to find out that we are waiting for them, and that is due to NATO cooperation.

Senator KELLY. So the Russians are pretty good operating in the Arctic. Have you seen advancement by the Chinese?

General GUILLOT. What I have seen, Senator, is a willingness and a desire by the Chinese to act up there. We have seen them in the maritime. We have seen them under the cloud of a technical or scientific research, but we think it is certainly multi-mission, to include military, and then I expect to see air activity in the Alaska part of the Arctic as soon as this year, potentially. It is a very big concern of mine.

Senator KELLY. All right. Thank you, General.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Guillot and General Richardson, first of all thank you to you and your teams for your service to our country.

I would like to followup just a little bit with what Senator Kelly began talking about with regard to Haiti. So General Richardson, it seems to me that it rather surprises me that there may not have been any advanced notice requesting additional or followup with regard to the possibility of a NEO operation in Haiti. Wouldn't that seem to be kind of an advisory that would be appropriate if you received something, at least from the Administration, indicating that it is possibility? Wouldn't that maybe give you the opportunity to notify those individuals responsible for providing you with the resources necessary to do your duty to be ready to go? I mean, it doesn't not seem to me that they can be on high alert all the time. Could you just expand on that a little bit, please.

General RICHARDSON. So, Senator, I did not mean to give the perception that we are not ready or that nobody has asked us to

be ready, or anything like that. We have been discussing that and talking about that, and I have been talking with our Joint Staff, our Chairman and our Secretary of Defense over the past 2 weeks about all of the range of plans that we might have to do—an evacuation, a NEO, a mass migration, all of those things. So those missions of extracting some non-essential personnel from the U.S. embassy—

Senator ROUNDS. Okay, so it is not just a matter of being ready to fight tonight as much as, yes, we are aware of it and we are doing some pre-planning, just in case that call is made.

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely, Senator. We are ready to go. We have all of our plans ready to go.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. Thank you, and then also I noted with regard to discussions earlier here about the transnational criminal organizations, the drug cartels, and so forth south of our border. Both of you have some responsibilities with regard to whether it is in other parts of the NORAD command or SOCOM. Just a reminder once again that under the NDAA we have already authorized the use of our cyber teams to be able to find out in advance and to know who these people are, where they bank, how they communicate, and so forth. So hopefully we will not just authorize but now we will fund that part of the operation so that we can assist those countries who want our expertise and finding out more about these organizations, that that is available to them, and simply that it is available to you for your use.

Let me also just, General Guillot, with the potential divestments of fighter aircraft by the Air Force there are concerns about how the Air National Guard, who shoulder a significant portion of the burden of homeland defense, how they will be able to continue to support you in that capacity while also fulfilling their obligations under the National Defense Strategy.

I bring this up because the resourcing that the Air National Guard receives appears to be incongruent with their mission assignments, which include both the Aerospace Control Alert defense strategy, using the same resources, and then also supporting the Joint Force in that national defense strategy. I am just curious, are you involved in any planning or discussions with Secretary Kendall and General Loh as they discuss the plan for long-term Air Force fighter force structure, and if not I would encourage your involvement.

Could you share just a little bit about your communications with them?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator, and first thanks for pointing out the outstanding contributions of the Air National Guard. We cannot conduct our air defense mission without them. They are not only the cornerstone, they provide, at 20 different ACA sites that you mentioned, our 24/7 capability to respond.

Because of their importance I have talked directly with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Alvin, about the commitment of the Air Force to that mission and then also what is going to happen with the future as we draw down some capabilities and bring on new capabilities to include the collaborative combat aircraft, the next-generation air dominance. General Alvin was very clear that he fully supports our mission and he understands the no-fail na-

ture of our mission, and then he invited me to be a part of the future discussions on how they incorporate these capabilities.

Senator ROUNDS. Excellent because we have to be able to incorporate the Air Guard, and they have got to have the resources to do that successfully.

General Richardson, we discussed China's growing footprint and the influence throughout SOUTHCOM and how important it is that the U.S. remain engaged in the region. One of the main tools that you have at your disposal, as we discussed in my office, is Section 333 of Title 10, which lets the DOD help build the security capacity of friendly nations. Unfortunately, Section 333 requires you to navigate a ponderous bureaucracy in both the Department of Defense and the Department of State before you can make use of this authority. It is not agile, and it clearly is not very quick. Ironically, the Chinese Communist Party is not bogged down by the same bureaucratic inertia.

How important is Section 333 authority to your mission, and how can it be improved?

General RICHARDSON. It is my main lever in security cooperation, Senator, and so the Triple 3, as we call it, and the ability to be able to—I have a Triple 3 package right now that is navigating all of the wickets that it needs to go through for a counter-PRC effort on port scanners, for example, and the stealing of data that the PRC does, and to be able to put a U.S. company in there to be able to do the scanning for in and out cargo is extremely important because, again, it is about the data.

So the Triple 3 and flexible authorities and being responsive is extremely important, so I appreciate the help and the assistance on those authorities.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and General Guillot and General Richardson, thank you for all your service and all the men and women who serve along with you. We appreciate that.

General Guillot, you mentioned the importance, or the challenges, I should say, the significant challenges we face in the Arctic in a previous question, and how we need to seek ways to address that, make additional investments into Arctic resilient platforms as well as cold weather training, which is essential for our troops.

A key portion of CONUS cold weather training is completed every winter during Northern Strike at the National All-Domain Warfighting Center in Michigan. We are blessed with cold weather during the winters, and it provides a great training opportunity.

So my question for you, General, is while the summer training portion of Northern Strike is extensive, we believe that the exercises' winter iteration of that training that we conduct there has some great expansion opportunities to provide cost-effective cold weather training for men and women who may be tasked to serve up there. So my question for you is how can we grow CONUS Arctic training through exercises like Northern Strike to support the priorities of our national security strategy?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I would be a strong proponent of doing exactly as you stated. One of the concerns I have as I visited

Alaska about a week into my command to assess many of the areas that you just discussed was that the forces up there are extremely well trained and equipped with the right equipment to operate in the Arctic, but the backfill forces are probably very well trained but they are not equipped and they have not trained in that environment.

So anything that we could do for the supplementing forces or the backfill forces that would go into the Arctic, training them either in the Arctic environment or in something as you described that would replicate that will be very important, not only to give them those skills but to identify what are the pieces of kit and equipment that we need to develop and issue so they could seamlessly operate in that strategic environment.

Senator PETERS. Very good. Thank you. General Richardson, as you know the National Guard State Partnership Program links our State National Guard units with global partners, and the program certainly has been invaluable, I believe, in strengthening our relationship with partner nations, including SOUTHCOM's 29 active SPP participants. As part of the State Partnership Program, U.S. embassies ideally have a bilateral affairs officer working as a conduit between the State as well as the partner country. But despite what I believe is a critical role, these billets unfortunately often sit vacant, forcing the COCOM commanders to use their assigned billets to pay for these BAOs.

So my question for you, General, is first, what role do bilateral affairs officers play in successfully implementing these State partnership programs, and how can we address the gaps that exist in the billets to ensure that they are filled and we can get the maximum utility out of these partnerships?

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, Senator, and I would say that the SPP program, I have the largest SPP program amongst all the geographic combatant commands, and we are very grateful for that program. It is a huge enabler. We have got to keep those BAA slots filled with those officers. They organize and synchronize the activities of the National Guard SPP program with the operations activities and investments that I have in USSOUTHCOM. So it is a critical role, and we have got to keep those filled.

With the Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative, which is a program that we are rolling out to put nine centers of excellence in the region, and this is partnering with the partner nation militaries and their military academies with program of instruction to teach and train maintenance and the culture of maintenance. But it is a tactical-level program, all the way up to an operational level, into the ministries of defense, where you can anticipate logistics and teach logistics, and that culture of maintenance to keep equipment ready and increase the readiness of capability for these partner nations.

Senator PETERS. I appreciate that. A question that I have for you, as well, General Richardson, is that my understanding is that right now the Chinese military is training about five times more Latin American and Caribbean military officers than the United States. I have some concerns that these Chinese professional military education exchanges may have an outsized impact on our allies, particularly in SOUTHCOM.

So my question for you is what are the risks associated with continuing to allow Chinese education exchanges to outpace what we are providing, and how can Congress support your command in countering this challenge?

General RICHARDSON. So the PRC is using our playbook against us, in terms of these exchanges and these all-expense-paid training exchanges for a year to 2 years to China, and the aegis that we are able to provide through the IMET program for professional military education. But the difference that it makes when they come to our schools, in the United States, for example, when you don't speak the language or speak in the language, and I would say there are 3 ministers of defense and about 15 chiefs of defense that have been to our United States schools, and so you have already built the trust. I do not have to build the trust over a year with these leaders. So if they have been to our U.S. schools I would say that we need to continue to sustain that and even increase our IMET program.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. Before I begin my remarks and questions for each of you I want to say something about what Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is saying on the Senate floor right now. The Majority Leader, on the

U.S. Senate floor, is calling for a new Israeli Government. This is coercion, it is dangerous, it is undemocratic. If Chuck Schumer does not like Netanyahu it does not matter. The Israeli Government should be respected by the American Government. Americans should stand strongly with Israel's elected leadership, not threaten it as it fights terrorism. I hope that Israel destroys, kills every Hamas terrorist there is.

First off, thanks to both of you for your service. So I want to say a few things before I ask you a couple of questions.

Protecting our national security interests means that the military must be laser-focused on the cold, hard facts, and not only what our adversaries are doing but what they are capable of doing. The violence and unrest in Haiti is heartbreaking. It is a symptom of political unrest that has only continued to grow under this Administration. Not only has the Biden administration taken an active role in destabilizing the region by appeasing Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, but it appears that the White House is totally unprepared to deal with the consequences of the political unrest these regimes create and support.

The policy in the United States should not be that we just let everyone into our country, totally unvetted, any time there is trouble around the world. That is what President Biden has done at the border with eight million people pouring across, and after the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan with 90,000 unvetted people coming in.

Not only does this Administration open the floodgates for people who do not know anything about what we believe in to come to our country, President Biden and Democrats at every level of government give these individuals cash, phones, lawyers, and everything else, paid for by the U.S. taxpayer.

The entire Biden administration can be summed up as this: Biden creates a magnet for illegal immigration here, appeases evil regimes, and forces the American people to pay for the unrest, humanitarian crisis, and mass border crossings that result. It does not work, and it cannot be our answer to the chaos in Haiti.

It is also worth knowing that all of this works to the benefit of our adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran. Our enemies thrive on our chaos. These evil regimes are working every day to expand their foothold in the Western Hemisphere and increase the ability for their proxies to threaten the U.S. and destabilize the region.

For SOUTHCOM we see Iran infiltrating the region and Communist China using initiatives like Belt and Road to spread their influence and saddle poor countries in Latin America with massive debt. For NORTHCOM we see Russia and Communist China using unconventional warfare, especially cyberattacks, going after our supply chains or taking advantage of the open border. We are even seeing our adversaries undermine U.S. security while expanding their reach in places like the Arctic, bringing their militaries closer to the U.S.

So I have a couple of questions. General Richardson, let's start with Haiti. The people of Haiti have reached a breaking point. Florida families, we have a lot of Haitian families in our State, are compassionate, for they are worried about how this instability in the region, to not only include Haiti but all of SOUTHCOM theater, could possibly stroke a mass immigration event in my State.

I spoke with the Coast Guard last night. I would like to hear from you. What is your plan to address the possibility of a mass migration event which may not only impact Florida but also our bases within the Caribbean? What are the options available to us with DOD assets and capabilities?

General RICHARDSON. So in terms of a mass migration we have our contingency plan at USSOUTHCOM and we did a train walk last summer on Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, and that was with all of the interagency to walk through all the processes and ensure that all the steps that are necessary to take place are actually in place, everything is refreshed, the equipment, everything is ready to go.

As we work through all of our contingency plans I assure you that USSOUTHCOM and the Department of Defense are ready to go.

Senator SCOTT. Second question for General Richardson. I worked on, and a lot of us worked on, getting the dual-use amendment for Homestead Air Force Base in the fiscal year 2023 NDAA. This base allows us to project power in the hemisphere where our enemies China, Russia, and Iran and its proxies are present and they are active. I asked Air Force leadership about the future of Homestead and having a permanent flying mission at the base. General Brown assured me that he was committed to having a platform operate out of Homestead. Can you talk about the strategic value of the base and why we need it?

General RICHARDSON. So Homestead Air Reserve Base actually is a great staging platform. When I was in NORTHCOM in my previous job as Army North Commander we staged out of Homestead for the response into the Bahamas for the damage that was done

by Hurricane Dorian. We launched our missions—my theater of Special Operations Command is at Homestead Air Reserve SOCSOUTH, and we staged our two missions that we conducted into Haiti this past week from Homestead.

So the ability for the Department of Defense to have Homestead as a staging base in South Florida, to be able to jump to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster response type activities is very hugely helpful.

Senator SCOTT. I thank both of you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our witnesses for your great service. General Guillot, I want to begin with you. My colleagues and I on this Committee have recently discussed installation security with respect to drone threats at bases in the United States. Recognizing that we are in an unclassified setting, what can you tell me about how NORTHCOM is addressing this issue and with what partners are you working this challenge?

General GUILLOT. Senator, NORTHCOM, as part of my 90-day assessment, to tell the truth, the counter-UAS mission has dominated that so far in the first month. Of course, I knew it was an issue, coming from another combatant command where we faced that threat in a very different way because of the environment, but I was not prepared for the number of incursions that I see. I have gone into the events at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, and I am using that as the centerpiece of my 90-day assessment to see where NORAD and NORTHCOM can and should do more as this emerging capability outstrips the operational framework that we have to address it.

Senator KAINE. Can you talk about other partners that you are working with, because obviously there is sort of a law enforcement component of this. So who else is working with you on this problem, sir?

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir, absolutely. So primarily Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice along the border have the primary responsibility. That is who I am working with there. In the interior it is the services that have the responsibility for defending their bases, so working with each individual service, and then again also Department of Homeland Security and Department of Energy for specific critical infrastructure locations. Those are the primary ones that I am working with.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that. Now a question for both of you about FMS. The importance of FMS was mentioned by General Kurilla last week. General Guillot, you mentioned it in your written statement. General Richardson, you and I talked about it a little bit last week when we were together. The FMS programs not only increase interoperability and strengthen partnerships but it can help reduce our partners' reliance upon strategic competitors, as well.

What are you hearing from your counterparts about FMS? I want to particularly direct that to General Richardson, recognizing General Guillot's short tenure that has been dominated by other issues. But General Richardson, could you talk about this?

General RICHARDSON. So FMS is a critical enabler, and obviously with being able to have our equipment, to have up-to-date equipment, and then having U.S. equipment and being interoperable and that sort of thing is an imperative.

So what Secretary Austin and the Chairman have instituted to speed up the processes within FMS over the past 2 years have taken place. But I would say that we have got to streamline that to the interagency, because it is not just the Department of Defense that has a stake in that and that approves things. So we have got to streamline that process a little bit better and speed it up.

Senator KAINE. We talked last week in my office about the potential synergy between the State Partnership Program, that Senator Peters was discussing, and the Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative. Could you talk a little bit about that and whether it could support or complement the FMS priorities that we have?

General RICHARDSON. Well, absolutely. I mean, that is the whole reason for it, where we have U.S. equipment in these countries. So maintenance is hard for our U.S. military, and it is hard for our partner nations as well. So with turnover, we always, in our U.S. military, have people coming in and going out and leaving the military, so there is a constant turnover. So you have to have a really good training, teaching and training program at the tactical level.

So the TMPI program, the Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative that you mentioned, the nexus with the National Guard State Partnership Program, there are tons of maintainers in the National Guard. This makes a very simple, easy way to teach and train, it fits right in line with the institutional capacity building as well.

Senator KAINE. Last question I would like to ask you, General Richardson, one of the best advantages we have in your region is the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. You have made this a real priority in your travels. Can you speak on the impacts that the WPS initiatives are having within our partner countries?

General RICHARDSON. Huge impact, so thank you for the question, Senator, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 for Women, Peace, and Security. So in every visit I do in the countries we have a Women, Peace, and Security event. The great thing is that we get what I call a "twofer" with our enlisted leader professional development program as well. We have many women enlisted leaders that are in our military formations in the region. So that dovetailing nicely with our different programs. They are both rock star programs, if I must say. Our partner nations doing that, and seeing the diversity and the ability to increase readiness within their forces, they have realized that and they continue on a really good path.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to both of you for being here today and your service to the most important combatant commanders. Everybody is important, but one of you guards our front door and one guards our back door. We know how important that is in this day and time.

General, we have seen the change in the government in Canada, maybe the direction that they are going, which is very important, should be very important to all of us. Have you seen any change with the military in terms of how they are helping us, you know, in NORTHCOM?

General GUILLOT. Senator, on the first day of my command I met with the Military of National Defense, Minister Blair, and the Chief of the Defense Staff, General Eyre, in Colorado Springs, and we talked about Canada's commitment to NORAD and NORAD modernization. They told me at that time that they were committed, with funding aligned, for over-the-horizon radar, F-35, P-8, and MQ-9. All those systems will immediately have benefit to us in the homeland defense mission that we share in NORAD.

Since the first day I have seen nothing but strong commitment from our Canadian partners for modernizing NORAD and working together to defend our Homelands.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Great. That is good news. What about the border? Are you getting any pushback from the northern border? We hear a lot about the southern border, but northern border is very important. We hear a lot of people are coming, especially terrorists, through the northern border. Have you had any conversations with any of your counterparts there?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I have. Although the Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security have not requested DOD or NORTHCOM's support on the north border it is something I watch very closely, for a number of reasons. One is the potential threats entering our country through the north, and I have frequent discussions with CBP and with the intel community to see if there are any threats that are coming through. Then, of course, it is shared border with a strong partner like Canada. So from mil-to-mil with Canada we talk about. So it is something I watch.

Senator TUBERVILLE. So you are getting cooperation?

General GUILLOT. Absolutely getting cooperation and keeping a strong sense of situational awareness on the activities at the northern border.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General Richardson, the Panama Canal is one of the most important resources for us in Central America. Give us an update right now on that. If we had some kind of conflict all over the world would we be able to use the Panama Canal?

General RICHARDSON. We have a very strong partnership with Panama, and that only continues to improve. But my concerns are the PRC state-owned enterprises that are along either side of the Panama Canal, the five. So that strategic sealine of communication, the Panama Canal, I would be extremely concerned about that, and am, and as a result we watch that very closely, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do you think the security there is adequate, above and beyond where we would be able to use it?

General RICHARDSON. Again, my concern is being able to use those state-owned enterprises for military application, if required. So the proximity that that has to the Panama Canal is a concern to me. I have no doubt in Panama's ability to secure that and our ability to help defend that, if required.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Is the expansion on target? I know the last time I was down there they were doing a lot of work at the Panama Canal. I do not know whether you keep up with that or not.

General RICHARDSON. That is the PRC, Senator?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes.

General RICHARDSON. Yes, and they are building a fourth bridge across the Canal. So we absolutely track everything that is done with the Panama Canal and work with our Panamanian authorities and our partners as we watch all of this activity that takes place and continues to take place.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Have you or any of your staff visited the Darién Gap, where we have all the immigrants coming from South America to North America?

General RICHARDSON. Senator, I visited the Darién several times, both on the Colombian side and on the Panama side, and I have been to the binational base that Colombia and Panama share together and conduct joint operations.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Where is the funding coming from for that?

General RICHARDSON. For the Darién, sir?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes.

General RICHARDSON. So in terms of the operations that Colombia conducts comes from Colombian resourcing that they have for their military. The ones for Panama come from the Panama security forces. Our activities, OAI—operations, activities, and investments—that we do with Panama are from my security cooperation funds in SOUTHCOM.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. I saw your budget and there is no doubt both of you are so important to the protection of the American citizens and our country. You know, we just voted to give \$60 billion to Ukraine. I wish it would have gone to you all. I am sure you all could have used it. I have seen your budgets and your things that you use to work in both of your NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. What you do is amazing, but we need to help you. We really do.

Thank you very much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Reed, of course Ranking Member Wicker, for holding this hearing, and I would like to thank General Guillot and General Richardson for testifying today and of course for your service to our Nation. I really appreciate it.

I am going to hit a little bit on countering Chinese and Russian forces because as Russia continues its war in Ukraine and China acts with increasing aggression in the Indo-Pacific, both countries are also taking steps that pose a direct threat to our national security right here at home.

General Guillot, how can NORTHCOM adapts its force posture to proactively deter and respond to the increasing presence and capabilities of Russian and Chinese assets off our coast and actually within North America?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the best way for us to counter them is to have presence of our own. So the execution of exercises, patrols in all domains is extremely important, off all of our coasts, primarily focusing right now in the region of Alaska because of the

number of incursions by Russian aircraft and then the number of maritime, the strong presence that both the Chinese and the Russians have there.

The same thing applies on what we call the two o'clock approach off on the northeast, making sure that we have presence there. That is what I think is the best way to counter. Then part of that presence being exercises, a strong exercise program, multinational, a lot of partners, showing that we have the resolve to defend that most strategic area.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I am going to move on again, General Guillot, on talking about cybersecurity because this is a big part of our Homeland security system, as well. Can you talk to us about how NORTHCOM is currently addressing cybersecurity threats to the Homeland? You are talking about other kinds of posturing. In your opinion could the creation of a new subordinate unified command specifically responsible for defense cyber operations could ensure a better comprehensive and actually a cohesive defense posture against our cyber adversaries?

General GUILLOT. Senator, in my previous response I should have mentioned cyber because it is the most prevalent and consistent threat that we see on a daily basis. You know, sure we see the maritime and the air occasionally, and they are important, but every day we have State actors, including Russia and China, that are attempting to get on our Department of Defense networks. The strength that we have through Cyber Command in detecting and defeating those threats is what is keeping us operational.

Northern Command's role is, first and foremost, to protect the systems that we use inside our NORAD and NORTHCOM to operate, and we have four different networks that we protect. Beyond that is anything with a Department of Defense nexus we work with Cyber Command to make sure that all of those are addressed. Then the third thing that we do, we work with the FBI and CISA, strong partnership with both of them, and in my short command I have already met with both of their leadership about how do we help other members of the critical infrastructure community, and if they need DOD support it is synchronized and presented through NORTHCOM to protect them.

For your question about a separate command, I would need to look into it. But my initial response would be that in the two combatant commands in which I have served the relationship and support from Cyber Command has been phenomenal. I would really hesitate to do anything that bifurcated or separated them from their seamless ability to do operational offensive cyber and defensive cyber under the same leadership, because it has worked really well for us in my previous job in Central Command and is certainly working well for us in Northern Command.

So always looking to improve, but it is something I would look at very closely because Cyber Command, in my opinion, has been a tremendous partner in this realm.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. That is really valuable input. I appreciate it.

I am going to move on to you, General Richardson, and talk a little bit about linguists, with the Department of Defense increasingly making investments focused on countering the People's Re-

public of China. Do you have concerns regarding a lack of language expertise for countries in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility, or is this gap sufficiently addressed by the diversity of the force that we recruit?

General RICHARDSON. I think with Spanish predominantly and Portuguese with Brazil, we have enough linguists, Senator, but because a lot of our linguists will speak Spanish as well as other languages, as well. So it is just a matter of making sure that we register our personnel demand and our requirements all the time, that this region is important and that we have got to keep these positions filled.

Senator ROSEN. Well, you speak about the Panama Canal and the PRC investments around there, so it is important to have possibly more than Spanish and Portuguese even in that area, because we know our adversaries are also there, as well.

So thank you. I appreciate it. My time is up.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Rosen. We anticipate that Senator Schmitt will arrive shortly, and I will take this opportunity to ask questions.

General Guillot, as you know Congress has been considering taking S band, which is known exclusively for military use, and begin to share or sell it to private entities. Can you tell the Committee the impact that would have on your operations?

General GUILLOT. Senator, sharing or yielding the spectrum between 3.1 and 3.45 gigahertz would have a significant impact on our homeland defense systems.

Chairman REED. Is there a possibility of sharing? I know some folks have come back and said that we can use it mutually. Is that something that you could do?

General GUILLOT. Chairman, I would say that in our initial review I have not found a way that we could share, especially because with Northern Command, the 24/7 on-alert responsibility for defending the Homeland, I would need full access to that, for all the various systems, which are sea-based, land-based, and air-based systems that use that frequency range.

Chairman REED. I would assume, too, that in a sharing arrangement there would be a period of time where some of your systems could not effectively operate as they modified themselves. Is that fair?

General GUILLOT. As we negotiate the potential to share we have made it very clear that we would need 24/7 access to those frequency ranges.

Chairman REED. General Richardson, the Chinese influence, and Russian influence, to a degree, in your area of command is focused on many things, but one of the things they are focused on is strategic minerals, which could, in fact, be the oil of the next generation as we move to more electric power, to vehicles, homes, et cetera. Have you seen a noticeable concentration of focus by the Chinese on trying to identify and control these strategic minerals?

General RICHARDSON. Yes, Chairman, and especially with the work that I have done to partner with our United States Ambassadors in Argentina and also Chile, and as we know, the Lithium Triangle is comprised of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. So 60 percent of the world's lithium is in that region, so the aggressive na-

ture of which the PRC works to extract that lithium, as well as gold and copper from the region too.

Chairman REED. As we spoke before, resources in the Inter-American Development Bank could help non-Chinese companies acquire these mines and begin processing. Is that accurate?

General RICHARDSON. This would all be part of that initiative, similar to what I mentioned before, Chairman, on the Economic Recovery Act of 1948, which was the Marshall Plan, and that APEP initiative, American Partnership for Economic Prosperity, through the IDBM Invest program at the Inter-American Development Bank and also Developmental Finance Corporation, and the infusion of billions of dollars into critical infrastructure, clean energy, and digital technology.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, ma'am. I will recognize Senator Schmitt, and if Senator King has additional questions I will recognize him after Senator Schmitt.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, I wanted to ask about the increase, and by some accounts a tenfold increase, in the number of Chinese nationals that have come across our southern border. It is 50 times—I mean, whatever account, there are a lot of Chinese nationals coming across in the last year, and, you know, flying in and out of China is not like getting out of DCA back home to St. Louis. It is a much different ordeal.

I guess I just want to ask, and 60 Minutes had a report about some content that is being pushed through social media channels of vulnerabilities with the border. I am certainly concerned about espionage operations. What information do we have about who these people are, what activities are taking place when they cross our southern border? It seems like this is happening now at a rate that just does not feel natural, to the extent that any of what is happening on our southern border makes any sense. But certainly the number of Chinese nationals coming across is of great concern to me, and I wonder if you could speak to that.

General GUILLOT. Senator, the number of Chinese that are coming across the border is a big concern of mine. In fact, in the short period of time that I have been in command I have gone down to the southern border to talk to the agents and leadership about that, and then I have also spoken with the Acting Commissioner of the CBP on this subject.

What concerns me most about specifically the Chinese migrants is, one, is that they are so centralized in one location on the border, and two is while many may be political refugees and other explanations, the ability for counterintelligence to hide in plain sight in those numbers. So therefore, we have a very strong and robust relationship with the interagency intelligence community, and I receive frequent briefings in the headquarters on the disposition of who has been apprehended and the potential of that threat that you described.

Senator SCHMITT. Do we have any—and if some of this is in a closed setting I am happy to—but what kind of coordination is taking place here? Because you are right. I think there were 21,000 just in the last 4 months in California alone, were the numbers that I have seen recently. So there seems to be a concentration and

it seems to be coordinated. Again, getting in and out of the People's Republic of China is a different deal.

What have you heard about sort of coordinated activities, and are we aware of specific efforts on their part to be in parts of the interior United States with sensitive military locations?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I had some of the same questions that you brought up. What I have been told by our partners in CBP is that the reason that California is the focal point is just simply ease of flying from China into Tijuana and then across.

I am concerned, and I think you were alluding to, and have talked to our partners about this, is how the surges seem to be coordinated and command and controlled using social media, primarily by the cartels, to drive the migrants to areas where we might not be, similar analogy to squeezing the balloon. Where we squeeze down, they, with command and control, primarily through social media, I am told, know to go to the other areas.

So our role in NORTHCOM is we are in support of the Customs and Border Protection for detection and monitoring along the site with about 2,500 military members, primarily from the Army and the Marine Corps. They work very closely to pick up where those surges are as well as where the gaps are with the monitoring equipment, to alert the law enforcement side of Border Protection to make the apprehensions.

Senator SCHMITT. I look forward to working with you on that and continuing that dialog about what is happening, because I think it is potentially a very dangerous situation.

Then with my limited time one last question. As far as the drone activity that we see at the southern border, presumably being coordinated by the cartels, maybe other actors, what information can you share about what is it that they are doing? Are they tracking Border Patrol agents? What is sort of the drone activity? What are they seeking to discover with these drones that are coming across?

General GUILLOT. Senator, again I asked those very same questions to the Commissioner. He said the overall majority of the activity that they see, the incursions, are spotters, trying to find gaps, finding out where we are so they can be where we are not. That is the majority. There is a smaller number that are probably moving narcotics across the border.

Senator SCHMITT. The drones themselves.

General GUILLOT. That is right. That is right, Senator, and then the last thing I would say, there is a lot of activity that is our own, that is doing the same thing to try to find where that activity is and make sure that we are prepared to stop it.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator King, you have another question?

Senator KING. Just one brief question to followup with General Richardson on our conversation about coordination. I understand there is an Interdiction Committee that is led by the Coast Guard. Could we followup together on upgrading that to a task force to include all the other agencies and really talk about how to better coordinate our response at the border? Is that something you are willing to work with us on?

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely, Senator. The Interdiction Committee meets regularly, and actually the meeting is coming up, and that includes all of the interagency.

Senator KING. Well, I would like to meet with you to talk about the activity and to further operationalize the activity of the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King.

Thank you to the witnesses for your excellent testimony. I will adjourn the open session, and we will reconvene in SVC-217 at, let us say, 11:40. That would give people time to rest and recuperate.

But again, thank you for your service, and General Richardson particularly, your remarkable service over a career that has really sustained this Nation and set an example that we admire. Thank you, ma'am.

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman REED. With that I will adjourn the open session.

[Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., the Committee recessed, to be continued in closed session.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

TACTICAL AIRLIFT

1. Senator GILLIBRAND. General Guillot, the Russian military has an inventory of 195 Antonov An-74, which can operate in any climatic conditions ranging from -60 to 45°C (-76 to 113 °F) and at any latitude, including the North Pole, and high altitudes. What steps is U.S. Air Force taking to counter this capability given the increased Russian activity in the Arctic and its geopolitical implications?

General GUILLOT. The successful execution of NORAD and USNORTHCOM's missions require a Joint Force capable of operating in all conditions and environments throughout the Commands' areas of responsibility, which certainly includes the Arctic. Over the last decade, Russia has steadily increased its presence in the Arctic, and the PRC has even declared itself a "near-Arctic" nation with the intent to operate in the High North, and the actions of both competitors are likely to have significant strategic implications. I would have to refer you to the Department of the Air Force regarding Service planning for future capabilities, however as the Arctic advocate for defense capabilities I will continue to vigorously advocate for designated forces that are trained and equipped to operate in this critical region.

2. Senator GILLIBRAND. General Guillot, please validate that the U.S. military requires a tactical airlift capability to support in austere arctic requirements, and that currently the only capability which exists is the LC-130H ski birds operated by the Air National Guard.

General GUILLOT. Yes, USNORTHCOM maintains a validated requirement for tactical airlift capable of operating throughout the Command's entire Area of Operations, to include the Arctic. The LC-130J and H model aircraft and their disciplined crews have admirably filled that role for years.

3. Senator GILLIBRAND. General Guillot, please address the nature of today's validated requirement for this capability in the Administration's updated Arctic Strategy as we increase our training and operations in the Arctic Region. What is our fallback if the LC-130H is no longer operational due to delays in recapitalization of the fleet?

General GUILLOT. NORAD and USNORTHCOM's missions require airlift platforms that are capable of operating throughout the command's entire area of operations, to include the

Arctic. The LC-130, operated solely by the New York Air National Guard, continue to perform admirably in support of training and operational mission in austere

environments, and NORAD and USNORTHCOM will continue to work with the Air Force to ensure there is no gap in this important mission area.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

COUNTER-UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM AUTHORITIES

4. Senator KING. General Guillot, given the complexity of the National Airspace System (NAS) and multiple Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial jurisdictional boundaries within the continental United States (CONUS), there are key Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) policy limitations that hinder timely response by respective authorities. This suggests a potential gap in domain awareness and capabilities, integration and interagency coordination in the detection, authorities, attribution, and potential engagement of Counter-small Unmanned Aerial System (C-sUAS). Additionally, outside of a national self-defense response, C-UAS activities are primarily the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) in support of their law enforcement and domestic security missions. Are the correct authorities in place for effective C-UAS, and what is your plan to close capability gaps regarding our capacity to defend against UAS and swarm missions?

General GUILLOT. Given the rapid proliferation of commercial UAS and an increased number of UAS incidents and incursions, further reviews of counter-UAS authorities and coordination processes should be made to enable increased effectiveness through a true whole-of-government approach to mitigating this emerging challenge. As you know, there are unique constraints within the United States when it comes to counter-UAS; however, I am confident a whole-of-government approach and greater interagency collaboration can overcome such gaps and challenges.

To defend against sUAS, as directed by the Secretary of Defense, NORAD and USNORTHCOM are working with the Joint C-sUAS Office (JCO) and the Services to develop and field systems that can detect, track, identify, and engage sUAS, to include those operating autonomously and in swarms, while observing unique constraints of operating within the United States. The distribution of these capabilities will be prioritized based on the criticality of the defended asset, its vulnerability to sUAS, and the assessed threat to the installation.

JOINT COUNTER-SMALL UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM OFFICE

5. Senator KING. General Guillot, the Joint C-sUAS Office (JCO), working in consultation with the combatant commands and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, completes assessments of fielded C-sUAS systems and makes recommendations for further investments. JCO has produced a Joint Capability Development Document outlining operational requirements for future systems and, in January 2021, released a Department of Defense (DOD) C-sUAS strategy. Section 1074 of the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA; P.L. 116–283) requires a series of reports to Congress, including a report on and independent assessment of the JCO's C-sUAS activities and a report on the threat posed by UAS. Section 162 of the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA (P.L. 117–263) directs the Secretary of Defense to conduct an assessment of the threats posed by UAS swarms and of DOD counter-swarm capabilities. It additionally directs the Secretary to “develop and implement a strategy to field capabilities to counter threats posed by unmanned aerial system swarms.” How effective has the JCO been in streamlining C-sUAS policy, and what implementations need to be made to utilize this organization to its fullest capacity?

General GUILLOT. The JCO has been highly effective in leading and directing DOD doctrine, requirements, materiel, and training to establish joint solutions to address current and future small UAS threats. I applaud their work and look forward to partnering with the JCO as we work on c-UAS challenges in the Homeland. Beyond the scope of the JCO mission, much work remains; a whole-of-government approach is needed given level of proliferation we are observing globally.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

DEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES MARINES TO HAITI—COORDINATION AND SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

6. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, is the main priority of DOD and U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to evacuate United States citizens from Haiti?

General RICHARDSON. Regarding Haiti, the SOUTHCOM mission is to enable the UN-authorized Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission by providing logistics, supplies, services, and support. As done elsewhere in the world, if directed, DOD would coordinate the protection and evacuation of United States citizens in Haiti with the Department of State, who is the lead for such efforts. SOUTHCOM stands ready to execute this mission if required.

7. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, beyond this effort, what are DOD and SOUTHCOM's other strategic priorities?

General RICHARDSON. DOD, including SOUTHCOM, supports the United States Government's strategic goals of addressing immediate insecurity and creating the necessary security conditions for Haiti's long-term stability and growth. We are doing this by enabling the MSS mission, which is supporting the Haitian National Police as they increase their anti-gang operations, build their capacity to maintain public safety, and provide humanitarian assistance to those in need. Looking ahead, SOUTHCOM stands ready to support USG long-term efforts to assist Haiti as it moves toward a more secure and prosperous future.

8. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, what is the capacity of SOUTHCOM to help coordinate and support humanitarian aid to the Haitian people?

General RICHARDSON. USAID is the lead Federal agency for humanitarian assistance overseas, and SOUTHCOM is prepared to support USAID and Department of State efforts if requested to provide it. SOUTHCOM has a longstanding and strong partnership with USAID, as well as with numerous NGO's through our Command's public-private partnership program. Our Command also has numerous liaison officers and interagency partners on staff who work closely with us on this issue, to ensure that we successfully coordinate and support humanitarian aid if required.

9. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, how will SOUTHCOM help coordinate and support humanitarian aid to the Haitian people?

General RICHARDSON. If requested by USAID and if directed, SOUTHCOM will coordinate with and support USAID and Department of State efforts, and leverage our extensive public-private partnership network, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Haitian people. As part of our support to the MSS mission, we have coordinated with local NGO's to deliver humanitarian aid to Haiti. In coordination with USAID and other agencies, we will continue to support the USG's efforts to help address the humanitarian needs of the Haitian people.

10. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, what efforts have been made to connect with aid organizations—local and international—available to support providing humanitarian aid to Haiti?

General RICHARDSON. We have longstanding public-private partnerships with a variety of NGO's, including many that work in Haiti. Our experience supporting USAID to deliver humanitarian aid after the devastating earthquakes in Haiti (2010 and 2021) are examples that demonstrate our commitment to support the provision of humanitarian assistance to Haiti. The deployment of the USNS COMFORT Hospital Ship visit to Haiti to provide medical care in 2022, has helped forge strong, lasting partnerships with many different groups. In coordination with USAID and the Department of State, we remain in constant contact with key NGO partners and stakeholders to understand the scope of humanitarian need in Haiti and enable delivery of aid when directed.

11. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, have these efforts been successful?

General RICHARDSON. Yes—our public-private partnerships are robust. NGO's continue to play a critical role in addressing Haiti's most pressing humanitarian needs.

12. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, what discussions or planning efforts have been made with the State Department to facilitate providing humanitarian aid to the people in Haiti?

General RICHARDSON. USAID is the lead Federal agency for the provision of humanitarian assistance overseas. Our Command also has numerous USAID liaison officers and interagency partners on staff, who work closely with us on this issue, to ensure that we successfully coordinate and support humanitarian aid if required. SOUTHCOM maintains regular consultations with the Department of State, in coordination with the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense regarding Haiti. We coordinate with the Interagency Working Group (IWG) that coordinates USG support to the MSS Mission, and includes the Department of State, other com-

ponents in the Department of Defense, and others to execute support to the MSS Mission.

SUPPLEMENT HAITI'S COLLAPSING HEALTH SYSTEM

13. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, how can SOUTHCOM help coordinate and support humanitarian aid in the form of health care for the Haitian people?

General RICHARDSON. Reestablishing security and stability in Haiti are crucial for the health and welfare of the Haitian people. In coordination with USAID and other agencies, we will continue to support the USC's efforts to help address the humanitarian needs of the Haitian people. As part of this effort, we also coordinated with local NGO's to deliver humanitarian aid to Haiti, including oral electrolyte solution and much-needed medications.

14. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, does SOUTHCOM communicate to DOD and the Haitian people its capacity to provide humanitarian aid directly to the Haitian people?

General RICHARDSON. The White House and the Department of State have the lead in communicating USG support to Haiti. SOUTHCOM is in a supporting role to USAID as the lead Federal agency for the provision of humanitarian assistance in Haiti. Our Public Affairs team works to ensure a coordinated and unified message of solidarity with the Haitian people.

15. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, the SOUTHCOM press statement on March 13, 2024 stated "The Department of Defense is postured to provide enabling support for MSS [Multinational Security Support], including planning assistance, information sharing, airlift, and medical support." Do those airlift and medical support efforts extend to Haitians who are not United States citizens?

General RICHARDSON. The airlift and medical support provided is directed to the MSS Mission, which is there to support the Government of Haiti.

16. Senator WARREN. General Richardson, what are the specific resources that will be used to support this humanitarian aid and security enforcement mission in Haiti?

General RICHARDSON. In February-March 2024, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense pledged \$300 million total in support to the MSS mission in Haiti. DOD logistical support is being conducted under DOD's Section 10 USC § 331 authorities and is being resourced through Service operation and maintenance accounts. Within my Combatant Command authorities, I have also used military airlift and contracted commercial airlift to deliver supplies and equipment to support the MSS mission.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

USE OF SPECTRUM FOR 5G AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

17. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, you testified that sharing or yielding the spectrum between 3.1 and 3.45 GHz would have "significant impact" on Homeland defense systems and that your initial review has determined that sharing the spectrum between 3.1 to 3.45 GHz is not possible. Would you identify Homeland defense systems that operate in the 3.1 to 3.45 GHz range that would be impacted?

General GUILLOT. [Deleted.]

18. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, for each system identified above, can the system operate between the 3.1 to 3.3 GHz range and is there reduction in capability if operating in a more limited band?

General GUILLOT. [Deleted.]

19. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, for each system that is unable to operate between 3.1 to 3.3 GHz, describe the nature of the system (e.g. ground, air, sea).

General GUILLOT. [Deleted.]

20. Senator COTTON. General Richardson, you testified that China is investing in 5G technology proliferation throughout South America. What should the United States do to counter this proliferation of Chinese based 5G technology?

General RICHARDSON. This requires whole of U.S. Government and private sector collaboration to provide a United States or other alternative to Chinese-based 5G

technology. We must encourage and incentivize U.S. and other companies from Allied and partner nations to compete on tenders in the region.

21. Senator COTTON. General Richardson, can the United States counter Chinese 5G proliferation in South America if United States based companies are not operating in the mid-band spectrum for broadband services (3.1–3.45 GHz)?

General RICHARDSON. Yes, by influencing international 5G treaty guidelines through the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) at the World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRC).

COUNTER SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

22. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, you testified as to an “alarming number” of drone incursions across the border. Would you please provide a specific number of drone incursions tracked across the border by North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)/ U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) in the span of month and in the span of the past year (i.e. all of 2023)?

General GUILLOT. As I testified before the SASC in March, the number of UAS incursions at the U.S. southwest border was alarming to me; I don’t know the actual number, but it’s in the thousands per month. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) is the Federal agency responsible for tracking and countering small Unmanned Aircraft Systems incursions along the border. I defer to the Department of Homeland Security and CBP regarding the number of incursions they detected.

23. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, has DOD or NORTHCOM guidance been updated since 2018 on the “Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in U.S. National Airspace”?

General GUILLOT. Yes, both DOD and USNORTHCOM have published updated guidance. On 31 October 2023, DOD published “Guidance for the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the U.S. National Airspace,” which superseded the 2018 memo. On 5 June 2024, I published my Policy for Approval of Unmanned Aircraft System Support. Additionally, the NORAD & USNORTHCOM J5 plans directorate participates in the quarterly UAS Subgroup of the DOD Policy Board for Federal Aviation (PBFA). As recently as 26 Jul 24, the subgroup coordinated on the MOU between DOD/FAA For UAS Operations In the National Airspace.

24. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, what changes would you recommend to title 10, title 50, or title 32 authorities to allow NORTHCOM forces to counter the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems threat?

General GUILLOT. As I noted throughout my March testimony, demonstrated adversary UAS advances must be countered and require increased attention from the whole-of-government. Presently, NORAD & USNORTHCOM do not have any recommendations for changes to Title 10, Title 50, or Title 32 authorities. I commit to you and this committee to provide such recommendations if our position changes during my time in command. However, I do recommend changes and advances in capabilities internal to DOD and are working with JCO and the Joint Staff to improve c-UAS capability and fielding. Both commands place a very high priority on mitigating these threats and are working closely with mission partners from across the Department of Defense, industry, and the interagency community to protect installations and critical infrastructure from sUAS.

25. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, does your unfunded priority list for fiscal year 2025 include sufficient funds and programs to address the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems threat you highlighted in your testimony?

General GUILLOT. The NORAD and USNORTHCOM Fiscal Year 2025 Unfunded Priority List (UPL) did not include a request to address small UAS threats when submitted, as c-UAS authorities exist solely with the military services. That said, I commit to you and this committee to request any such sUAS/c-UAS unfunded requirements during my time in command, if NORAD & USNORTHCOM are given c-UAS authorities and responsibilities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND MARITIME RESOURCING

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, the U.S. Fourth Fleet, which serves as the Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander for U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), has only been allocated one U.S. naval ship for persistent presence.

Are you sufficiently resourced in the maritime domain to address the increasing naval presence of Russian and PRC [People's Republic of China] vessels in your area of responsibility (AOR)?

General RICHARDSON. No, we are not sufficiently resourced. In fact, we must request assets from other Geographic Combatant Commands to shadow Russian ships when they enter the SOUTHCOM AOR.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, do you have sufficient resources from Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense to counter the 200–600 PRC fishing vessels in your AOR that are conducting Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing?

General RICHARDSON. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is the lead Federal agency to conduct counter-IUU fishing operations. As part of our continuous support to U.S. departments and agencies and law enforcement partners, SOUTHCOM, shares information on IUU fishing trends and activities within the SOUTHCOM AOR to raise awareness of this threat, and to help enable counter-IUU operations by the USCG and our partner nations.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, have you explored an unmanned surface vessel task force, similar to Task Force 59 in U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), to increase Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) in the maritime domain in your AOR?

General RICHARDSON. Yes, the Secretary of the Navy tasked 4th Fleet to operationalize the Hybrid Fleet concept in the SOUTHCOM AOR. 4th Fleet has been operating unmanned vehicles for the past year and a half to accomplish this task. We see great potential in new technology to improve the efficacy of our detection and monitoring efforts to offset chronic asset shortfalls.

JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE-SOUTH AUTHORITIES

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, what additional authorities does Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South) need to conduct counter-Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing operations?

General RICHARDSON. JIATF-South is statutorily tasked with the sole focus on the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. The USCG is the lead Federal agency to conduct counter-IUU fishing operations.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, what additional authorities does JIATF-South need to conduct counter-violent extremism operations?

General RICHARDSON. Multiple Federal agencies, including the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, and USAID are involved in this critical mission to counter-violent extremism. JIATF-South conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States, and facilitates information and intelligence sharing with law enforcement partners regarding illegal drug trafficking and transnational organized crime (TOC) operations in the AOR.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, what additional authorities does JIATF-South need to conduct counter-weapons trafficking operations?

General RICHARDSON. We greatly appreciate the continued support Congress has provided to DOD's and SOUTHCOM's efforts to support other agencies' efforts to counter not only drug trafficking, but also other forms of transnational organized crime (TOC). Current statutory authorities, 10 U.S.C. 284 authorizes DOD to provide intelligence analysis support authorizes when certain conditions are met, DOD to provide intelligence analysis support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies in support of their efforts to counter other activities by TCOs. This includes the trafficking of illegal drugs and weapons, human trafficking, illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and other forms of illegal means as determined by the Secretary of Defense pursuant to statutory authority. JIATF-South conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States by air or by sea, and facilitates information and intelligence sharing with law enforcement partners regarding illegal drug trafficking and TCO operations in the AOR.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, what additional authorities does JIATF-South need to conduct counter-illegal migration operations?

General RICHARDSON. DOD is the single lead Federal agency for the detection and monitoring (D&M) of the aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States. By statute, the U.S. Coast Guard is the lead Federal agency to conduct migrant interdiction operations at sea. If migration flows or movements are detected as part of routine D&M operations, JIATF-South may share this information with the USCG, but JIATF-South plays no statutory role in migrant interdiction.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, what additional authorities does JIATF-South need to conduct counter-trafficking in human persons operations?

General RICHARDSON. We greatly appreciate the continued support Congress has provided to DOD's and SOUTHCOM's efforts to support other agencies' efforts to counter not only drug trafficking, but also other forms of TOC. Current statutory authorities, 10 U.S.C. 284 authorizes DOD to provide intelligence analysis support authorizes DOD to provide intelligence analysis support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies in support of their efforts to counter a broader continuum of illicit activity by TCOs. This includes the trafficking of illegal drugs and weapons, money, human trafficking, illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and other forms of illegal means as determined by the Secretary of Defense pursuant to statutory authority. JIATF-South conducts detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States by air or by sea, and facilitates information and intelligence sharing with law enforcement partners regarding illegal drug trafficking and TCO operations in the AOR.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. General Richardson, section 124 of title 10 makes DOD the lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs for drugs transiting into the United States. Under this existing statute, are you able to cue partners and allies to illegal drugs headed to their shores?

General RICHARDSON. Current authorities limit our ability to detect and monitor movements of illicit drugs other than those headed toward the United States. However, under section 284(b)(9) of title 10 we can provide intelligence analysis to U.S. interagency law enforcement partners on the movement of drugs to locations other than the U.S.

IMPROVEMENTS IN ALASKA FOR THE HOMELAND DEFENSE MISSION

35. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, what specific infrastructure improvements in Alaska would most benefit NORTHCOM's mission to monitor and defend the Homeland?

General GUILLOT. Alaska Command is currently leading development of an Area Development Plan that will assess infrastructure requirements at main operating bases that serve as power projection platforms in the Alaska Theater of Operations (AKTO). Infrastructure improvements in Alaska that would most benefit NORTHCOM's mission to monitor and respond to threats to the Homeland are those that provide earlier warning of threats, greater decision space, and quicker response with capabilities to deter and defend against aerospace threats in and through the Arctic approaches to North America. For example, NORAD & USNORTHCOM would benefit from the ability to operate fighter aircraft and search-and-rescue rotary wing platforms north of Eielson AFB. As the Arctic advocate for defense capabilities, I commit to you to make such infrastructure recommendations and requests to the Department for consideration in the annual budget process. If such requirements go unfunded, I will assess whether to include it in the NORAD & USNORTHCOM UPL.

COUNTERING RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE ARCTIC

36. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, China and Russia are increasing military activities in the Arctic, where both countries have a persistent presence. You have stated that the best way for the United States "to counter them is to have a presence of our own". The United States conducts several exercises in Alaska, such as Northern Edge, Arctic Edge, and Red Flag-Alaska. In your opinion, should those exercises grow in size, include allies and partners, in response to increased Chinese and Russian activity?

General GUILLOT. I appreciate your focus on the Arctic and the activities of competitors such as Russia and the PRC in that region. In line with strategic guidance, I am working to increase presence and campaign in all parts of the Arctic, through operational patrols, training, and exercises. Increases in size of exercises in the region is not outright necessary, however I would like to explore expanding the window of time we conduct the exercises. As you indicated, including our Allies and

Partners is essential to countering Russian and PRC influence. Finally, I strongly support designating forces that are trained and equipped to operate in the Arctic.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, in August 2023, the PRC and Russia conducted a combined naval patrol in the Bering Sea. This is the third patrol in the last few years conducted by the PRC and Russia off the coast of Alaska. We responded with four DDGs and a P-8, which was far more robust than the one Coast Guard cutter that responded in 2022. Are you satisfied with the availability of United States Navy resources to your command to counter joint PRC-Russian naval patrols with larger numbers of vessels and aircraft?

General GUILLOT. Yes, I am satisfied with the availability of US Navy resources to counter recent PRC-Russian naval patrols in the High North. That said, during crisis or conflict, such Navy resource availability will be a concern when considering the vast and varied USNORTHCOM and USINDOPACOM maritime requirements. We have validated the “One Pacific” force employment and force sharing concept with USINDOPACOM and apply the concept frequently. NORAD & USNORTHCOM must continue to maintain maritime warning capabilities in this area, which requires close coordination between both Combatant Commands and the Joint Staff. I commend the ongoing maritime presence of the US Coast Guard in waters off Alaska, and the ongoing maritime cooperation and coordination with our Canadian allies.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, last year when the Joint Chinese-Russian Naval Task Force approached Alaska, our United States destroyers had to re-route to refuel because of lack of infrastructure to refuel medium size U.S. surface combatants. What benefits would a Naval Support Activity or other type of shore infrastructure to resupply and refuel U.S. Navy ships provide you as the NORTHCOM Commander as you develop plans to counter joint PRC-Russian task forces?

General GUILLOT. Currently, the use of Dutch Harbor, AK to support fueling of US Navy assets operating in the waters off Alaska is sufficient; however, such refueling activities requires leaving station for several days. I understand the planned expansion at the Port of Nome will reduce time off station and provide deep-water porting capabilities to our Navy. Once operational, this will significantly improve US Navy stationkeeping presence in the Alaska Theater of Operations (AKTO).

39. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, do you believe that increasing the number of locations in Alaska that can refuel DDGs improves your ability to respond to future Russian or PRC naval patrols?

General GUILLOT. Yes. An increase in the number of locations in Alaska that can refuel DDGs would enhance the Joint Force’s ability to respond to Russian and PRC naval activity in the region and would also serve as a deterrent. I support the planned expansion of the Port of Nome which, when completed, will meet these requirements.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, are the Russians and Chinese capable of accessing points in the Arctic that we are not capable of accessing due to a lack of United States icebreakers in your AOR?

General GUILLOT. In terms of capabilities, the answer is no. However, Russia has a greater capacity with seven “heavy” icebreakers that are rated capable of year-round operation in all polar waters or moderate multi-year ice conditions. PRC does not have heavy icebreakers but has one “medium” icebreaker capable of year-round operation in ice up to 2.5 meters thick. By comparison, I understand the United States Coast Guard has one heavy icebreaker and one medium icebreaker. The lack of capacity risks a situation when no U.S. icebreaker is available with the requisite capability to reach all areas in the Arctic, putting us at a disadvantage.

SERVICE ARCTIC STRATEGIES

41. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, the Pentagon will release an updated DOD Arctic Strategy this spring, which will highlight how the Arctic has changed in the last 5 years, both in terms of climate change and its impact as well as Russia and China increasingly acting alone and together to destabilize the region. Was NORTHCOM consulted in the course of this strategy update?

General GUILLOT. Yes, OSD consulted with USNORTHCOM throughout the DOD Arctic Strategy development process. USNORTHCOM also welcomes the continued direction to serve as the Arctic advocate for defense capabilities and will continue to inform the Department and Congress of such requirements and capabilities. We

need greater physical presence in the Arctic, both military and civilian, and we need infrastructure in the Arctic to support that presence.

42. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, do you believe the Services are adequately resourcing their Arctic strategies to provide you with Arctic-capable forces to defend the Homeland?

General GUILLOT. Currently, due to competing requirements, the Services have aligned resources to provide limited Arctic-capable forces to support homeland defense. However, capability gaps remain in domain awareness, communications, and infrastructure. I am seeking cooperation with the military services to designate forces and units that are trained and equipped to operate in the harsh environments of the Arctic.

43. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, do you believe it would be a helpful forcing function for the Services to label which investments were applicable to their respective Arctic strategies?

General GUILLOT. I do not necessarily believe labeling Arctic investments would be helpful but support other ways of identifying commitment to Arctic strategy resourcing. There are investments in capability such as aircraft and ships that can operate in many regions to include the Arctic but are not tied to the Services' Arctic strategies. Labeling investments that support Arctic strategies does not necessarily identify capabilities specifically designated for the Arctic region.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KEVIN CRAMER

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE

44. Senator CRAMER. General Richardson, roughly what percentage of your airborne ISR requirement went unfilled in fiscal year 2023?

General RICHARDSON. SOUTHCOM received approximately 2 percent of the DOD ISR planned allocation. The DOD allocation provided, plus our use of contract airborne ISR, leaves approximately 70 percent of our requirements unfulfilled. In support of JIATF-South's aerial we utilize established Global Force Management processes to request forces when required. SOUTHCOM will continue to build partner capacity, and maritime detection and monitoring mission, however, work with the DOD counterdrug program provides four (soon to be six) government-owned, contractor-operated maritime patrol aircraft U.S. interagency, to employ the full range of tools to build operational awareness and promote security and funds the operation and maintenance of stability in the Relocatable Over-the-Horizon Radar.

45. Senator CRAMER. General Richardson, do you expect to be allocated enough airborne ISR in fiscal year 2024 to meet your requirement?

General RICHARDSON. No, our requirement is almost two thirds more than what we receive through DOD allocation and contracted ISR. We utilize established Global Force Management processes to request forces when required. SOUTHCOM will continue to build partner capacity, and work with the U.S. interagency, to employ the full range of tools to build operational awareness and promote security and stability in the region.

46. Senator CRAMER. General Richardson, is the MQ-9 effective enough and survivable enough to contribute to your ISR requirements in SOUTHCOM?

General RICHARDSON. The MQ-9 could support SOUTHCOM ISR requirements and contribute to our counternarcotics /counter-transnational criminal organizations missions and to our humanitarian assistance/disaster response missions. However, the MQ-9 would need to be outfitted with the appropriate sensor packages to be useful in the SOUTHCOM AOR.

47. Senator CRAMER. General Richardson, are you allocated enough space based ISR to negate the need for airborne ISR?

General RICHARDSON. SOUTHCOM is not currently allocated DOD space-based ISR and will need to rely on airborne ISR to meet its unique requirements for the foreseeable future. Even with space-based ISR, we will always have a requirement for airborne ISR based on the terrain and adversary capabilities. We utilize established Global Force Management processes to request forces when required.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

48. Senator BUDD. General Richardson, can you please explain the value of Special Operations Forces in your AOR?

General RICHARDSON. Our Special Operations Forces are among the most qualified, culturally sensitive, and linguistically capable trainers in the U.S. military. Above all, they excel at building trust and forging personal relationships that are essential to supporting our national interests and maintaining both our strategic partnership and access in the region. Rotations of small SOF teams provide a light footprint, but also a persistent presence, which not only builds trust and interoperability with our partners, but it also provides us with a better understanding of regional dynamics and the convergence of various threats, which are disrupting regional stability. The unique capabilities that SOF provide in the AOR have directly contributed to our ability to counter strategic competitors and malign activities, provided unique expertise that supports our partners in countering emergent threats that threaten regional stability, such as threats posed by TCOs. Improved regional stability in the AOR and supported global contingency planning and integrated deterrence.

49. Senator BUDD. General Richardson, what impacts, if any, do you expect to theater operations given planned force structure and personnel cuts to Army Special Operations Forces?

General RICHARDSON. I anticipate these cuts will have long-term second-and third-order implications. We will have to make very tough decisions about where we can employ SOF, and where we will be forced to accept risk. SOF has been invaluable to offsetting our longstanding lack of assigned forces and assets. Cuts to force structure will be painful and would directly affect our ability to engage with our partners, as well as their ability to address emergent threats that threaten regional stability, such as TCOs, but we will be creative and find ways to minimize impacts and risks as much as possible.

50. Senator BUDD. General Richardson, have you or your command been consulted on the assessment of optimal force structure for special operations forces required by section 1075 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act?

General RICHARDSON. I have responded with my assessment of risk to proposed force structure changes during my tenure in command. Those responses were received by SOCOM and Joint Staff, and then weighed against competing requirements in other Geographic Combatant Commands.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND AND UNITED
STATES FORCES KOREA**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:29 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony from Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and General Paul LaCamera, Commander of U.S. Forces, who are here.

Gentlemen, please convey my thanks to the men and women serving under your command. I must, at this point, stop. I think there is an interesting—yes, we have a communications problem. So, let me—

[Technical problems.]

Chairman REED. Admiral—on behalf of the Committee—

[Technical problems.]

[Applause.]

[Technical problems.]

Chairman REED. His ambition in the region continues to grow, as does his aggressive behavior. Chinese leadership seeks greater power and influence around the world, and it is leveraging a wide range of military, economic, and political pressures against its neighbors and other vulnerable nations to advance these goals.

As our defense leaders have made clear, the United States does not seek conflict with China and strategic competition is not an inevitable march to conflict. America has long been a Pacific nation, and we have deep economic and security interest in the region.

During today's hearing, I look forward to discussing how our Forces can continue to improve our military posture and capabilities, while also supporting whole of Government efforts to compete effectively in the region.

To that end, the Defense Department released a joint concept for competing last year, which made clear the objective of China and our adversaries is to win without fighting. The concept warns that if we do not adapt to the realities of long term competition, the United States risk ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage while preparing for war that never occurs.

I am interested to hear from our witnesses how they plan to utilize the joint capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and Korea to address these challenges. Recognizing the challenges in the Indo-Pacific, President Biden has requested considerable funding for INDOPACOM in the fiscal year 2025 budget.

This includes \$9.9 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, or PDI, to strengthen the posture, infrastructure, and capabilities of our Forces. In addition, this PDI investment will help build the capabilities of our allies and partners through military to military training exercises, freedom of navigation operations, and infrastructure improvement.

The PDI request is a subset of broader, Department wide investments to modernize and equip the force, much of which is focused on China as the Department's pacing challenge. I am also encouraged by the progress we have made with our allies and partners in the region.

These efforts captured in new agreements with Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and an initiative like AUKUS [Australia, United Kingdom, United States] and the Quad are truly our asymmetric advantage in the long term strategic competition with China.

However, the most dangerous flashpoint that could turn our competition with China into a conflict remains Taiwan. In the past several years, we have seen a surge of aggressive Chinese military exercises around Taiwan's airspace and territorial waters, as well as an escalation in combative language from Beijing.

The world has a right to be concerned. To help strengthen our posture and develop Taiwan's capabilities, the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act included a number of important security assistance tools.

The bill established the Indo-Pacific Campaigning Initiative to facilitate INDOPACOM's campaigning activities in the region, including increased frequency and scale of exercises, freedom of navigation operations, and partner engagements.

The bill also established a comprehensive training, advising, and institutional capacity building program for the Military Forces of Taiwan. I understand INDOPACOM is continuing to help Taiwan to advance its defense capabilities consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, and I expect Congress will continue to support this effort.

Admiral Aquilino, faced with his wide ranging challenges, I would like to know your assessment of INDOPACOM's preparedness to carry out the United States strategy in the region. Key to our success in competition with China, the posture of our forces in South Korea is another vital factor.

I am encouraged by the recent progress we have seen in the trilateral relationship between South Korea, Japan, and the United States. In particular, last year's historic cooperation announcement between South Korea and Japan, and the remarkable transformation in Japan's new defense strategy bode well for the future of this relationship.

In addition, last spring, South Korean President Yoon addressed a Joint Session of Congress here in Washington as part of his State visit, just the second of President Biden's term. I understand that Japanese Prime Minister Kishida will do the same next month.

I hope that developments like these will provide more opportunities to engage other regional partners. General LaCamera, I would ask for your views on the partnership between the United States, Japan, South Korea, and other regional partners in addressing China, as well as North Korea's destabilizing activity.

We must continue to manage the threat posed by North Korea. We know that Kim Jong-un continues to view nuclear weapons as, in his words, the ultimate deterrent against foreign intervention and intends to gain international acceptance as a nuclear armed State. The goal of United States policy remains the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but we are not taken on an all or nothing approach.

Instead, the Biden administration has pursued what it describes as a calibrated, practical approach to diplomacy with the North, with the goal of eliminating the threat to the United States.

Gentlemen, I would appreciate your view on the current threat from North Korea, and how your forces are maintaining readiness through training and exercises with their South Korean counterparts.

Again, let me thank the witnesses for their testimony and let me recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Well, we will try this. What do you say?

Chairman REED. Yes. I say, good.

Senator WICKER. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, thank you both for your service to our country. It is hard to feel good about the Indo-Pacific. The balance of power is tipping away from the United States in this region.

As we confront this uncomfortable dynamic, this Committee needs honest feedback and the best military judgment, and I think we are going to get that today. The Biden administration has completely taken its focus off North Korea, even as Pyongyang becomes a major enabler of Russia's brutal war in Ukraine.

Some experts believe that North Korea is preparing for war. We will be interested in your thoughts on that. On the other hand, there is total consensus that China is preparing for war. Beijing just announced another 7.2 percent increase to its defense budget, which already rivals ours in size.

The Chinese Communist Party continues to modernize its military at a breathtaking pace. China has the largest navy in the world. Last year, Beijing added 30 ships, while the United States reduced our fleet by 2. But China is improving more than just its numbers.

Every week, we receive more sobering news of emerging Chinese capabilities, improving Chinese force training. Beijing likes to flex this newfound strength, particularly against our Filipino allies and against Taiwan.

Chinese ships coerce and harass Filipino vessels, conducting regular resupply missions on Second Thomas Shoal. The Chinese military conducts aggressive military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, simulating a blockade scenario of that free and democratic island.

Chinese jets regularly engage in unsafe and unprofessional maneuvers against United States and allied aircraft, a problem Admiral Aquilino has publicly highlighted last year. These activities are not surprising.

In public comments, Beijing has clearly stated its intentions to surpass the United States. Just last year in San Francisco, Xi Jinping directly told President Biden that he intends to take Taiwan. We need to pause for a moment and let that sink in.

Xi Jinping told our President, our Commander in Chief, that he intends to take Taiwan. The Chinese leader warned the American President, warned the American President face to face, in person that he intends to take Taiwan.

What should we do in response? Our position needs to be clear. We do not have a moment to waste. We need to do everything we can right now to deter conflict in the Indo-Pacific. At the moment, it is plain that we are not doing everything that we need to do. Last year, INDOPACOM's unfunded requirements list totaled \$3.5 billion.

This year's unfunded requirement list is \$11 billion, compared to \$3.5 billion last year. We are asking our military to prepare for a potential war against China without giving them all the tools necessary to accomplish that objective. That is unacceptable. We must do better. We must do better so we can avoid war.

So, we can be strong enough to avoid what might happen. The Committee needs to come together, as it has done in the past, to authorize sufficient, robust funding levels for our military. There are clear consequences if we fail to do so. The needs are vast in the Indo-Pacific theater.

We need more capable munitions. We need better networked command and control systems, additional submarines, additional destroyers, more amphibious, and military construction for distributed basing. There are more needs, but those are the great starting place.

Without sufficient funds to implement the National Defense Strategy, which the chair referred to, the regional balance of power will continue to tilt away from America.

I look forward to hearing these distinguished witnesses, their testimony and a candid discussion of what this Committee can do this year to begin addressing these challenges. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. Admiral Aquilino, please.

**STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO, USN
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND**

Admiral AQUILINO. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing

me the opportunity to come before you today to talk about the Indo-Pacific region, and as Chairman Reed said, this will be the last time I testify as Commander of USINDOPACOM.

I would like to take a second and thank my family for their support during these last three incredibly demanding years and for over 40 years of time in uniform, and after that time, I can say unequivocally that the sacrifice of our servicemembers—make is equally shared by their families. So again, I couldn't have been successful without the support of mine.

I would like to thank them. The last 3 years have been an honor of my lifetime to serve with our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, coast guardsmen, and the civilians who work tirelessly alongside our allies and partners to keep our Nation safe and ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

I would also like to thank Congress and all of you. Your support, especially in establishing the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, has been incredible. The American people should know that your efforts to focus our country's resources on addressing our most pressing national security challenge is making a difference.

But we all have much more to do and we need to go faster. When I assumed command 3 years ago, we established the Seize the Initiative approach to implement the National Defense Strategy.

In order to deter our adversaries, we challenged the Joint Force to think, act, and operate differently, and while progress has been made, we still have high risk, and we are trending in the wrong direction. Seize the Initiative has been challenged by the delay in delivery of military construction, advanced capabilities, and resources to persistently project and maintain forces West of the International Date Line.

While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address this rapidly evolving security environment. As required by the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act], I provided my independent assessment of INDOPACOM's resourcing requirements to inform PDI.

That was delivered to your offices on Monday with the delivery of the budget, and for the last 3 years these requirements have been transparent and consistent, and I acknowledge, however, that those increased—those requirements have increased. Now, that is due to a few things.

First, previously unfunded requirements don't go away and they roll over into the request. Second, inflation. Third, as we work toward military construction, the cost has increased from initial planning and design, and that is maturity.

Then last the threat has changed, and it continues to increase and deliver quality capability and increased capacity from our security challengers. So, as I have said many times, conflict is neither imminent or inevitable, but our adversaries have to become—they have become increasingly aggressive and emboldened.

The PRC's [People's Republic of China] unprecedented military buildup and campaign of coercive actions destabilize the region, and they challenge our values and the institutions that support a free and open Indo-Pacific. We must build upon the progress achieved in the last few years to accelerate the fielding of these key

joint capabilities that I have described in the independent assessment.

They include the Guam defense system, things that deliver joint and decision superiority, specifically the Joint Fires Network, the INDOPACOM mission network, and they have to advance our relationships, specifically AUKUS and all of the other efforts, trilateral cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Korea.

As I prepare to depart again, I want to thank Congress for your focus and your support for the challenges in Indo-Pacific. I also value many of the warm interactions and counsel I have had with all of you, so I thank you for the frank conversations, the guidance, and the assistance.

My successor will need that same support. This challenge is not going away, nor will it get easier, and Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for, again, the opportunity to be here. I look forward to having—your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral John C. Aquilino follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ADMIRAL JOHN C. AQUILINO

INTRODUCTION / OPENING STATEMENT

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Indo-Pacific Region. This will be the last time I testify as the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). I want to thank my wife, Laura, and the rest of our family for their support. After 40 years of service, I can say unequivocally that the sacrifice servicemembers make for our Nation is a family affair, and I could not have done it without mine. These last 3 years have been the honor of a lifetime. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, coast guardsmen, and civilian warriors work tirelessly alongside our allies and partners daily to keep our Nation safe while ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

I also thank Congress for your support, especially in establishing the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI). The American people should know that your efforts to focus our country's resources on addressing the most pressing national security challenge our Nation has ever faced are making a difference, but we have much more to do. The United States cannot spend its way to a position of preeminence as our economic and technological advantages over the PRC continue to narrow. While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address the rapidly evolving security environment.

The complexity of the threats we face requires the U.S. to mobilize the whole-of-government and use all elements of national power to counter revisionist powers and their proxies committed to overturning the rules-based order for the benefit of themselves and at the expense of everyone else. However, we must recognize that the most dangerous national security challenges are evolving faster than our current government processes allow us to address them. Each of our three major State threats in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR)—the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)—are taking unprecedented actions that challenge international norms and advance authoritarianism. These adversarial regimes are increasingly interconnected, which is evident in Xi and Putin's declaration of a "no limits friendship" as well as Kim Jong-un's materiel deliveries to Putin in support of the illegal invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, *the PRC is the only country that has the capability, capacity, and intent to upend the international order*. Even amidst slowing economic growth, the PRC continues its aggressive military buildup, modernization, and coercive gray-zone operations. All indications point to the PLA meeting President Xi Jinping's directive to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. Furthermore, the PLA's actions indicate their ability to meet Xi's preferred timeline to unify Taiwan with mainland China by force if directed.

When I became the Commander, I established *Seize the Initiative* as USINDOPACOM's approach to implement the National Defense Strategy (NDS) with a focus on deterring our adversaries by challenging the Joint Force to *think, act, and operate differently* and synchronizing four lines of effort in the near-

mid-, and long-term. While some progress has been made, the risk we assume is high and trending in the wrong direction, specifically due to delayed delivery of military construction, advanced capabilities, and resources to persistently project and maintain forces west of the International Date Line (IDL).

Pursuant to Section 1302 of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, this Committee was provided USINDOPACOM's resourcing requirements needed to deter the PRC. The content of this posture statement and the 1302 Report has been provided to the Secretary and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *More than ever, USINDOPACOM needs your support to deliver the sustainable solution outlined in my Independent Assessment.*

Without a credible deterrent, China, Russia, and other revisionist powers will be emboldened to take action to counter United States interests. This testimony focuses on how *Seize the Initiative* enables the U.S. to deter conflict while reassuring our allies and partners.

This testimony describes the four focus areas and highlights the critical investments required to strengthen deterrence, which is within our reach. We must establish a forward-deployed, defense-in-depth posture to defend the U.S. Homeland and interests abroad, deter aggression, assure allies, and provide the President and Secretary of Defense flexible response options should deterrence fail. The four areas that will enable our warfighters to rapidly operate within the first island chain with the capabilities to blind, see, and kill are as follows:

- 1) *Distributed Force Posture.* A distributed force posture that is persistently forward-based, west of the IDL, makes U.S. Forces more effective, responsive, and survivable. USINDOPACOM's Independent Assessment (1302 Report) provides a prioritized list of MILCON and access agreements and required capabilities for each desired force posture location. With the support of Congress and the Department of Defense, USINDOPACOM has worked diligently to accelerate construction and action of \$50 million of advance planning. This includes Joint Area Development Plans, site surveys for the Guam Defense System (GDS), and employment of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Field Force Engineering Teams to the Philippines to rapidly develop projects at existing and new agreed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites. *We have also worked with special authority via 2807 notifications to implement \$169 million of design work to adequately program for \$2.75 billion in construction.* Once construction is appropriated, these projects will provide an operational airfield, port, and fuel storage projects needed to sustain the Joint Force west of the International Date Line.
- 2) *Campaign of Joint and Combined Operations.* A joint and combined campaign allows the combatant commander to conduct full spectrum military operations in combination with the exercise and experimentation program to enhance what is currently provided by the Services. Our campaign now includes persistent operations, synchronized across the Joint Force in all domains and with allies and partners, linked over space and time. Key highlights include ground forces operating in Northern Luzon of the Philippines and Japan's Southwest Islands and combined Taiwan Strait Transits with Canada. USINDOPACOM campaigning is combined with and built around an exercise program supported by experimentation and enhanced through scale, scope, timing, and location changes. We have brought high-end capabilities to exercises like Balikitan hosted by the Philippines and increased the number of multilateral exercises such as Super Garuda Shield hosted by Indonesia, Cobra Gold hosted by Thailand, Keen Edge hosted by Japan, and Talisman Sabre hosted by Australia. To better address campaigning requirements and improve our military positioning in the theater to respond to crisis and conflict, USINDOPACOM is evolving its command and control to be ready to fight tonight, thereby improving joint warfighting proficiency.
- 3) *Advanced Warfighting Capabilities.* Maintaining our joint warfighting advantage requires us to outpace our challengers and urgently deliver advanced capabilities. With homeland defense as our number one priority, the Guam Defense System (GDS) is a critical capability USINDOPACOM seeks to accelerate by fusing our most advanced missile defense capabilities from Army, Navy, and Air Force systems. Maintaining decision superiority to blind, see, and kill any threat provides a strong deterrent effect and enables us to be prepared to fight and win if tasked. The Joint Fires Network (JFN) is USINDOPACOM's mechanism to integrate, command, control, synchronize, and deliver effects across the battlespace. JFN has evolved expeditiously via an experimentation campaign starting in 2019, yielding initial capability in 2024. The USINDOPACOM Mission Network (IMN), formerly the Mission Partner Environment, is a secure,

zero-trust data-centric environment that allows USINDOPACOM to rapidly share information and a common operating picture with allies and partners. Additionally, the Pacific Multidomain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) enhances U.S., allied, and partner training by enabling realistic, joint, and combined training ranges to improve our future operations and exercises using Stormbreaker, an AI-based gaming and simulation capability. To further accelerate capability development and fielding, USINDOPACOM established the Joint Mission Accelerator Directorate (JMAD) in 2023 to identify emerging Department technology and commercial content able to mitigate capability gaps with near-term technical solutions.

- 4) *Enhanced Network of Allies and Partners.* Our robust network of allies and partners is our most significant asymmetrical advantage in long-term competition. Our alliances, multilateral arrangements, partnerships, friendships, and Five Eyes relationships are essential to this network and play an important role in enhancing regional security. Over the past 3 years, our network of strong, resilient, and mutually reinforcing relationships have strengthened cooperation in unprecedented ways. AUKUS was established, and the trilateral partners have since announced the Optimal Pathway for Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. A new phase in United States-Japan-Republic of Korea trilateral cooperation facilitated the activation of 24/7 real-time DPRK missile warning data sharing last year. The new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites with the Philippines have reinvigorated the bilateral relationship with the Philippines, and provided the opportunity to make significant bilateral advancements, including in economic projects in the Philippines. We have also launched the India-United States Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) and signed a defense cooperation agreement with Papua New Guinea.

While there has been progress in all four areas, *we MUST move faster to reduce the risk of conflict in the near and mid-term. Each line of effort is integral to deterrence in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility.* USINDOPACOM requests increased support to make progress across these four lines of effort, allowing us to continue to *Seize the Initiative*.

KEY ADVERSARIAL CHALLENGES

Since I took command in 2021, our potential adversaries have become increasingly aggressive in seeking to impose their will at the expense of all others. The PRC has coupled its massive military buildup with a campaign of coercive actions designed to force more vulnerable nations to bend to their will. Russia's illegal, illegitimate invasion of Ukraine exposed it as an irresponsible actor uninterested in upholding international commitments. DPRK continues to develop weapons it plainly articulates as threats to both the region and the United States Homeland. Individually, each poses its challenges.

People's Republic of China (PRC)-

Strategic Intent

The PRC's strategic goals remain unchanged from those it held even before 2021. It remains the only competitor with the military strength, will, and intent to change the world order with authoritarian characteristics and displace the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The PRC uses all elements of its "comprehensive national power" to attempt to elevate China to the world's "indispensable power" and to alter the international system to one that encourages repressive, authoritarian governance and protectionist economic practices that distort markets by avoiding openness and transparency.

The PRC's aggressive military buildup underpins its drive to supplant United States security leadership in the region, enabling the PRC to subjugate Taiwan, exert control over the South China Sea through its excessive maritime claims, and oppress those who believe in a free and open Indo-Pacific. While the PRC military focuses on regional issues, Beijing is setting the stage for a more significant global role through its global society, civilization, and development initiatives.

Military Modernization

The PRC continues to advance its comprehensive military modernization program to transform the PLA into an integrated, joint, high-tech, network-centric military force. Modernization has remained aggressive, and China remains committed to delivering the capabilities needed to achieve its objective by 2027.

On a scale not seen since WWII, the PLA's buildup is occurring across land, sea, air, space, cyber, and information domains. Despite challenges presented by

COVID-19 and an economic downturn, the PRC's official defense budget has risen over 16 percent from 192 billion USD to 223.5 billion USD. In the 3-years since I took command, the PLA has added over 400 fighter aircraft (almost all 4th and 5th generation variants), more than 20 major warships (guided missile cruisers, destroyers, frigates), and has more than doubled its inventory of ballistic and cruise missiles. Likewise, China has increased the number of satellites launched by over 50 percent during this period, yielding a fivefold increase since 2020. Perhaps most concerning has been the rapid pace at which the PRC has bolstered its nuclear arsenal, increasing its warhead inventory by well over 100 percent since 2020.

During my tenure, we have observed the PRC's growing focus on developing the capability and capacity to project power and challenge adversaries beyond the First Island Chain (FIC). The rapid expansion of the PLA Navy's (PLAN) guided missile cruiser and destroyer inventories and advances in ballistic missiles will enable the PLAN to contest adversaries increasingly farther outside the FIC. The subsurface fleet has also grown in volume and capability, notably with the launch of nuclear-powered guided missile submarines (the PLAN's first SSGNs).

PLA aviation has also undergone a significant transformation since 2021. Combined, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific. Over half of the PLA's operational fighter force is 4th and 5th generation, enabling longer-range A2/AD and counter-air operations across the western Pacific Ocean. The PLA is also developing a stealth bomber that can cover the Second Island Chain and the Western Pacific.

The PLA's investment in modern, long-range weapons, almost certainly focused on countering third-party intervention, is underscored by the rapid expansion of its ballistic missile inventories and technologies. During my tenure, the PLA increased its inventory of intermediate and medium-range ballistic missiles by over 60 percent while continuing to develop new longer-range capabilities, such as the DF-27 ballistic missile that will be able to reach targets well beyond the Second Island Chain.

The continued development of supporting space and communications technologies is steadily increasing the lethality and precision of PLA systems. In addition to the sharp increase in space launches over the past 3 years, the PRC is steadily delivering capabilities that seek to deny the use of our space architecture. Despite statements opposing the weaponization of space, the PRC is developing a range of counter-space capabilities and related technologies, including kinetic-kill missiles, ground-based lasers, and orbiting space robots.

Like other domains, the PLA's nuclear force has proliferated in the last 3 years. Upon taking command, the number of nuclear warheads was in the low 200's, and its nuclear triad was nascent, with the air component operationally fielded only in 2020. Now we see a PLA nuclear force with 500+ warheads, missile systems employing multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV), three new ICBM silo fields, and a nuclear-capable, air-to-air refuelable bomber. Unfortunately, this is not the end of the PRC's nuclear buildup; the PLA has plans for 1,000 warheads by 2030, accompanied by new air and sea-launch platforms.

Destabilizing Actions

Taiwan

Xi Jinping continues to view unification with Taiwan as a "historical inevitability" and "indispensable for the realization of China's great rejuvenation." As such, Beijing is employing all elements of national power to lead Taiwan and the international community to believe that unification is, in fact, inevitable. Although the PRC claims it prefers to achieve unification through peaceful means, Xi will not renounce the use of force.

China's pressure campaign, ongoing in earnest since 2016, spiked in 2022 when the PLA executed a large-scale military exercise following the United States House Speaker's visit to Taiwan. The well-documented, multidomain operation established a new, more dangerous status quo for PLA activity and posture around Taiwan, normalizing warship patrols around Taiwan and military flights crossing the Taiwan Strait centerline, routinely entering the PRC's self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone, and executing legal actions to validate their objectives.

Equally concerning, the PLA is systematically rehearsing critical tasks associated with military operations against Taiwan. In 2022 and 2023, the PLA rehearsed the encirclement of Taiwan, simulating a maritime and air blockade of the island while bracketing the island with ballistic missile launches. Subsequent exercises in 2023 focused on rehearsing counter-intervention and amphibious assault operations, the latter featuring extensive use of civilian Roll-On Roll-Off (RORO) ferries and vehicle carriers. This operational strategy leverages civilian capabilities to prepare its forces for seizing Taiwan.

Coercive and Risky Operational Behavior

Since 2021, the PLA has increasingly employed coercive tactics in response to activity the PRC deems provocative, significantly raising the risk of an incident or accident that could lead to loss of life or spark a wider, unintended conflict. The Department of Defense's 2023 China Military Power Report stated, "The PLA appears to have been engaged in a centralized, concerted campaign to perform risky behaviors to coerce a change in lawful U.S. operational activity and that of U.S. Allies and partners." These activities include reckless and dangerous maneuvers in the air and at sea in response to our activities that are well within international law.

Excessive Maritime Claims in the Region

The PRC is challenging the regional status quo through increasingly coercive tactics to pressure Taiwan and to force acceptance of Beijing's excessive maritime claims. The PRC accompanies its direct and clear claims with pointed warnings, most clearly, but not exclusively, in its Taiwan-focused rhetoric. In the ongoing dispute with the Philippines in the South China Sea (SCS), the PRC has significantly increased its aggression against the Philippines claiming "indisputable sovereignty" over Philippine waters. These actions are inconsistent with the conclusions of the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal convened pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

During my tenure, the PRC has become increasingly assertive in enforcing its illegitimate sovereignty claims in the SCS. The PRC continues to militarize its South China Sea outposts, enabling Beijing to threaten all nations operating nearby. It is quietly undertaking land reclamation at unoccupied features—a strikingly provocative act that clearly violates the spirit of the DOC. Over the last 2 years, the PRC utilized SCS-based CCG and maritime militia to water cannon, laser, and ram Philippine vessels that were, attempting to lawfully resupply the Philippine outpost at Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC's lawfare strategy is underpinned by increasingly assertive domestic laws, portrayed as being consistent with international law that they use to justify the enforcement of their excessive claims.

In the East China Sea, the PRC attempts to legitimize claims over the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands with a continuous presence of PRC fishing and Maritime Militia vessels, escorted by Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) ships, with PLAN ships nearby. CCG ships routinely enter territorial waters surrounding the Senkakus, frequently harassing Japanese fishing vessels. Other actions, such as its annual, unilateral summer fishing ban, threaten China's neighbors and clearly illustrate an attempt to change the existing international order in its favor. In 2021, amid its long-running border dispute with India, the PRC passed a land border law, asserting "which asserted that the 'sovereignty and territorial integrity of the [PRC] are sacred and inviolable' sovereignty that and provided a legal framework for greater PLA involvement in border security.

PRC-Russia Cooperation

Since declaring a "no-limits" partnership in 2022, combined Russia-China military activities and PRC support for Russia's defense industrial base have become more concerning. Last summer's combined naval exercise in the Sea of Japan and followup on distant naval patrol highlight this growing military cooperation. The PRC has helped Russia rebuild and reconstitute its defense industrial base, with real world battlefield impacts in Ukraine. Beijing has become the largest consumer of Russian oil and natural gas, essentially keeping the Russian economy afloat as it suffers from the economic consequences of its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The relationship is strengthened by the personal relationships between Xi and President Putin and their shared antipathy for the United States and our allies. While Xi has voiced support for Russia's justifications for its Ukraine war, the PRC has sought to avoid the appearance of direct support for Russia's military operations.

The Russian Federation

Strategic Intent

Russian President Vladimir Putin's blind ambition to reclaim the clout and influence of the Soviet Union has been fully displayed in my 3 years at USINDOPACOM. With disastrous results for all involved, Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine exposed weakness in the Russian economy and further damaged its international standing. The Russian economy has been exposed as one-dimensional and increasingly dependent on oil and natural gas exports. Internationally, Russia has become further isolated, only explicitly supported by authoritarian regimes like the PRC, the DPRK, and Iran.

Russia's inability to achieve its war aims continues to have disastrous consequences for its military, decimating large swaths of its ground forces and seriously depleting stores of ammunition and armaments. Even so, Russia remains a formidable potential adversary in the Indo-Pacific, intent on improving its ability to defend Russian territory in the Northern Pacific, strike United States and Allied targets, and sustain military engagement as a significant component of regional influence.

Military Modernization

Even with its immediate attention fixed on Ukraine, the Russian Naval Doctrine published in 2022 prioritizes the Pacific and Arctic regions above all others. Its main goal of "strategic stability" (a euphemism for mutual nuclear deterrence) delineates the Sea of Okhotsk and much of the Arctic as "areas of existential importance" alongside Russian territorial seas and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). It is within this context that Russia has pursued the modernization of its strategic assets in the region, even as its conventional forces are engaged in Ukraine.

Since 2021, Russia's Pacific Fleet has added several modern surface ships and submarines to increase Moscow's combat capability. Russia fielded new nuclear-powered ballistic and cruise missile submarines and upgraded *Kilo*-class diesel submarines. Armed with dual nuclear and conventional capable Kalibr cruise missiles and the Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile (still in testing), the Russian Pacific Fleet is increasing its ability to threaten United States and allied land and maritime targets.

Russia also continues to invest in modernizing its nuclear triad's land and air legs. This past January, Moscow identified the completion of the deployment of the Sarmat strategic missile system, which replaces legacy ICBMs with the new system capable of carrying multiple warheads. Russia also continues to upgrade its strategic bomber force in pursuit of Russia's aim to be able to effectively strike every United States installation in the Pacific, Alaska, and the United States West Coast.

Destabilizing Actions

Power Projection

Russia uses its Pacific-facing forces as a power projection tool, signaling that it has retained the capability and capacity to use military force in the region if it so chooses despite significant losses in Ukraine. In addition to strategic air patrols that skirt the coasts of Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam, the Russian military also uses exercises near United States and allied territory to reinforce perceptions of military might. The Russian exercise FINVAL 2023 reportedly involved 10,000 Russian Navy Pacific Fleet personnel, and numerous ships, submarines, aircraft, helicopters, and coastal missile systems. It deliberately messaged Moscow's intent to control its declared Northern Sea Route, including areas near Alaska.

Combined Exercises and Naval Diplomacy

The increasing frequency of combined activity is cause for concern. In addition to naval drills, Russia continues to partner with the PLA in strategic bomber patrols in the western Pacific near Guam. Russia is also increasingly collaborating with the PLA to execute combined air patrols that regularly cross into Japan and the Republic of Korea's Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ), further threatening our allies.

Arms Transfers from the DPRK

One of the many unfortunate outcomes of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is a growing relationship between Moscow and Pyongyang. In addition to the ammunition the DPRK supplied last year, DPRK provided short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) that Russia is presently using in Ukraine. In return, Kim Jong-un probably seeks technical support for his growing strategic weapons program and Moscow's political support through its veto power at the United Nations Security Council.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Strategic Intent

The DPRK's primary strategic priority—regime security—has remained fixed for decades. What has become increasingly evident over the past 3 years is that Kim Jong-un is unwilling to slow the development of strategic weapons, even in the face of blistering sanctions, to possess a credible strategic deterrent. The DPRK's laser focus on developing technology and weapons that enable its strategic strike capability is evidenced both by the statements coming from Pyongyang and the well-publicized tests of systems intended to deliver nuclear strikes against the United States Homeland and its regional neighbors.

Military Modernization

Over the past 3 years, the DPRK has primarily focused its military modernization efforts on strategic capabilities. At the DPRK's 8th Party Congress in 2021, Kim Jong-un articulated his intent to further develop strategic weapons and supporting technologies. Kim specifically highlighted preemptive and retaliatory precision nuclear strike capabilities, developing tactical nuclear weapons, solid-fuel ballistic missiles, and fielding a military reconnaissance satellite as priorities.

The DPRK has made significant progress toward its 8th Party Congress goals. In 2023, the DPRK unveiled what appear to be miniaturized warheads that can be employed on shorter-range missiles and conducted drills simulating tactical nuclear strikes and a nuclear counterattack. Since 2021, Pyongyang has also publicized multiple advancements in delivery platforms, now claiming the ability to launch weapons from subsurface, rail, and silo-based launchers.

Modernization of the DPRK's vast conventional force has been slower in comparison but progressing nonetheless. Ballistic missile submarines, associated SLBMs, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) closely resembling U.S. systems highlight recent developments.

Destabilizing Actions

Missile Launches

Since 2021, the DPRK has launched over 100 ballistic and cruise missiles, including an IRBM that overflew Japan. In 2022, the DPRK restarted ICBM testing—paused since 2017—and tested a new solid-propellant ICBM in 2023. In 2024, DPRK launched a solid-propellant ballistic missile loaded with a hypersonic mobile control warhead. The advancements in solid-propellant rocket motors potentially enable DPRK to launch missiles with much less warning than their liquid-propellant counterparts.

Escalatory Behavior

The DPRK increasingly messages its aggressive behavior as a response to the actions of its adversaries. In an address to the United Nations, the DPRK accused the United States of a “sinister intention to provoke a nuclear war” and attempting to create an “Asian NATO.” These comments come in a year that saw Pyongyang's actions compel the Republic of Korea to suspend the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement, designed to lower military tensions and accidental military clashes between the two countries. Among other provocations, Pyongyang threatened to shoot down any United States reconnaissance aircraft breaching its claimed airspace, fired more than 200 artillery rounds near a disputed maritime border with the ROK [Republic of Korea], launched an intercontinental ballistic missile into waters near Japan, and simulated a missile strike on the ROK in protest of military drills conducted by ROK with the United States.

Satellite Launch

The DPRK also took significant steps to advance its space and satellite reconnaissance capabilities to meet the goals identified in the 8th Party Congress. In 2023, DPRK successfully used its ballistic missile technology to launch its first reconnaissance satellite following two high-profile failures. The successful launch occurred only months after a Kim-Putin summit in Russia. Putin reportedly promised to help DPRK build satellites, almost certainly in return for support for Russia's war effort.

Support to Russia

In addition to ballistic missiles, the DPRK has probably provided over one million artillery shells and scores of missiles to Russia. Pyongyang almost certainly hopes to leverage Russian technological expertise to bolster its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. These benefits are in addition to the diplomatic cover Moscow provides DPRK, using its U.N. Security Council vote to frustrate efforts to increase sanctions against Pyongyang.

Sanctions Evasion

DPRK's efforts to evade U.N. imposed sanctions intended to curtail funding for its nuclear and other WMD programs are nothing new. In 2023, a U.N. Panel of Experts found that the DPRK continues to employ various evasion measures to import refined petroleum products. The report states that, after a record-breaking level of cyber thefts in 2022, estimated at \$1.7 billion, the DPRK continued to successfully target cyber cryptocurrency and other financial exchanges globally to support its sanctioned development programs. Even as DPRK takes more aggressive steps in these programs and tests more weapons in contravention of Security Council resolutions, Russia and China continue to resist efforts to strengthen sanctions.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs)

Transnational and ethno-nationalist violent extremist organizations remain active across the Indo-Pacific region. The December 2023 bombing of a Catholic Mass in the southern Philippines that killed four is only the most recent reminder. While VEO strength as a whole in the region is far from its pinnacle, and security forces throughout the region have thinned VEO ranks, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to prevent violent extremists from planning and executing attacks.

IMPLEMENTING *SEIZE THE INITIATIVE*

USINDOPACOM developed the *Seize the Initiative* approach to transform the needed force posture, operational campaign, advanced capabilities, and partnerships to defend the Nation and deter our adversaries. Essential to this approach is the imperative to *think, act, and operate differently*. With the support of Congress, USINDOPACOM has made progress in the last 3 years in preparing and planning for a distributed force posture, implementing an integrated, operational campaign of joint operations, activities, and investments (OAI) with advanced capabilities specifically designed to enhance deterrence, and strengthening relationships with our allies and partners.

Distributed Force Posture

Deterrence depends on the ability of the Joint Force to act quickly and decisively, which requires an increasingly flexible and distributed force posture and logistics network. Central to *Seizing the Initiative* is shifting from the “As Is” posture of 2021 to a near future “To Be” force posture of forward-based and rotational joint forces. By creating a distributed force posture west of the IDL, U.S. Forces are more responsive, survivable, and interoperable with our allies and partners. This effort also provides the Secretary and the President with increased options to respond to a crisis.

A distributed force posture also requires new approaches to sustainment and logistics, as well as definitive access, basing, and overflight (ABO) agreements with allies and partners. USINDOPACOM’s Joint Posture Management Office (JPMO), established in 2023, synchronized theater posture planning, design, and construction to streamline and coordinate priorities. Across the Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM has been pursuing distributed force posture aligned across four posture “clusters.” Specific site information and planning efforts are described in detail in the classified 1302 Report.

Congressional funding and support have allowed USINDOPACOM to progress with design and planning. However, many of these projects still need to be prioritized by the Services. We have only completed 12 of over 200 required infrastructure projects in my 3 years in command. Forty-seven (47) high-priority MILCON projects still need to be funded. However, we can now create gains with the support from the additional authorities and funding provided by Congress. We seek the programming and budgeting necessary to implement significant construction efforts as early as fiscal year 2025.

The Guam Cluster

The Guam cluster—comprised of the forward-most United States territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)—as well as the Freely Associated States (FAS), which include the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)—is the cornerstone of the U.S. security architecture west of the International Date Line. In a crisis, bases and infrastructure in these territories and states will be crucial to sustain the Joint Force. USINDOPACOM has worked diligently to build local political support across the region over the last 3 years. The national and territorial governments have welcomed the increased transparent communications and our willingness to incorporate local concerns into our plans.

USINDOPACOM continues to work toward rapid implementation of priority posture projects in the region, an enabling component of the “To Be” posture. The Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) is on plan. It continues to develop infrastructure on Guam and CNMI, including Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, where marines will begin movement from Okinawa by the end of the year. USINDOPACOM and Congress have successfully identified ways to accelerate posture processes to meet the Guam cluster’s emerging operational infrastructure development requirements. The funding Congress enacted for USINDOPACOM in fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023 funded the necessary planning and development for critical Joint Force-enabling projects not prioritized by the Services. Leveraging these targeted investments and authorities, USINDOPACOM was able to advance infrastructure needs in FSM, Palau, and CNMI on a faster timeline than traditional MILCON and better

position projects for funding within the budget cycle. USINDOPACOM and the FAS continue discuss potential ways to negotiate on additional defense sites for use by all Services. These sites will significantly enhance our logistical lines of communication and add to our aviation dispersal and other combat capabilities, while providing attendant economic benefits to the local governments.

Our increasing military capabilities strain local infrastructure and sustainment networks in the U.S. territories and the FAS. The remote nature of many of the posture project locations in this region results in a massive demand for limited materials, contracting, and housing resources. In Guam and CNMI, the totality of military construction projects is too large to be supported solely by local labor. Congress has provided much-needed relief from the H-2B temporary work requirement extending through 2029 for projects directly connected to military realignment. Additional relief is necessary to enable prolonged extensions of H-2B visas and direct relief for typhoon recovery and resilience projects in Guam and the CNMI. Absent additional relief before fiscal year 2027, the loss of an assured workforce will result in cost and schedule impacts to both military relocation and typhoon resilience projects; impacts will increase until the workforce collapses in fiscal year 2030.

Under the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) agreements with the Freely Associated States (FAS), the U.S. has full authority and responsibility for security and defense matters in and related to the FAS, including extensive access to operations in their territories. In May 2023, the U.S. signed agreements with FSM and Palau to extend economic assistance for 20 years, and in October 2023, the United States signed a similar agreement with the RMI. I want to thank Congress for recently approving legislation to implement and bring agreements under COFA into force. The President signed these 20-year assistance agreements into law this month, reaffirming the perception of the United States as a reliable partner for all Pacific Island nations.

The Japan Cluster

USINDOPACOM has worked closely with the Government of Japan to optimize Alliance force posture based on improved operational concepts and enhanced capabilities to address increasing security challenges in the region, including for the defense of Japan's Southwest Islands. In October 2022, the United States completed a deployment of MQ-9s to Japan's Kanoya Air Base, followed by movement to Kadena Air Base in November 2023. In April 2023, USINDOPACOM established the Composite Watercraft Company at Yokohama North Dock to strengthen Alliance maritime mobility. In addition, as part of our commitment to strengthening Japan's defense, the United States began the first deployment of a TPS-80 radar system to the Sakishima Islands in October 2023.

We continue to work with the Government of Japan to position more resilient and mobile forces with increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), anti-ship, and transportation capabilities. To strengthen deterrence and response capabilities, we are optimizing the posture of United States Forces in Japan, alongside enhanced Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) capabilities and posture in areas including the Southwest Islands. Further, we are continuing close consultation with Japan to expand joint use of United States and Japanese facilities and enhance bilateral exercises and training focusing on Japan's Sakishima Islands.

The Philippines Cluster

In 2023, to allow both countries to address shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, the United States and the Philippines designated four additional EDCA in addition to the five existing EDCA sites. The four new announced EDCA sites will expand United States rotational access across the Philippines, strategically strengthening the interoperability of United States and Philippine armed forces and facilitating the rapid provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Philippines.

The U.S. has allocated over \$109 million toward infrastructure improvements at the five existing EDCA locations and two new EDCA locations. This investment, and forthcoming additional allotment, will complete twenty-three projects, enabling the United States and the Philippines to continue to build lasting security infrastructure to fill short-term capability gaps, promote long-term modernization, establish a credible mutual defense posture, maintain humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities, and enhance the strength of the alliance. We anticipate making significant progress in the Philippines this year. Once appropriations are received, we have several projects ready for rapid execution. We will streamline construction at the EDCA locations using a design-build acquisition approach that employs new and recently provided authorities for smaller projects (up to \$9 million) using Unspecified Minor Military Construction.

The Australia Cluster

To ensure an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, stable, peaceful, prosperous, and respectful of sovereignty, the United States has completed 12 construction projects in the Indo-Pacific region worth \$146 million; three of these projects support our bilateral alliance with Australia. These efforts have been carried out in close partnership with the Australian Department of Defense's United States Force Posture Initiatives (USFPI) program, which focuses on Marine Rotational Force—Darwin, enhanced air cooperation, enhanced land cooperation, enhanced maritime cooperation, combined logistics sustainment, and maintenance enterprise, and enhanced space cooperation. There are three large MILCON projects in Australia to improve the early phases of Darwin/Tindal airfield improvements and ammunition and fuel storage. USINDOPACOM is working to identify alternatives which might enable accelerated execution of other posture initiatives.

Over the past few years, the United States and Australia have expanded posture coordination beyond Australia. The United States has recently added several initiatives to our posture planning efforts to support AUKUS and mutual operational requirements. Australia has been a valuable partner in coordinating posture initiatives and other cooperation activities across the Pacific Island region, including with the government of Papua New Guinea. In May 2023, the United States and Papua New Guinea signed a bilateral defense cooperation agreement (DCA) enabling the modernization and strengthening of this important security partnership in the region. The DC will enhance security cooperation, further strengthen our bilateral relationship, improve the capability of the PNG Defence Force, and increase stability and security in the region.

DETERRENCE CAMPAIGN OF JOINT AND COMBINED OPERATIONS

Through a persistent campaign in the Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM deters adversaries by demonstrating U.S. capabilities, responsiveness, and commitment to the region. USINDOPACOM's deterrence campaign normalizes U.S. operations in the AOR, builds warfighting advantage through rehearsal of concepts, and strengthens interoperability with allies and partners. Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has actively worked to expand its campaign of joint and combined operations, including phased surges that increase our positions of relative advantage by concentrating OAI in time and tempo to maximize effects. Improvements to OAI include expansion of operational complexity across all domains and enhanced coordination of global activities with other combatant commands. Additionally, to strengthen OAI with allies and partners, USINDOPACOM is conducting new flexible response options and multilateral operations to increase the complexity of our activities, create new dilemmas for adversaries, and reassure like-minded countries within the theater.

The key to our deterrence campaign is maintaining our forward stationed and rotational forces to maintain our military strength to respond quickly to any contingency. The removal of capability or capacity of the Joint Force sends the wrong message to our potential adversaries, allies, and partners. Additionally, the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps still need to procure the types and quantities of the munitions required to defeat threats in the Indo-Pacific region. These Service decisions continue to increase the risk to USINDOPACOM and its men and women while reducing our forces' overall deterrent effect in theater.

To meld Service capabilities into an integrated Joint Force, USINDOPACOM is evolving its operational command and control to be prepared to "fight tonight," thereby improving joint warfighting proficiency and effectiveness. As the updated command structure executes operations, activities, and investments throughout the region, we will capture lessons learned and identify known shortfalls in personnel, facilities, and equipment. These lessons and shortfalls will inform future USINDOPACOM resource requirements.

The first step in this process was forming a joint force headquarters on Guam, Joint Task Force-Micronesia (JTF-M). JTF-M integrates joint, all-domain command and control effects and mission command and control in Guam. As of January 2024, an initial staff for the JTF is on Guam and setting the conditions to establish an enduring headquarters. USINDOPACOM will identify additional resources and staffing requirements as planning efforts and joint exercises refine operational concepts.

Exercise, Experimentation, and Training

USINDOPACOM's Joint Exercise Program has been integrated into our deterrence campaign plan and is critical to a trained and ready joint force. Major joint exercises put aggregated combat formations with advanced capabilities in a position to conduct all-domain operations and activities. With allies and partners, these exer-

cises demonstrate interoperability and warfighting proficiency, contributing to combat credibility and bolstering deterrence.

Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has evolved the exercise program to increase multilateral participation, facilitate experimentation with advanced concepts and technologies, and demonstrate the ability to execute high-end all-domain warfighting in the theater. In 2023, USINDOPACOM oversaw an annual exercise program consisting of 19 joint and more than 90 Service exercises involving participants from the United States and allies and partners across the globe.

Bilateral exercises such as KEEN Edge with Japan and Balikatan with the Philippines have expanded to multilateral events and have increased in complexity, interoperability, and scope. Additionally, USINDOPACOM expanded previously unilateral exercises such as Northern Edge and Valiant Shield to integrate other combatant commands and allies such as Australia and the United Kingdom. Continued and additional investment in USINDOPACOM's Joint Training Exercise and Evaluation Program (JTEEP) will further advance the Command's ability to exercise large-scale, all-domain joint and combined exercises in contested environments, improving joint force training, readiness, and interoperability.

USINDOPACOM developed the Pacific Multidomain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC) to enhance U.S., allied, and partner training. PMTEC enables realistic joint, combined all-domain training across a live-virtual-constructive environment via networked ranges, simulation centers, and mobile training support systems. PMTEC resourcing in fiscal year 2023 delivered substantial contributions to transition the Joint Exercise Program into operationalized training, experimentation, and rehearsal events through the Balikatan, Northern Edge, and Talisman Sabre exercises, among others. Through PMTEC, these previously geographically focused exercises enjoyed greater theater-wide participation due to linking capabilities across the theater and adding more Combined Joint All Domain Operations (CJADO) in the events. CJADO activities were supported by CONUS-based constructive and virtual support to provide more realistic common operational pictures, including increased emulation of space, cyber, and electronic warfare effects. PMTEC reached Initial Operational Capability for exercise enhancement through these initiatives in September 2023.

ADVANCED WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

Over the past 3 years, the PRC has continued the most extensive and rapid build-up since World War II. With the Department focused on the PRC as the pacing threat, delivering capabilities enables us to sustain credible deterrence. *This budget cycle is a critical opportunity to focus concerted on providing the right capabilities in the suitable capacity on the proper timelines to strengthen deterrence.*

Guam Defense System (GDS)

As the most forward United States territory in the Western Pacific, Guam is a strategic outpost critical to projecting power, maintaining deterrence and stability, and responding to regional crises or conflicts. Establishing the GDS—a 360-degree, persistent, layered, and integrated air and missile defense on Guam—remains the top homeland defense priority for USINDOPACOM to protect more than 170,000 United States citizens on the island. The United States has programmed billions of dollars in defense capability on Guam to advance these capabilities, including offensive capabilities, command and control, and sustainment.

In June 2023, the Deputy Secretary of Defense designated the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD A&S) as the senior DOD official responsible for the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam, the Army as the Service Acquisition Executive (SAE), and GDS as an Acquisition Category (ACAT) 1D program. USINDOPACOM joined multiple war games and exercises in the past 3 years that have refined and optimized the GDS defensive capabilities. Although field-testing of the initial elements of GDS will begin in 2024, USINDOPACOM continues to advocate for and work with the larger defense enterprise to accelerate the fielding of the entire GDS ahead of the current delivery timelines. *As of today, USINDOPACOM believes the completion and integration of the GDS will be late to need* and continues to advocate for prioritizing and accelerating the necessary operations, activities, and investments (OAI) to complete the initiative this decade.

DECISION SUPERIORITY

Decision superiority requires us to operate in contested space safely, sustain target quality, real-time battlespace awareness, and deliver multidomain joint fires. A Persistent Targeting-Quality Common Operating Picture (PT-COP)—the visualization of fires command and control drawing from a common data layer and pairing the best weapons against adversary targets—is necessary to enable *BLIND—SEE—*

KILL effects. JFN provides decision superiority by fusing sensors across all domains and platforms with intelligence and other information to provide target guidance simultaneously to commanders across the battlefield.

Combined warfighting also requires rapidly sharing information and a common operating picture with allies and partners in a secure and resilient data-centric environment. IMN is an agile environment that modernizes command, control, communication, computer, and information technology (C4IT) systems by shifting USINDOPACOM from 13 separate coalition systems into one system to deliver combined C2 in a contested environment. IMN increases coalition access to data, improves mission assurance west of the IDL, and enables campaigning and coalition operations by getting the correct information to the right partner at the right time. Without full resourcing, the modernization and fielding of this more resilient and effective mission partner communication in the theater will be delayed.

BLIND: Operate in Contested Space and Domains

Detering conflict requires the U.S. to demonstrate the ability to operate in all contested spaces and dominate all domains, especially in space and cyberspace. Our competitors recognize the importance of space and cyberspace and have invested heavily to advance their capabilities in these domains. Over the last 3 years, the U.S. has made the investments necessary to maintain its advantage in space and cyberspace, and we must continue to focus resources and talent in these domains to stay ahead. USINDOPACOM's mission depends on U.S. dominance in space and cyberspace through resilient and flexible capabilities integrated and exercised with our allies and partners.

SEE: Battlespace Awareness Across the Joint Force

Since 2021, USINDOPACOM has advocated for resources to fund critical future space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems explicitly designed to support warfighting requirements and improvements in signals intelligence collection capability. These capabilities combine to enable a complete understanding of the battlespace throughout the Joint Force and share that understanding with key allies and partners.

KILL: Synchronizing Joint Fires

USINDOPACOM's Joint Fires Network (JFN) initiative seeks to integrate Joint Force capabilities into a coherent architecture to provide a Persistent Targeting Common Operating Picture (PT-COP), a Common Data Layer (CDL), a standard set of integrated Battle Management and Command and Control Applications (BMC2), and a resilient, secure transport-agnostic communications infrastructure. JFN is USINDOPACOM's mechanism to integrate, synchronize, and deliver effects across the battlespace.

Since USINDOPACOM established the JFN initiative in 2022, we have made tremendous strides thanks to our close partnership with OSD Acquisition and Sustainment (OSD A&S); Research and Engineering (OSD R&E); the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO); the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU); the Services; the Intelligence Community; and industry. We developed and deployed 15 JFN experimentation kits in 2023 in 8 months. With these kits, we conducted experimentation in three joint exercise and experimentation venues in calendar year 2023, successfully scaling up from eight nodes in Northern Edge 23-1 to 20 nodes in Northern Edge 23-2. To further accelerate our progress, we successfully integrated with the OSD-led Global Information Dominance Exercise in December 2023 (GIDE 8). Further integration in exercises, including a JFN live fire demonstration during Valiant Shield 2024, will deliver an initial JFN combat credible capability to the Joint Force in calendar year 2024.

Joint Mission Accelerator Directorate (JMAD)

To identify and accelerate solutions that enhance the interdependencies between required strategic capabilities, USINDOPACOM established the JMAD in October 2023. JMAD is driving the acceleration, integration, and interoperability of the most critical and strategic needs across the Department and the Joint Force. JMAD has already initiated the integration of JFN and IMN architectures. JMAD also oversees Stormbreaker, USINDOPACOM's program to develop a Joint Operational Planning Toolkit (JOPT) enabled by advanced technology that will include advanced data optimization capabilities, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to support planning, war gaming, mission analysis, and execution of all-domain, operational-level course of action development. Stormbreaker is optimizing alignment with operational and wartime planning requirements and objectives.

ENHANCED NETWORK OF ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Over the last 3 years, USINDOPACOM has trained, operated, exercised, experimented with, and engaged allies and partners from across the region and the globe to enhance the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. The relationships we have developed are built upon respect, trust, and shared values that are not just enduring but transformative. Our network of allies and partners is an unmatched asymmetric advantage, and our work together is critical to delivering integrated deterrence.

Multilateral Cooperation, Coordination, and Integration

Strengthening our bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral defense relations is one of USINDOPACOM's highest priorities, whether through capacity building, security cooperation, increasingly complex exercises, or advanced capability development. Developing stronger multilateral relationships in the region has been one of our greatest successes in the last 3 years, resulting in increased multilateral deterrence effects and the creation of relationships and activities among U.S. allies and partners to pursue a more stable order in the region.

AUKUS

AUKUS embodies a generational opportunity to modernize the longstanding relationships among the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (U.K.), guided by a shared commitment to global security. The trilateral AUKUS partnership consists of two pillars: Submarine Consultation (Pillar I) and Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II).

On Pillar I, we are working to deliver a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability to Australia as soon as possible, upholding while setting the highest nuclear non-proliferation standards. We have already made significant progress in operator and industry training for Australia, and we look forward to having Australian sailors commence duty in Guam this year to build their maintenance skills. We are also increasing the number of visits of nuclear-powered attack submarines to Australia, including the visit by the USS *North Carolina* in 2023 and the visit going on right now by the USS *Annapolis*.

We are working to accelerate and deepen cooperation on advanced defense capabilities through Pillar II. The Chiefs of Defense from Australia, the U.K., and I have made specific recommendations to the respective ministers and the Secretary of Defense on the priority areas that can deliver advanced capability in the near term while we also pursue maritime autonomous systems, anti-submarine warfare: undersea vehicles; positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT); artificial intelligence (A.I.); space capabilities; and integrated air and missile defense (IAMD). *We appreciate the NDAA's establishment of national exemptions for Australia and the United Kingdom from United States defense export control licensing and adding these two allies to the U.S. Defense Production Act. These provisions are crucial to enable accelerated delivery of advanced capabilities.*

United States-Japan-ROK

Trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and the ROK is a priority for the United States and crucial for security in northeast Asia. The relationship between our three nations is the strongest it has ever been. As the DPRK continues its provocations, we are committed to enhancing our deterrence by responding in concert with our allies through improved intelligence and missile defense information sharing, combined operations in response to DPRK actions, and strengthening our interoperability across all three nations. In the last 3 years, we advanced a new era of trilateral cooperation by activating a 24/7 real-time DPRK missile warning data-sharing mechanism. The efforts improve our shared ability to ensure the safety of our people by trilaterally detecting and assessing DPRK missiles. We expanded our trilateral exercise program's scope and scale in recent years through successful trilateral ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine warfare, air exercises, and exercises with our Canadian and Australian partners. In 2023, we negotiated a multi-year trilateral exercise program, which formalized our trilateral cooperation in exercises for the next 2 years.

The Quad

The Quad nations, represented by Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, is a diplomatic network supporting a prosperous, Free, and Open Indo-Pacific. The Quad is not a military alliance, but rather a diplomatic network committed to a peaceful, secure region, free from intimidation and committed to the rule of law. The Quad nations collaborate on matters such as maritime awareness, disaster response, and counterterrorism to enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Including all

Quad nations in India's Exercise MALABAR demonstrates commitment of Quad nations to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The chiefs of defense of Australia, India, Japan and I now meet annually for the Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue to discuss common security challenges.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN advances critical works to uphold the rules-based order, advance respect for international law, and peacefully resolve disputes through consultation, diplomacy, and consensus-based decisionmaking. At the 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summit, President Biden announced the launch of the U.S.-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. USINDOPACOM is committed to supporting maritime security cooperation with ASEAN, including significant support via the U.S. Pacific Fleet to a second ASEAN Maritime Exercise in 2025. USINDOPACOM is also co-chairing a Medical Expert Working Group with Indonesia and is developing concepts to support Laos' initiatives in environmental resilience; women, peace, and security; and cyber efforts.

Blue Pacific Cooperative

The Blue Pacific Cooperative (BPC) is a USINDOPACOM-led initiative to support the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and, the Pacific regional framework laid out by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and ultimately address critical issues for Blue Pacific nations, such as combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and building climate resilience. The BPC provides the 17 partner nations with enhanced maritime domain awareness and seamless information sharing and supports the Forum Fisheries Agency based in the Solomon Islands and the Fiji Maritime Surveillance Rescue Coordination Center. Additionally, as a member of the Pacific Quad with Australia, France, and New Zealand, we work to build the capacity of Blue Pacific nations' maritime security forces, assist in the protection of central and western Pacific fisheries, and provide access to maritime domain awareness technology and best practices to counter IUU fishing assets. U.S. cooperation with Blue Pacific nations without militaries focuses on improving relations through engineering projects, combating transnational crime, and enhancing coordination and collaboration. In July 2023, Samoa joined the State Partnership Program with the Nevada National Guard.

Northeast Asia

Our relationships with allies and partners in Northeast Asia are crucial to deterring aggressive action by the DPRK, Russia, and the PRC, as well as securing the support needed to transition to conflict if necessary. Increasing bilateral interoperability and growing multilateral relationships and operations have significantly improved our strategic position and deterrence within the First Island Chain.

Alliances with Japan and the ROK are the cornerstone of regional peace and security. Beyond trilateral cooperation, bilateral relations with each country are consistently being modernized to prevail in the new era of strategic competition and underpin a shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The United States and Japan made significant progress in modernizing the alliance in the last 3 years, including expanding bilateral planning efforts for contingencies and exploring more effective alliance command and control relationships to enhance interoperability. We are rapidly expanding our multilateral cooperation efforts by including partners such as Canada, the Philippines, the ROK, and the U.K. in Exercise Keen Sword 23 and Australia in Keen Edge 24. The United States and Japan continue to optimize force posture, including for the defense of the Southwest Islands, by forward-deploying more resilient and mobile capabilities. Japan continues demonstrating its resolve to take a more active role in maintaining regional peace and stability. Japan has committed to doubling its defense budget from 1 percent to 2 percent by 2027, resulting in unprecedented defense spending. This spending includes counter-strike, integrated air and missile defense, multidomain, sustainment, and other capabilities.

The United States-ROK military-to-military relationship is one of the world's most robust and interoperable alliances. Exercise Ulchi Freedom Shield continues to significantly improve our bilateral crisis management and war execution capabilities. As part of our commitment to extended deterrence, USINDOPACOM facilitated the first U.S. SSBN port visit to ROK in 40 years, the port visit of the USS *Ronald Reagan* Carrier Strike Group; the first 5th Gen aircraft deployment to Korea, and the first B-52 landing in Korea in decades. The United States and the ROK are committed to modernizing our capabilities to strengthen our combined defense; at nearly \$43 billion, the 2023 ROK Defense budget is its most significant defense budget ever—a 4.4 percent increase over 2022, which was previously a record-high year. USINDOPACOM continues to work toward transitioning wartime Operational

Control (OPCON) to the ROK through the Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP).

The United States is proud to be Mongolia's strategic "Third Neighbor" and partner. Continued military-to-military relationship with Mongolia is one of the most active aspects of our Strategic Partnership and a contributor to regional security. USINDOPACOM and Mongolia cooperate on improving HA/DR response, defense modernization, developing professional military education (PME) programs, expanding Special Operations Forces capability, and enhancing air operations. We also continue to support Mongolian participation and leadership in U.N. Peacekeeping operation (UN PKO) missions, including expanding the scope and depth of Exercise KHAAN QUEST to include participation by Japan and the Republic of Korea.

United States policy on Taiwan is consistent and unchanged. We will continue to support Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act. This aligns with our one China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances. The United States is committed to cross-strait peace and stability and the peaceful resolution of differences, free from coercion and pressure.

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia continues to be a region that sees significant coercive action from the PRC. These actions include the increasing militarization of their South China Sea outposts and further coercive gray zone actions against the Philippines in their Exclusive Economic Zone, including around Second Thomas Shoal, and other attempts to enforce domestic laws in international spaces, including using Chinese law enforcement entities to harass nations operating legally within their exclusive economic zones. Increased aggressive behavior by the PRC has led nations in this area to rethink and adjust their relationships with China, the United States, and each other.

The Philippines and Thailand, as allies of the United States, continue to grow closer bilaterally, as well as increase multilateral activity to ensure the defense of their nations against external armed attack in the Pacific. For the Philippines, the four new sites were announced for proposed inclusion under Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, with the United States allocating over \$109 million in infrastructure projects to improve bilateral military modernization and expand training opportunities, as well as position for response to HA/DR events. Exercise Balikatan increased in scope to include plan-based command posts and combined joint field training exercise events, including live fire maritime strikes, integrated air-missile defense activities, and the Australian Defence Force as a part of the exercise. In support of the Philippines' sovereign rights and its maritime security, USINDOPACOM conducted a bilateral sail and air patrol campaign in the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone and Northern Luzon Strait, with five bilateral sails executed as of March 2024 and nearly 500 bilateral activities planned for the rest of the calendar year.

In Thailand, USINDOPACOM is committed to building an interoperable ally and supporting its military modernization efforts, including welcoming the first permanent Thai Liaison Officer in April 2024. Exercise Cobra Gold continues to grow in scope and scale, featuring a staff exercise, a field training exercise, humanitarian civic assistance programs, and cyber operations, and includes forces from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the ROK, and Singapore.

Other nations in Southeast Asia remain essential to ensure regional stability. Singapore provides substantial support to the United States military, including offering United States Forces the use of facilities near the Strait of Malacca. The United States-Singapore defense relationship has advanced over the last 3 years, with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) USINDOPACOM and USCYBERCOM signing an MOU in August 2021 to advance cybersecurity information sharing, exchange of threat indicators, combined cyber training and exercises, and other cyber cooperation. In February 2023, Singapore hosted a rotational deployment of United States unmanned aerial systems, and we are exploring options to deploy United States maritime vessels based out of Singapore. SAF uses four CONUS locations, including three flying training programs and an annual live fire training with High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers. By 2026, Singapore's F-16 training facility at Luke AFB will relocate before their F-35B deliveries in October 2026. Singapore hosts the multinational maritime Information Fusion Center (IFC), which coordinates efforts to support regional maritime security, and the Counterterrorism Information Facility (CTIF), which uses network analysis and multilayer analytics to identify trends, aberrations, and terrorist threats.

The United States and Brunei made significant strides in strengthening our military relationship, signing a new Acquisition Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in

April 2023 to enable greater military interoperability and a 505 Agreement in December 2023 that provides a conduit for defense articles and training grants. Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) is the largest United States-Brunei annual exercise, marking its 30th iteration in 2024. Brunei also participates in Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) and the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise. In September 2022, in the first multilateral training in Brunei, the U.K. Special Boat Service (SBS) joined U.S. Navy SEALs and the Brunei Special Forces Regiment in Exercise NEPTUNE WARRIOR. In March 2023, His Royal Highness Prince Mateen visited the United States and engaged with Naval Special Warfare and others, strengthening military-to-military ties.

Indonesia's location stretching between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the southern edge of the South China Sea means it occupies a critical strategic position regionally and globally. The United States has worked closely with Indonesia over the last 3 years to advance our strong defense cooperation. In November 2023, Presidents Biden and Widodo elevated our relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership. This effort resulted in a mutual commitment to advance space cooperation, cyber capacity building, maritime security, exercises, and other areas. Super Garuda Shield grew from an Army service exercise to one of the most extensive joint and multinational exercises in the Indo-Pacific, featuring a joint bilateral CPX and FTX conducted with the Indonesian military and multinational participants from Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and France.

The United States-Laos military relationship continues to advance as lingering mistrust from the legacy of war issues subsides. Laos and the United States resumed a Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD) in 2023 to advance cooperation efforts, resulting in the delivery, supported by the U.S. Department of Defense, of 619 various-sized cold-chain freezers capable of storing Pfizer COVID vaccines, distributed throughout the provinces in January 2024. USINDOPACOM has supported Laos via the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) in their traditional advisory role, as well as through the provision of computer equipment. INDOPACOM continues to support ASEAN's central role in the region and Laos' ascension to the chairmanship of ASEAN for 2024.

Bilateral security cooperation tripled in scope and scale after the United States-Malaysia relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Partnership in 2014 and revalidated in 2017. USINDOPACOM and the Malaysian Armed Forces will hold the first-ever execution of KERIS STRIKE in Sabah (East Malaysia) in fiscal year 2024 and are developing BERSAMA WARRIOR (BW) into a multilateral exercise through a Five-Year Plan. To augment Malaysia's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability, the U.S. delivered 18 UAS ScanEagles by November 2022 for maritime domain awareness and counterterrorism (C.T.) missions. Since 2017, the U.S. has invested approximately \$220 million in Maritime Security Initiative/Build-Partner Capacity (MSI/BPC) programs.

In February 2023, Timor-Leste, the Rhode Island National Guard (RING), and Timor-Leste Defense Force signed a State Partnership Program agreement, resulting in RING's participation in several exercises and exchanges with Timor-Leste in 2023. The Baucau MOU signed in June 2021 was a milestone in U.S.-Timor-Leste bilateral relations, paving the way for more significant security cooperation and expanded access. The \$23 million airfield rehabilitation and maritime security program will allow Timor-Leste to monitor its EEZ and conduct maritime security operations.

Vietnam is a leading regional voice supporting freedom of navigation and adherence to international law and the rules-based international order. The United States and Vietnam upgraded our relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during President Biden's visit in September 2023, resulting in progress in maritime security and opportunities to expand cooperation in HA/DR, PKO, aviation, cyber, and personnel accounting (POW/MIA). This year, we will host a Vietnam delegation to conduct the US-VNM bilateral defense dialog.

Cambodia's new government, appointed in August 2023, has expressed a desire for an improved bilateral relationship with the United States, to include the possible restoration of security cooperation. In January 2017, Cambodia imposed a moratorium on all military exercises with the United States, followed by the State Partnership Program (SPP) termination in 2020. Currently, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission continues, allowing for the continued search and recovery of 48 United States personnel still declared missing in Cambodia. We are seriously concerned about the PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base.

Relations with Burma remain strained. We condemn the military coup in 2021 against the democratically elected government in Burma and the subsequent widespread violence perpetrated by the Burma military regime against the people of

Burma. USINDOPACOM does not engage with Burma's military but monitors the information space to support and assist the State Department in the protection of United States facilities and American personnel in Burma.

In January 2017, Cambodia imposed a moratorium on all military exercises with the United States, followed by the State Partnership Program (SPP) termination in 2020. Currently, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) mission continues, allowing for the continued search and recovery of 48 United States personnel still declared missing in Cambodia. While USINDOPACOM desires military engagement with Cambodia where policy allows, we remain seriously concerned about the PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base.

Oceania

The many nations of the Oceania region include staunch allies and strong partners but are continuously under threat from diplomatic, economic, and security coercion by the PRC. Consequently, many of our relationships in this area have expanded and strengthened to address pernicious Chinese behavior and coercive pressure.

The United States and Australia have worked to enhance all-domain cooperation, integrate ranges, improve posture, and expand multilateral exercises across the theater, including hosting Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D). The alliance continues to demonstrate combined operational capability executed in two Bomber Task Forces, submarine and United States Army watercraft rotations to Australia, and the deployment of U.S. Navy Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) from Australia to strengthen maritime domain awareness. Australia and the United States continue to expand the scope and scale of our robust exercise program, including PACIFIC SENTRY 23, featuring combined United States-Australia planning and combat operations against an all-domain, near-peer adversary, and TALISMAN SABRE 23 emphasizing interoperability and expeditionary logistics from 11 additional partners from across the globe. Increased trilateral opportunities with Australia and Japan allowed for increased complexity of our operations while improving partner interoperability throughout the region at the joint level. Australia's importance as an anchor of United States security in the Indo-Pacific remains unequivocal.

The Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and Palau—occupy a strategic location linking the United States to the rest of the Indo-Pacific region, and they have the highest military service per capita in the U.S. military. We greatly appreciate that Congress recently passed the legislation that will allow the new COFA-related assistance agreements to be brought into force.

In addition to the COFA-related agreements, the United States must fully fund the Economic Assistance Agreement associated with the South Pacific Tuna Treaty. The treaty provides the United States access to tuna fisheries across Oceania and provides a mechanism for the United States to support economic development in the region. Failure to fund the Economic Assistance Agreement undermines U.S. credibility and opens the door for other countries to gain influence over these strategically important partners.

New Zealand is an essential leader in Oceania, with a mature network of mentors, instructors, and technical advisors supporting a pan-regional security cooperation program. New Zealand is part of DPRK U.N. Security Council Resolution enforcement efforts, part of the Headquarters Integrated Area Defense System under the Five Powers Defense Arrangements, and contributes to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility in Singapore. Exercise TEMPEST EXPRESS 23 featured a joint multilateral exercise conducted in New Zealand with 20 participating nations where planners examined New Zealand's earthquake response plan and HA/DR operations planning. In addition, New Zealand routinely engages in a broad range of United States-led exercises across the Indo-Pacific, including Rim of the Pacific, PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP, MOBILITY GUARDIAN, and CARTWHEEL.

Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Tonga are essential partners in the region to ensure continued defense relationships, access, and lines of communication into the First Island Chain. Through Fiji's Blackrock training center, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) regularly deploys personnel supporting U.N. peacekeeping operations across the globe. Nevada National Guard's State Partnership Program and Exercise CARTWHEEL, Exercise TAQOMACA, the United States-Fiji Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD), the U.S. Shiprider Program, and the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative improve bilateral coordination of maritime domain awareness in support of Fijian sovereignty.

In May 2023, the United States and PNG entered into a bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). This foundational agreement enhances access and secu-

rity cooperation and further strengthens our bilateral relationship, improves the capacity of the PNG Defence Force, and increases stability and security in the region. Capacity building and training are advancing through the SPP's Wisconsin National Guard, and a ship rider program is set to expand U.S. Coast Guard elements into a maritime security line of effort.

The United States opened a new United States Embassy in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, in May 2023. It conducted a United States-Tonga Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD) that examined non-commissioned officer (NCO) developmental training opportunities and improvements to State Partnership Program initiatives between Tongan forces and the Nevada National Guard.

South Asia

South Asia is at the nexus of global trade and commerce, with nearly half of the world's 90,000 commercial vessels and two-thirds of global oil trade traveling through the Indian Ocean. The region boasts some of the fastest-growing economies on Earth and is home to a quarter of the world's population. While the region offers unprecedented opportunity, it also confronts many security challenges, including a growing Chinese presence, static or declining defense budgets, terrorism, and climate change effects. To combat these challenges, the United States seeks opportunities to broaden and strengthen partnerships with India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

A strong United States-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership is essential to a free and open Indo-Pacific. In 2023, the United States and India launched INDUS-X and completed a Roadmap for U.S.-India Defense Industrial Cooperation to enhance bilateral defense industrial cooperation and innovation. The proposed deal between G.E. Aerospace and Hindustan Aeronautics for domestic Indian production of F-414 jet engines exemplifies this approach. The United States and India are seeking unprecedented levels of interoperability by expanding cooperation in the air domain through the participation of United States B-1B Bombers in India's biennial air show AERO INDIA and bilateral air exercise COPE INDIA. Additionally, in the land domain, we conducted the largest-ever bilateral joint amphibious exercise with India, TIGER TRIUMPH, improving our cooperation on maritime domain awareness and strengthening service-to-service ties. USINDOPACOM seeks to deepen cooperation under the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) to enable more regular and flexible engagements in the Indian Ocean Region, including U.S. ship repair in Indian shipyards. Two new Master Ship Repair Agreements were signed in 2023, and three U.S. Navy vessels have recently received maintenance and repair in Indian shipyards.

USINDOPACOM conducted the 10th Bilateral Defence Dialogue with the Bangladesh AFD in August 2023 to strengthen military-to-military ties further and explore opportunities for collaboration on training, exercises, and equipment exchanges. USINDOPACOM seeks a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Bangladesh to improve cooperation between our countries on defense matters.

The United States is committed to our longstanding defense relationship and supporting Maldivian sovereignty, safety, and security. USINDOPACOM continues seeking opportunities to enhance our relationship with the Maldives, including building maritime security and counterterrorism capacity. In 2021, the Maldives signed an arrangement with the Montana National Guard to join the State Partnership Program. As the Maldives looks toward establishing a maritime fusion center in the future, USINDOPACOM stands ready to leverage capabilities through our Joint Interagency Task Force—West (JIATF-W) and the U.S. Coast Guard to support those efforts.

USINDOPACOM supports Nepal in becoming a premier contributor to global PKO through Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) funds and exercises. In February of this year, the United States and Nepal co-hosted the largest-ever military exercise in Nepal, the Multinational Peacekeeping Exercise SHANTI PRAYAS IV, which included over 1,000 participants from 20 countries. Beyond PKO, USINDOPACOM partners closely with Nepal on HA/DR, border security, and special operations cooperation.

USINDOPACOM continues to support Sri Lankan defense reform and equipment divestiture efforts within the bounds of current legal constraints, as well as opportunities for institutional capacity building, maritime security, HA/DR, and U.N. PKO. In the past 3 years, United States-Sri Lankan defense relations built upon a successful CARAT exercise, the transfer of the 3d USCG cutter, and Sri Lanka's hosting of the 2023 USINDOPACOM Environmental Security Forum. We welcome Sri Lanka's decision to participate in Operation Prosperity Guardian utilizing a Coast Guard cutter previously transferred through the EDA program. It is a valu-

able reminder that our security assistance programs advance U.S. and global security. We will continue strengthening our relationship with the upcoming King Air Maritime Patrol Aircraft delivery in 2024.

Other Indo-Pacific Nations

Many other Indo-Pacific nations have continued to increase their activities unilaterally and bilaterally with regional governments and multilaterally to strengthen the rules-based international order. Key among these nations are Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (U.K.). Canada continues to deploy competent forces to the region to support freedom of navigation and sovereignty, including through several combined Taiwan Strait Transits with the United States in the last 3 years. French armed forces maintain commands in French Polynesia (FAPF), New Caledonia (FANC), and South Indian Ocean Zone (FAZOI), as well as keeping an active role in regional security, protecting fisheries, and countering transnational crimes. The U.K. sustains a regional defense posture, including the Brunei Garrison and two permanently deployed Royal Navy Offshore Patrol Vessels. A broad program of bilateral and multilateral operations and activities complement their posture, including exercises and training contributions from the British Army and Royal Air Force. The U.K. invests in the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore; continues a Global Combat Air Programme with Japan and Italy to develop 6th generation fighter aircraft; and supports defense programs through the Hiroshima Accord with Japan, the Downing Street Accord with the Republic of Korea; a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with India; and the Partnership Roadmap with Indonesia, and Strategic Partnership with Singapore. USINDOPACOM continues to benefit from basing and access to the British Indian Ocean Territory at Diego Garcia and from the British Defence Singapore Support Unit.

OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Program

USINDOPACOM executes a robust WPS program as part of the Department of Defense's (DOD) implementation of the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act 2017. This is done by mainstreaming a gender perspective into theater plans, programs, and policies to enable USINDOPACOM to develop inclusive security strategies that advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. WPS-themed security cooperation engagements with partner nations are an innovative approach for strategic competition that is non-escalatory, less costly than conflict, enables values-based choices, and helps the United States maintain an asymmetric advantage. WPS builds resilience capacity and self-reliance, demonstrating a commitment to investing in our partners, not extracting from them.

In 2023, USINDOPACOM designed and delivered a tailored gender focal point training to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) at the request of the recently established PNGDF Gender Committee. This work with the PNGDF Gender Committee is currently the only DOD initiative in the Indo-Pacific Region supporting the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote stability (also known as the Global Fragility Act). USINDOPACOM also supported a United States-Malaysia Trafficking in Persons workshop with WPS-related programming. Finally, USINDOPACOM developed and held the inaugural Indo-Pacific Regional Military Gender Advisor Course, part of a 5-year initiative to create a fully trained network of certified military Gender Advisors within the region. Course participants included representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Climate Change

The national security impacts of climate change are a priority concern to many allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. These impacts may exacerbate existing challenges, including growing geostrategic competition and maritime boundary disputes. Our partners and allies in Oceania, Southeast Asia, and South Asia are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather and the food and water security challenges that result.

Climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience considerations are essential to long-term planning for U.S. operating locations, critical facilities, and capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region. USINDOPACOM is committed to increasing the resilience of its infrastructure, facilities, and forces and assisting allies and partners in resiliency efforts. The military's role in disaster preparedness and response will be increasingly needed as climate change impacts become more frequent and severe. Enhancing disaster preparedness and response is an opportunity for the USINDOPACOM to play a significant role in supporting efforts to build resilience.

Red Hill

Secretary Austin tasked USINDOPACOM to establish Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH) in recognition of the need to safely and expeditiously defuel the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility and to rebuild trust with the State of Hawaii and the local community on Oahu. Through collaboration and transparency with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii Department of Health, JTF-RH accelerated the defueling schedule by 6 months. On 16 December 2023, JTF-RH completed gravity defueling of over 104 million gallons of fuel, fulfilling the Department's commitment to remove the threat to one of Oahu's primary aquifers as quickly and safely as possible. JTF-RH is presently removing residual fuel from the facility, simultaneously conducting a methodical turnover with a newly established Navy Closure Task Force as the Department transitions the main effort from defueling to closure and long-term environmental remediation. As DOD notified Congress in September 2023, defueling the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility will not adversely impact the Department's ability to support military operations in the Indo-Pacific theater. The Defense Logistics Agency repositions fuel across the Indo-Pacific to better support USINDOPACOM requirements.

CONCLUSION

Conflict is not imminent or inevitable, but our potential adversaries have become increasingly aggressive and seek to impose their will at the expense of like-minded nations that embrace a rules-based order. The PRC's actions, which include a massive military buildup accompanied by a campaign of coercive actions, destabilize the region and challenge the ideals that support a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Through *Seize the Initiative* and in concert with the Department of Defense and the U.S. Congress, USINDOPACOM has delivered a comprehensive plan that provides a more distributed force posture, a synchronized campaign of joint/combined operations across all domains, the capabilities needed to fight and win, and the relationships with allies and partners needed to maintain a free and open INDOPACIFIC.

However, *my successor will need your support to continue making progress across all of these efforts with a sense of urgency.* We must build upon the progress achieved in the last few years to accelerate the fielding of the initiatives described in the Section 1302 Independent Assessment. These initiatives include the defense of Guam, decision superiority capabilities, our security cooperation actions, AUKUS, and bilateral international agreements such as [those related to] the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) to ensure the United States remains the security partner of choice in the Indo-Pacific.

Last, I want to thank Congress for your continued focus on our challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and your commitment over the last 3 years. *Your focus and leadership have never been more important.* Congress must pass timely appropriations. Continuing resolutions result in cumulative and detrimental effects on our buying power, delay the fielding of much-needed capability and capacity, and increase the level of operational risk that I am forced to assume. If we are not vigilant in aligning our resources to address the most critical national security priorities, our ability to ensure the safe and prosperous future of the U.S. and our children and grandchildren will be in jeopardy.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Admiral Aquilino. General LaCamera, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PAUL J. LACAMERA, USA COMMANDER, UNITED NATIONS COMMAND, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND, UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA

General LACAMERA. Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it remains my distinct honor to sit before you today as the Commander of the United States Forces Korea, Combined Forces Command, and United Nations Command.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your unwavering support to our servicemembers, our civilians, our contractors, our interagency colleagues and all our families overseas and those who wait at home. We can never take our eye off the solemn responsibility to care for those who have raised their right hand to defend

our Constitution and our way of life, including their families who do not volunteer, but serve, nonetheless.

I am prepared to discuss those in the security environment on the Korean Peninsula. It was just over 7 years ago that China supported, Russia spurned, an opportunistic communist North Korea decided to illegally invade the South, plunging Korea into a very costly armed conflict that is ongoing today.

22 United Nations states came to the aid of the Republic of Korea then, and 17 of them continue to support armistice enforcement today through the United Nations Command. Defending forward in this strategic location allows us to better protect our people, the Korean people, our Homelands, and reinforce the United States' ironclad commitment to the Republic of Korea. Situated on the Asian continent, the Korean Peninsula shares a Northern border with both China and Russia.

Although U.N. Security Council resolutions have levied strict sanctions against the DPRK, they have found refuge in their alliance with the People's Republic of China and their revitalized partnership with Russia. In the last year, the DPRK has continued developing its military capabilities, including solid fuel ballistic missile technology, which violate sanctions.

Some of the missile systems that North Korea has been testing threaten countries worldwide. North Korea has also been providing military material support to Russia, assisting in Russia's illegal and indefensible invasion of Ukraine.

These relationships have allowed the DPRK to circumvent sanctions, build their weapons program illegally, further missile technology, sustain their cybercrime derived economy, and threaten the international rules based order.

During the same time, the United States ROK Alliance continue to adapt to meet the evolving challenges. In April 2023, the Presidents of the two countries signed the Washington Declaration reaffirming our commitment to mutual defense. They also announced the establishment of a Nuclear Consultative Group to strengthen extended deterrence, discuss nuclear strategic planning, and manage the DPRK threat.

We have taken substantial and concrete steps to follow through on these commitments. The Republic of Korea has organized its own strategic command, giving us another arrow in our quiver. There have been multiple strategic asset deployments to the Republic—to the Korean Peninsula, including a nuclear ballistic missile submarine and the first B-52 landing in the last 40 years.

In August 2023, the Presidents of the United States, ROK, and Prime Minister of Japan met at Camp David for a trilateral summit. This historically significant meeting recognized the importance of advancing the security and prosperity of our people.

We have made significant progress in following through on the commitments made during the summit, including steps toward sharing of real time missile warning data, increased trilateral exercises on the sea, and the introduction of trilateral air and cyber exercises.

Over the past 3 years, my thinking on operations, activities, and investments has—continues to evolve. However, what has not changed is my focus on protecting the homelands, preparing for

combat, and taking care of people. Since readiness is perishable, I will never be satisfied with our level of training and preparedness.

As the ROK and United States conduct regular military training activities on the Peninsula, I am convinced that the DPRK is not only reacting to our activities, but in many ways mirroring them. We must continue to build physical, mental, and spiritual readiness through operations and activities designed to compete in the gray zone with the DPRK.

To defend the Republic of Korea, we must continue to invest in 28,500 servicemembers, including by, tri, and multilateral exercises on and off the peninsula. Multi-domain training integrating live, virtual, and constructive entities, and continue to experiment with next generation capabilities in the exact environment where they will be employed.

To maintain the armistice agreement, our ironclad commitment to maintain our combat readiness, we need your continued support and recognition of the threat to the Homeland. It has been an honor to serve in these three commands.

It has also been an honor to serve with Admiral Aquilino these past four and a half years in multiple commands. My best to him and his family. Fair winds and following seas. Once again, thank you for all your support and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Paul J. LaCamera follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL PAUL J. LACAMERA

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement on the security environment in the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Northeast Asia. I appreciate your unwavering support to the servicemembers, civilians, contractors, and their families who work with our Korean allies and United Nations Command Member States to maintain security on the Korean Peninsula. The United States-ROK Alliance serves as a linchpin for peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Our two nations share common values and democratic norms, value human rights, and abide by the rules-based international order. We also share significant economic and cultural ties that benefit both nations. The ROK sits at the heart of Northeast Asia, a region of significant security and economic interest for the United States. The presence of United States Forces in the ROK and Japan demonstrates our ironclad commitment to the people of Korea and protects our strategic interests in Northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.

This past year has seen significant strides in United States-ROK relations. President Biden hosted President Yoon for a State Visit in April 2023, leading to the issuance of the Washington Declaration, in which the two nations expressed our bilateral commitment to develop an ever-stronger mutual defense relationship and reaffirmed commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty. As a result, the Washington Declaration also established the Nuclear Consultative Group as an enduring, bilateral consultative body focused on strengthening extended deterrence, discussing nuclear and strategic planning, and managing the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). President Yoon noted the importance of the United Nations Command (UNC) in his August 15, 2023, National Day Address, stating that UNC is a great example of international solidarity that has played a key role in firmly safeguarding the ROK's freedom. In November 2023, in commemoration of the 70 years of the Alliance and in recognition of the changing security environment both on the Korean Peninsula and the broader region, Secretary Austin and Minister Shin issued a "Defense Vision of the United States-ROK Alliance" outlining a transformational way forward for the security and defense of the two countries, while also contributing to the security of the region and the world. Our Alliance with the ROK and their growing cooperation and coordination with Japan is bolstering regional security in Northeast Asia. Additionally, moving beyond the bilateral framework, President Biden and President Yoon met with Japanese Prime Min-

ister Kishida during the Camp David Summit, the first-ever summit of the leaders from the United States, ROK, and Japan, yielding broad trilateral military and diplomatic progress.

As the United States-ROK Alliance strengthens, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has responded with continued destabilizing activities. The mission of the UNC is to enforce the terms of the Armistice Agreement and to restore peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. The mission of the United States-Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command (CFC) is to deter aggression and if necessary, defend the ROK to maintain stability in Northeast Asia. The mission of the United States Forces Korea (USFK) is to deter aggression and protect the ROK against any adversary or threat, ultimately maintaining stability in Northeast Asia.

My priorities and focus as the Commander for these three commands are the same. My lines of operations are: Defend the Homeland(s), Strengthen the Alliance, Prepare for Combat, and Build Coalitions in order to ensure we achieve our strategic, operational, and tactical end states. My lines of effort, which are interwoven and connect my lines of operations are: taking care of the servicemembers, civilians, families, and contractors who support the Forces on the Korean Peninsula, and working to gain and maintain our Information Advantage which is critical in Armistice and vital in Conflict.

DEFEND THE HOMELAND(S)

Northeast Asia, which includes the Korean Peninsula, is vital to global peace and stability. It is home to four of the world's most powerful and largest economies: the United States, ROK, Japan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The United States has also had an enduring economic presence in the region for decades. It is also important to acknowledge Russia's growing presence in Northeast Asia.

Due to geographic proximity, there is significant potential for third party intervention and influence on the Korean Peninsula, should a crisis occur specifically from the PRC (Korea lies within the PRC's Anti-Access / Area Denial defensive layers) and Russia. Both are mindful that there is a premier Joint Force of 28,500+ American servicemembers forward deployed to the ROK. These geographic realities, combined with powerful economic interests, make the ROK the linchpin of security in Northeast Asia and a treaty ally we must defend.

It is imperative for us to remember that the Korean War has not ended; the Korean Peninsula is in armistice and the DPRK continues to develop capabilities that threaten not only the region but nations around the world. These capabilities include nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, orbital launch capabilities, cyber threats, and chemical and biological weapons. The persistent DPRK threat looms far beyond the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia, and into multiple domains including cyber and space. Furthermore, recent DPRK collaboration with Russia is also an indicator of growing bilateral relations between the two nations which is manifested in the DPRK's continued supply of artillery and ballistic missiles for use in Ukraine. It has delivered more than 10,000 shipping containers—the equivalent of 260,000 metric tons—of munitions or munitions-related materials to Russia since September 2023, which undermines regional security beyond Northeast Asia. In confronting the DPRK's actions, the United States and the ROK will continue to stand together to maintain peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and stability throughout Northeast Asia. This commitment is vital to stability in the region and is an example to other like-minded nations.

We must maintain our ironclad commitment to the Alliance which has endured since the Korean War and never take it for granted. Pursuing our goal of the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, deterring the DPRK from using nuclear weapons, and defending our Homelands requires all three Commands in Korea: United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States Forces Korea.

STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE

We have shared a Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROK since 1953, but we should never take our Alliance for granted. The Washington Declaration and the Camp David Summit have helped to expand our cooperation and reinforce our extended deterrence commitments.

President Yoon articulated his vision for the ROK to become a "global pivotal state" and the ROK government released its own Indo-Pacific strategy. The strategy is a comprehensive vision for the entire region and is not limited to just Northeast Asia or economics. It is reflective of a rules-based international order founded in cooperation rather than coercion. As the ROK aims to "increase engagement and cooperation with the Indo-Pacific" (Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-

Pacific Region, 2022), protected under the security umbrella of the United States military and interagency, I expect Northeast Asia will remain vital to global stability and security.

Of these powerful economies, the ROK is, by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the 13th largest economy in the world and 4th largest in Asia. It is a leading producer of semi-conductors, vehicles, and many other consumer electronics. It is also the 6th largest defense exporter in the world and President Yoon has set a goal for the ROK to become the 4th largest during his tenure. The advances within the Korean defense sector have yielded exports in aircraft, warships, and ground combat vehicles and weapons; the presence of Korean weaponry within the international community has trended higher since 2000 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).

The ROK is also the 6th largest United States trading partner (United States is now the ROK's largest trading partner), and the 6th largest United States agricultural export market. Between 2019–2022, the ROK directly invested \$74 billion, and ROK firms have announced \$98 billion of new planned investments in the United States, concentrated in semiconductors, electric vehicles, and battery technology.

The ROK's success is due to our shared values, democratic ideals, and market-based economies within the rules-based international order. Maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula is important to global stability and to the global economy, including the United States.

PREPARE FOR COMBAT

While we remain focused on a diplomatic resolution, the military missions of UNC, CFC, and USFK are to be prepared for combat so our governments can negotiate from a position of strength. Each of the three commands has separate sets of authorities, separate chains of command, and each continues to adapt to meet emerging security challenges. Our goal is to prevent an outbreak of hostilities, but we remain prepared to react and respond to any form of aggression across all domains.

Combined Forces Command has been the heart of the United States-ROK Alliance for over 45 years and is a unique, bilateral warfighting command charged with the dual missions of deterrence and defense. Combined Forces Command receives its direction and guidance from both United States and ROK national leaders, through ministerial and general officer level forums. During Armistice, I, as the Commander of CFC, have Combined Delegated Authority of designated ROK forces to maintain deterrence and to prepare forces to execute combined missions and plans. This starts and ends with tough, realistic training—executed in combined and joint environments alongside our interagency partners across all domains using live, virtual, and constructive environments. In addition to our strategic asset deployments to Korea, including carrier strike groups, strategic bombers, and nuclear submarines, our routine, defensive training events, such as Ulchi Freedom Shield and Freedom Shield are critical to our ability to maintain readiness and provide extended deterrence in Northeast Asia. Finally, bilateral, trilateral, and multinational operations, activities, and investments on and off the Korean Peninsula allow us to Fight Tonight.

United States Forces Korea remains the premier Joint Force, capable of operating in all domains with our allies and partners and committed to defending the security of the ROK. It is a critical part of the United States' approach to providing extended deterrence in Northeast Asia. As United States Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) sub-unified Joint Force on the Korean Peninsula, USFK is primarily responsible for the Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration of combat forces to the peninsula, as well as the sustainment of those forces. As the USFK Commander, I support UNC and CFC by coordinating and planning among United States component commands in the ROK, exercising operational control of United States forces as directed by USINDOPACOM, and coordinating United States military assistance to the ROK.

United States Forces Korea continues to demonstrate new and innovative capabilities that provide our forces advantages across multiple domains. Everything the Department of Defense (DOD) is doing to modernize is occurring on the Korean Peninsula—in a combined, joint, interagency environment in multiple domains. We are pursuing opportunities in artificial intelligence and machine learning. We are also working with all U.S. military services on improving our aging network and cybersecurity posture for our Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting (C5ISR). Additionally, the Northeast Asia Regional Fusion Cell is USFK's mechanism and environment through which we will aggregate understanding of DPRK's nuclear and weapons of mass destruction kill web. Our Fusion Cell capability ensures unity of efforts with

the U.S. Intelligence Community and identifies effects-based options to deter aggression.

Our ability to provide forward deterrence is dependent upon conducting regular, robust, and challenging training in addition to proper manning. Readiness for combat—at the unit and operational levels—must be built and continuously maintained; USFK has a high turnover rate and many of our servicemembers serve 2 years or less in Korea. Additionally, due to geographical space constraints, current ranges and availability for collective live-fire training requirements are limited. Components must train outside of Korea throughout the year to maintain unit readiness. These constraints impact our ability to execute fixed and rotary wing live fire exercises. Training off peninsula, while costly, is critical to maintaining our combined and joint force operational readiness. These are the steps we must take to ensure a Fight Tonight posture on the Korea Peninsula; we cannot afford to wait to train.

While assignment lengths of permanent party pose challenges to reactivity and unit readiness, our rotational units and units that train in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula build readiness. The Services provide trained and ready forces, but we build their operational readiness to fight in the Korean Peninsula environment. We are not a readiness consumer.

BUILD COALITIONS

Our network of allies and partners on the Korean Peninsula represents our greatest asymmetric advantage in supporting regional stability. These coalitions are bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral. In support of our efforts to build coalitions, UNC continues to represent the mechanism for collective security on the Peninsula. Our collective action ensures we are strategically predictable to our allies and partners, while being tactically and operationally unpredictable to adversaries and competitors. Managing and responding to crisis is the most consequential thing we do as an Alliance.

Since 1950, U.N. Member States under the UNC have collectively supported the ROK's security and sovereignty alongside United States forward deterrence. UNC provides three enduring functions.

First, UNC enforces the Armistice Agreement by executing the functions necessary to maintain and enforce the terms of the Armistice through close coordination between the United States, the ROK, U.N. member states, as well as coordination with the Korean People's Army (KPA). Furthermore, UNC informs the DPRK prior to the start of United States-ROK Alliance large-scale training exercises, such as the defensive Freedom Shield and Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, to ensure training events are not misinterpreted as aggressive actions.

Second, UNC coordinates the multinational contributions for securing the Korean Peninsula. Today, 17 countries contribute to UNC's mission. These U.N. Member States come from every corner of the globe, offering a visible reminder of the international community's resolve to defend the ROK and the global nature of the DPRK threat. I am thankful for each country's contributions, and it is an honor to serve with their countrymen and women.

Finally, UNC executes functions as assigned by U.S. National Authorities through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. United Nations Command is a one-of-a-kind, multinational military command under U.S. leadership. The UNC is not a United Nations peacekeeping organization.

United Nations Command is critical to our mission and provides international legitimacy through multinational contributions; it is a "ready-made" combined joint task force that adds value across the Korean Peninsula. We continue to welcome Member States to join our coalition and increase participation through exercises and liaison officer programs to our headquarters in the ROK.

TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

Servicemembers, civilians, families, and contractors who support the Force are our most precious resource; taking care of our people is a no-fail task.

Those who volunteer to bring their families to the Korean Peninsula normally spend at least 2 years there defending the ROK and deterring the DPRK. Ensuring those personnel and their families the best quality of life possible while they are away from the United States Homeland is of great importance and something I stress with leaders at every echelon. For those serving in Korea accompanied with their families, we are recommending tour length normalizations to 3 years that will enhance family stability while keeping unaccompanied tours at 1 year. We continue to look for ways to build our community to ensure the ROK remains an assignment of choice for our personnel and their families.

Our families also include the dependents of U.N. Member States who live on our installations. Currently, the school aged children of the U.N. Member State personnel are not guaranteed spaces at the on base schools, which creates an often-stressful planning challenge for the families who are headed to Korea to share in the mission. We are working with relevant organizations and agencies to mitigate these challenges, and ensure we do all we can to take advantage of these multinational and multigenerational relationship building opportunities.

The well-being of our servicemembers is also dependent on addressing systemic issues such as sexual assault and harassment in our ranks. I have a zero-tolerance policy for any action that destroys unit cohesion. Our senior leaders continue to impress the importance of these initiatives upon their subordinates. This is not just about combat readiness; it is simply doing right by our people.

Finally, our people live and work across the entire ROK, from Panmunjom near the Demilitarized Zone to the southern port of Busan. Being a responsible ally means being a good steward of the places where we operate. United States Forces Korea continues to conduct bilateral engagements with the ROK to appropriately posture our presence while also returning valuable land for use by the Korean people. We could not do this without military construction support from Congress.

INFORMATION ADVANTAGE

Our newest line of effort, "Gain and Maintain Information Advantage" is critical. The UNC/CFC/USFK must protect operations security-related critical information while leveraging information to achieve our missions during Armistice and conflict. Our ability to integrate and synchronize UNC/CFC/USFK strategic communication and Operations, Activities, and Investments (OAI)s across the information environment is contested by adversaries. Competition in the information environment increases the risks associated with strategic miscalculation; our ability to affect adversary perceptions in support of deterrence and protection of UNC/CFC/USFK forces and domestic populations is vital.

Today's information environment requires fewer resources to contest than other aspects of the operational environment. Our competition in the information environment encompasses activities across the informational, cognitive, and cyber dimensions to gain military advantages. This enhances efforts to deter by synchronizing our communication, actions, images, and intentions to send clear and credible signals to our adversaries. During conflict, leveraging information is critical to maintaining global support and legitimacy among the international community.

Each component of the UNC/CFC/USFK provides a different function and capability needed to exploit opportunities in the information environment in support of deterrence. While we can operate across all domains, I am concerned about our ability to compete in the information environment in Northeast Asia in light of PRC, Russia, and DPRK's aggressive investments in information warfare technology and operational practices. As the largest United States force on the Asian continent, USFK is uniquely positioned to counter many of the disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information efforts of our competitors and adversaries, and defeat enemies during conflict.

CONCLUSION

United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States Forces Korea, will deter and, if necessary, defeat our adversaries. Our collective actions will advance a free and open Indo-Pacific that is more connected, prosperous, and secure. The men and women working toward that goal are motivated, capable, and postured to do so while forward deployed in Korea alongside our ROK Allies and U.N. Member State Servicemembers. Our presence within Korea is advantageous; it is better to be prepared from within Korea rather than to fight our way in. We train to fight in a combined, joint, interagency, and multi-domain environment simultaneously. In doing so, we will preserve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia, and the Indo-Pacific. I am grateful for this Committee's continued support, and I am honored to lead this dedicated multinational, combined, and Joint Force deployed to the Asian mainland.

Thank you to the United States Congress, Armed Service Components, USINDOPACOM, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Under One Flag! We Go Together! Fight Tonight!

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General LaCamera, and before I begin, let me remind my colleagues that we had a closed classified session before this. No information discussed in that session may be discussed here in the open session.

Admiral Aquilino, CIA Director Burns recently published an article in which he said, “no one is watching United States support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leadership.” What message does that send to China if the United States fails to support Ukraine and allows the Russians, as a result, to succeed?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Chairman. You know, in today’s integrated, world and this closely aligned global environment, it is clear to me that based on the comments by President Putin and President Xi and their desire for a no limits relationship, and in President Xi’s words, a relationship that we haven’t seen in 100 years, that the two authoritarian nations are aligned more closely than ever.

So, in the lens that we look at it, a strategic win in Ukraine for Russia is a strategic win for President Xi in China, and allowing those authoritarian nations to move forward, to change the world order in ways that favor authoritarian nations and infringe upon the freedoms and our values that the United States and our likeminded nations and allies and partners share, that is a dangerous new world.

Chairman REED. Thank you. The supplemental that we are now currently trying to pass contains not only the necessary support for Ukraine, but also support for the Indo-Pacific region. So, we would need to pass that supplemental to help you also. Is that correct?

Admiral AQUILINO. Chairman, thank you to the Committee and the Congress for working through this supplemental, and I respectfully request that it gets passed as soon as possible. What is in that is beneficial not only for my partner, General Cavoli in EUCOM, as it applies to the capabilities that Ukraine needs.

To our previous point, a strategic win for President Putin is a strategic loss for the United States. It is also a strategic win for China. But I thank you specifically for the things you put in there that directly support INDOPACOM. The \$3 billion that has been identified for increased submarine industrial base maintenance and support, that is critically important.

Second, the FMF support for Taiwan, also critically important and directly aligned with the Taiwan Relations Act and the responsibilities that we execute in support of that law. Then last, those capabilities provided to INDOPACOM—and I have had multiple engagements with many of you.

Senator Sullivan and I had some conversations on those capabilities that are critically important, and I know those are in that supplemental. I thank all the Members, the Committee, and the Congress for pushing that forward. But it is critically important, and it is important to go fast.

Chairman REED. I should note that the major proponent of the submarine industrial base funds was my colleague, Senator Wicker, and we all should thank him for that.

General LaCamera, we have been talking about a transfer of operational control in Korea for as long as I think I have been here. Quickly, what are the obstacles? Is that something that is now being essentially postponed because of the increasing threat?

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Chairman. No, I mean we are on the trajectory to complete it, but it is standard space, not time based, and I have gotten that directly from the President of the Re-

public of Korea. So, we are working on it, and we are moving forward.

Chairman REED. But the cooperation between, I assume from comments that we have heard, between not only South Korea but Japan and the United States together is at a historic level of integration and cooperation. Is that correct?

General LACAMERA. Yes, Chairman, and I would like to thank Admiral Aquilino for the tremendous support we get and getting at the strategic assets, and also working the cooperation between the three countries.

Chairman REED. Thank you. One issue, for both of you, a conflict in the Pacific, perhaps our weakest link is congested logistics. It is a long way from the United States to the areas of operation, and just Admiral Aquilino, very quickly, since my time is running out, your quick comments and then General LaCamera on congested logistics and what must we do.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Thanks. So, supporting the force over half the globe is the task in the Indo-Pacific AOR. It is one of the reasons that we have highlighted the need for significant posture initiatives in the form of support and development to our friends and allies and partners in the region.

That is one of the critical aspects. But I also have to thank Congress for your support for the additional fueling tankers that you provided to General Van Ovost to be able to do that. We are going to need more of those, and as we distribute our logistics capabilities, we are going to do them on land.

We are going to do it at sea. We move some Army watercraft. So bottom line is it is critically important. That said, the United States is the only nation that can sustain this type of force across the globe. So, it is critically important. We need to do more.

Chairman REED. Very—General, comment, please.

General LACAMERA. Yes. The question I continue to ask both TRANSCOM and INDOPACOM is when is strategic movement become operational maneuver? I think our adversaries have learned if you let us build the Iron Mountain, you are in trouble. So, there is that piece of the fight.

The other part of the fight is that the fact that I sit inside the A2/AD bubble, and that we are actually on the Asian continent, in South Korea. It is not a Third World country. It is a first world country that can have production—that has production capabilities, and I think we are looking at all avenues of what can we do to sustain ourselves.

But we have got to keep the air and the sea lines of communications open in the fight. It will be a different fight for a fight on the Korean Peninsula in the future.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Admiral Aquilino, you just talked a little about the supplemental. If Putin is successful in Ukraine, I think you said that is a strategic win for the Chinese Communist Party, and you just nodded your head in the affirmative.

Can I conclude from your testimony that failure to pass the supplemental, being a strategic win for Putin and being a strategic win for the Chinese Communist Party, makes conflict in the Indo-Pacific more likely?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. Again, with the linkage of the PRC and Russia as—that we have watched now over the past 2 years, again, I have—I do believe that a strategic win for Putin is a strategic win for President Xi. It certainly makes our problem of deterrence more difficult, and it makes the potential for conflict more likely.

Senator WICKER. You said, I believe I am quoting you correctly a few moments ago, things are trending in the wrong direction for the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Could you enlarge on that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir. What I said is that things are trending in the wrong direction based on their capability, capacity, defense industrial base, their actions and intent by the People's Republic of China.

So, they are continuing to develop their military machine despite an economy that has significant problems. They have increased their defense budget 7.2 percent this year. That is 3 years in a row they have increased it, and I am not sure that is a very transparent number. My assessment is they are actually spending more on defense than they articulate.

So, capability and capacity are increasing. Their actions are becoming much more belligerent. Their rhetoric is more clear. They have now articulated that the feature at Second Thomas Shoal is sovereign territory of the People's Republic of China.

It is not, as validated by the 2016 arbitral ruling that concluded China has no legal claim to that feature, and then on top of that, their enforcement is becoming concerning.

The fire hosing of our Philippine allies, the ramming of their ships, and preventing their ability to resupply their sailors on the Sierra Madre, as well as restricting their ability to utilize the resources inside their exclusive economic zone is all counter to international law, and it is counter to what all nations interpret as the rightful interpretation of UNCLOS.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, that leads me then to ask about the unfunded requirements. Last fiscal year, the Navy asked for \$3.5 billion in unfunded requirements. This year, it has skyrocketed to \$11 billion in unfunded requirements. Now, it is my understanding this is way more than a simple wish list on your part.

Because we have required in the NDAA a couple of years ago an independent assessment. We have required it specifically of INDOPACOM. Look at the National Defense Strategy that is in place for the United States. Look at what you have and give us an independent assessment of what you need. Is that independent assessment report instructive to you in telling us what your unfunded requirements are?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, yes, Senator, first, it is law, so I will deliver that report until you tell me to stop. We have advocated for those capabilities now for 3 years. They have been about 90 plus percent consistent. So, in other words, we haven't shifted the target. We believe we have the right strategy.

We believe we have the right approach, and we have delivered those requirements. Additionally, for the 2-years prior to me, my predecessor was required to deliver a similar—or the same report. Those requirements have been consistent, specifically with, you know, approach to the Guam defense system, the munitions capa-

bilities that we need to sustain our deterrence effects, and then many of the other capabilities, so—

Senator WICKER. We have told you to give us this report, and we have specifically directed that in our NDAA to INDOPACOM, and yet, this Congress has not given you what you have needed, so much of that requirement rolls over to the next Fiscal Year and is—and contributes to the \$11 billion which you have asked for this year.

Admiral AQUILINO. That is correct, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Admiral and General, for the years of service to our country and for the commitment of your families as well. Admiral, we will miss you probably more than you will miss us, actually.

But I think this is a question for you, General LaCamera, and although you both talked about the growing relationship between North Korea and Russia, that has developed since Putin invaded Ukraine, and, but can you elaborate on what that means for the regional reaction and what we are seeing in terms of that ability to empower both North Korea and Russia?

General LACAMERA. Yes, thanks, Senator. It is all—the relationship has always been there. I mean, the Korean War goes back to when both Mao and Kim Il-Sung went to Stalin and asked for permission to invade. Then it fell off when the Soviet Union collapsed, and that relationship or that assistance, which I think contributed to the arduous march of the 90's for DPRK, now it is—there is an opportunity for KGU to have its weapons tested and to provide that support.

He has always gotten support from Russia and China and the United Nations. Over the last couple of years, they have continued to veto any kind of new sanctions, and so diplomatically, he has gotten that support.

Informationally, he has gotten the support. Both have provided exchanges of congratulations, and then militarily, there is now that relationship and they have contributed to the ability for DPRK to avoid sanctions.

Senator SHAHEEN. Are we seeing any reaction from our allies and the other countries in the Indo-Pacific to this relationship, and any greater concern about what is going on there?

General LACAMERA. I meet with the member nation Ambassadors once a month doing an ambassador roundtable and we talk about it, and it is very concerning, that relationship.

Senator SHAHEEN. China and Russia have both gained a strategic advantage over us in terms of information operations and are fighting irregular warfare campaigns against us and our allies. Can you speak to what we need to do to better leverage our ability to combat those information campaigns? I guess, Admiral, this is for you.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, thanks. You know, the execution of propaganda, misinformation and disinformation, is a real concern for me. It should be a real concern for all of the United

States. The PRC's ability to influence our information environment is concerning. I will give you this example, right. So, 2 years ago, you heard a lot about the West is declining, the United States is in decline, and the East is rising. China is rising. All right, that is Chinese propaganda.

Our economy continues to grow. Theirs is in the cellar. So, the actions in the information space—ultimately, it was being reported all over the United States. That is the expansive ability of mis and disinformation to influence the United States.

We ought to understand that it is occurring, and we ought to understand that our free and open media, and the truth that we project is a critical value of the United States. It is one to be protected. But we have to call out the mis and disinformation to stop that ability to influence.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you think we need more authorities, we need more leadership on responding to that? We need a better strategy? Why have we not done better as China and Russia have both really expanded their disinformation operations.

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, when you say we I am going to talk about what we do in INDOPACOM. So, the strategic approach we have taken is to expose the bad and amplify the good. We must continue to tell the story that is right.

The actions that occurred at Second Thomas Shoal at the Philippines is a good example there. The media that the Philippine—our Philippine allies put on the ships to show the PRC actions are important for the world to see. You will not see those videotapes in mainland China.

Their story is completely different, which is, you know, this is an agreement that the Philippines have balked on, and they are taking their action. So again, it is just a good example of what happens.

We have to understand how media is used in the People's Republic of China. Oh, by the way, and in Russia, because it is a similar problem, and in the DPRK. But it is not what we see in our media. We have to understand what is occurring and the differences, we have to value it, and then we have to expose it.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I am out of time, but I did want to thank INDOPACOM for being the leading combatant command on women, peace, and security because I think it gives us a real advantage. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen. Senator Ernst, please. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today. Admiral, thank you for your many years of service. As you mentioned, families are important in this too, so my thanks to them as well. Thank you for providing, Admiral, the Committee with your unfunded requirements list.

Its sheer size indicates a significant gap in what INDOPACOM is being asked to do and what this Administration's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request would equipment to do. Can you highlight some of your missions that would be more challenging to achieve without the items on that unfunded requirements list?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. You know, first, it is worth highlighting that, I don't take lightly when we develop that

list and identify the requirements and we also understand the magnitude. But what we all have to understand is we haven't faced a threat like this since World War II, okay.

The largest military, again, as Senator Wicker said, the world's largest navy, soon to be the world's largest air force. So, the magnitude, scope, and scale of this security challenge cannot be understated. All the missions would be challenged, but some examples. The defense of Guam system is designed to deliver homeland defense to 170,000 American citizens in Guam, as well as the need to deliver combat power if required from Guam.

So, there is a military force generation mission. There is a defense of our allies and partners mission as applied through the mutual defense treaties of the Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Those requirements and our commitment to our allies is the highest level of commitment. The ability to deliver deterrent effects and ensure I am prepared to fight and win if tasked, that is what we have identified on that list.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. I appreciate that it is a, I think, very complete list as well and it is very realistic. I do appreciate your honesty in the information you provide on what you need to keep this country safe and keep the world safer.

So, thank you for that. In your written testimony, you note that the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps still need to procure the types and quantities of munitions required to defeat threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

As a Combatant Commander, how do delays in munitions production or decisions to procure lower quantities of munitions than you require by the operation plans that we have out there, how does that inhibit your ability to field an integrated Joint Force that will be effective against a pure adversary?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. You know, I would say the number one lesson learned for the United States as we watched what the Russians have done in the illegitimate, illegal invasion of Ukraine, the number one lesson we learned is that munitions of the right type and magnitude in the right place, a, delivers a deterrent effect, and b, if we get in a fight will be absolutely needed.

So, this is a lesson learned over many, many years, but highlighted in this recent history as it applies to Ukraine. Those same lessons learned applied in the Indo-Pacific command. So, we need the right numbers and the right types for the problem set that the United States will have.

Those are capabilities, not only the land attack capabilities, but the anti-ship capabilities, anti-air capabilities, and in the magnitude that we need. So critically important, and, you know, I don't want to learn the lesson again.

Senator FISCHER. Sir, in that unfunded priorities list, you included a requirement for an additional \$580.7 million for INDOPACOM campaigning. When you testified before this Committee last year, we discussed the value of campaigning and having persistent forward forces operating with our allies and partners forward every single day.

So, I understand the importance of these types of exercises. Clearly the budget doesn't align with that campaigning though. So,

what happens if there are continued delays and the resources needed to persistently project and maintain forces in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. So critically important and aligned to the strategy in the theater and in the national defense strategy is the theory of campaigning, which is pushing to turn forces forward, operating, exercising and, you know, working every day with our allies and partners forward to deliver those deterrent effects. If those funds are not there, I will just be doing less.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. As I said in the closed session that we had, I want to express my appreciation for both of your service and the tremendous service of everybody who works under your commands.

I would like to ask a couple of questions about submarines, in particular AUKUS. How important is AUKUS in our defense going into the future in deterring China and also providing the capability that the United States needs to defend our allies and ourselves?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, again, additionally, part of our strategy is to bring together and strengthen our alliance and partnerships.

So, AUKUS is a critically important aspect of that. It is a once in a lifetime, once in a generation increase in capability of the Australians. It is worth me highlighting that the Australians are a mutual defense treaty ally. There are critical partner.

The Australians have shared blood and treasure with the United States in every fight we have been in for the last 100 years. So, strengthening their defense. Having them with the exact same capabilities that we have to be interoperable. You know, I see no break in that linkage.

For the Australians to have *Virginia*-class submarines and additional capabilities, we identify in pillar two of the AUKUS agreement, tied with our UK counterparts, that is a critically—let's put it this way, that is a really strong team that if we need to come together, that is very valuable.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Doesn't our reducing the rate of production of submarines send the wrong signal at this point?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, Senator, I have certainly advocated for increased capability of our Joint Force. I have advocated for increased capacity of our Joint Force in all domains. Our undersea capabilities are a significant advantage for the United States, and we ought to consider expanding.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I know you are in a tough position, and I am not asking you for your personal opinion or what the deliberations were that went into the rate—the reduction in the rate of submarine production from two to one per year.

But I think it sends exactly the wrong signal to our allies, not only Australia, but others in the region when we reduce the output of such a critical weapons platform that is vital not only to our own defense, but to deterrence and defense of others in the region.

Would you agree that we ought to increase the rate of production, if possible?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, again, I would—the undersea capabilities that you have articulated, I absolutely need, and I need them at scale, and I need them at speed. This is a whole of nation problem.

Number one, we should resource the requirements as it is needed to deliver those capabilities. But we also need to deliver those capabilities on the timelines that we desire and that we pay for.

So again, I think there is lessons for all of the Nation here as it applies to this specific capability and others. So again, I need the assets operationally, there is no doubt.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. How would you compare, question for both of you, our capability in the artificial intelligence sphere as compared to the PRC?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I am tracking this very closely. I think the United States clearly has an advantage. We need to maintain that advantage, and, you know, when we talk about AI, I always articulate, let's speak more precisely instead of saying AI, right.

So, whether it is target recognition, whether it is autonomous command and control, we have to be specific. That said, we do have an advantage. I work a lot with, Mr. Doug Beck from the Defense Innovative—you know, Innovation Unit.

He supports my efforts to deliver capabilities that we need, and he is a really good asset to help push this forward. But we do have an advantage and we need to maintain it.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. General.

General LACAMERA. Senator, I would agree with that, and we are continuing to work with INDOPACOM, also with the commercial industry, and academia to make sure that we do maintain that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Thank you both. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, let me just begin by thanking both of you for your service to our country.

Admiral Aquilino, I understand this is the last time you are going to be before our Committee, and we thank you very much for your years of service to this country. I have most certainly appreciated your candidness in our closed session regarding the challenges that you face and the need to continue to invest.

Everything that we can do to deter the forces in that region, means that our young men and women are not in harm's way as much as they would be otherwise. So, thank you for that. Let me just begin, Admiral Aquilino, the way that you have discussed the Joint Fires Network makes it sound like an actual joint solution to the problem—to the problem set that the Department has identified and which the JADC2 is supposed to solve.

If so, I am glad that you are leaning forward on this and have submitted it as an unfunded priority. My question to you relates to my concern that each service is apparently deciding its own approach to the joint all-domain command and control program.

We are talking air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace. How and when do you see the Department bringing all of these separate lines of effort together?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thank you, Senator. So first, the services are doing some good work to figure out how to close and maintain the ability, through a kill web mechanism, to close their kill chains.

From the combatant command perspective, we don't do anything in stovepipes. We fight as a Joint Force. So, the approach we have taken with the Joint Fires Network is to pull together a best of breed approach of Project Convergence from the Army, Overmatch from the Navy and Marine Corps, and then ABMS from the Air Force, along with the DARPA aspect of Assault Break II, to pull all those together and deliver a real near time, best of breed solution to be able to command and control the Joint Force and ultimately close the kill chain.

I think what this is—the way we have articulated it and linked it with the building, Senator is, you know, we are going to kind of provide some insights into the further development of JADC2 as it goes forward.

So, we are completely linked. We participate in utilize it in the guide series of experiments that Deputy Secretary Hicks has been running. We think it will be informative, but ultimately I am going to produce a prototype, if you will, that will be demonstrated in our next big exercise this year to see where we are, what we are doing, is it right, is it at scale?

We have also pulled in what CENTCOM has been doing, and we have pulled in what General Cavoli has been doing in EUCOM in support of Ukraine. So, our lens is this is a best of breed and a pretty good indicator on what we think the future should look like.

Senator ROUNDS. When we talk about all of the domains, we are assuming that our adversaries in the region will do their best to limit our capabilities in multiple domains, whether it is cyber or whether it is space. In our particular case, we have adversaries who prepare to fight and in an armed conflict there will be no limitations with regard to any domain.

We will be at war, and the war will be in all domains, including cyberspace and space itself. Accurate to say? The reason why I ask that is because we talk about a kill web now rather than a kill chain, recognizing multiple ways.

Can you expand a little bit on that? I am going to ask you to be a little bit brief because I have one question that I really want to get to, to General LaCamera on as well.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir. The kill web is critical, right, because we do expect the adversary to try to break our kill chains. We need multiple paths, multiple dimensions. We need to be resilient. We need to deliver and close those kill chains. So. Absolutely required.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Admiral, and I appreciate your directness on that. General LaCamera, from where I said a quiet day on the Korean peninsula is truly a great day.

Our relationship with the Republic of Korea and with the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission, is a large credit to why we have had a lasting peace since 1950. We have been there, but we have been there, and we have been able to maintain peace.

While these relationships have been established for decades, are there any policy barriers that hinder your command's ability to

fully integrate partner nation family personnel into your community programs such as schools.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. It is not a policy. It is really I need the NDAA changed to read a space—from space available to space required for our schools for our UNC member nations.

Senator ROUNDS. It is a simple change, but it is one that would be very important in terms of maintaining that relationship.

General LACAMERA. We haven't had to turn anybody away, but we can't guarantee it for them. Obviously the families are important and there is angst in those families until we can tell them that, yes, we have a school slot for them.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Senator Rounds. On behalf of Chairman Reed, I recognize Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. I would like to ask some questions about alliances. First, I will stress the questions that Senator Blumenthal asked about the capacity that AUKUS helps deliver us in the region.

I won't go into it because I thought, Admiral Aquilino, your answer was very robust there. I have worked with many of the colleagues on this Committee and on the Foreign Relations Committee to get the AUKUS framework in law, and I am really happy with the first set of authorities we put in the NDAA, but we do need to get the supplemental passed, as you indicated.

Let me ask a question about another alliance that I think the Committee understands, but sometimes the public doesn't, and General LaCamera, I would like to ask you about Japan and South Korea. When the President, President Biden, had the Camp David summit with the political leadership of the two countries, it was a headline in the United States, but most people saw it and thought, well, Japan is an ally and Korea is an ally.

So, in the U.S., I don't think it was seen as a big deal. But it is a big deal because Japan and South Korea have had a lot of challenges based on tough, tough history, and the—in closing—the increasing closeness of that relationship, both at the political level and at the military level, is a big deal.

I would like you to talk a little bit about how this relationship getting closer and the U.S. role in helping achieve a rapprochement is giving us a strong set of alliances and an increasing deterrence capacity in the Indo-Pacific.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. I will open with, we have got to have the humility to know that we can't solve the historical differences between the two nations, but we have to do our best to continue to work together with them.

We have to have the emotional intelligence to see it from both sides as we go forward. The true existential threat to the Republic of Korea and Japan is not World War II imperial Japan, it is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with nuclear weapons pointed at both countries, and quite frankly, our country.

So, I think, you know, that and our ability to train and it is, you know, what do we reveal and what do we conceal? You know, how do we reassure, the South Korean people? How do we reassure the people of Japan of the importance of that relationship?

The Korea theater of operations is pretty tight. The Admiral has been talking about some of these weapons systems that are out there. We are all inside an A2/AD /bubble, both countries, and we have got to continue to work together for the security of all three nations.

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, can I—comment. So, it is absolutely worth highlighting the leadership of President Yoon and Prime Minister Kishida to move to where we are today with the trilateral relationships.

Without their leadership—and I sat with both of them, and I thank them for it, but the security environment dictates we are stronger together. We can defend each other's nations. As a matter of fact, as we sit here today, we have a United States ballistic missile defense ship, a Japanese ballistic missile defense ship, and a Korea, South Korean ballistic missile defense ship operating in the area with the expectation of a potential launch by North Korea to defend all three of our nations.

That is where we move this ball, and again, General LaCamera's work has been critical, but the President and Prime Minister's leadership cannot be understated.

Senator KAINE. I am glad you emphasize that. Let me move to another topic. 2024 is the 30th anniversary of the effective date of the U.N. convention on the law of the sea. It was written in the 1980's.

Sufficient nations ratified by 1994 for it to go into effect. The U.S. follows the convention but has never ratified it. The fact that we haven't ratified it means that we lose opportunities, for example, to claim mineral rights at deep seabed. Those opportunities have shrunk while other nations have grown, even at our expense.

The fact that we haven't ratified also means that we are unable to take enforcement actions or press against illegal activities by nations like China that would violate the convention.

There has been a pretty steady drumbeat of support for the U.N. convention from defense secretaries, DHS secretaries, Secretaries of State, military leadership under Administrations of both parties over the last 30 years, but it has particularly picked up in the last 10 years, indicating that it would be wise, it would be in the U.S.'s interest if we join the more than 150 nations that acceded to that convention.

Is that, Admiral Aquilino, as you finish, you know, 40 plus years of service, including service in the INDOPACOM in this most recent important chapter of your professional career, do you share the view that the U.S. joining the convention would be a smart thing for us to do?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. So, for 3 years, INDOPACOM and all of my hearings and meetings with Congress, I have advocated for the ratification of UNCLOS. For the 3-years before that, as the Pacific Fleet Commander, I have advocated for it, and in the years before that as well. So, it absolutely puts us on the right foot as it applies to the security environment, there is no doubt.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks, gentlemen, very much for being here today. Admiral Aquilino, we wish you the best in your next chapter, and thank you so much for your service. Admiral Aquilino, as the Combatant Commander for INDOPACOM, you do have a lot on your plate. You have heard from my colleagues.

We understand the threat that China poses as our pacing threat. In July, I have received back some RFIs from SOCOM, and they stated that global Combatant Commanders will require more SOF forces in great power competition.

That same RFI stated that the United States Army's force structure cuts to SOF enablers will increase risk to operational commanders. Specifically, cuts to the SOF formation decrease our ability to meet Combatant Commanders' requirements.

Admiral, do you agree with SOCOM's assessment that you will need more SOF forces in great power competition?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. It is good to see you again. So, General Fenton has been a great partner for a number of years.

So, as we look at laying down the correct posture and Indo-Pacific Command in order to deter conflict, there is an absolute SOF component of that, and it has increased as we have laid out, what do we believe we need in place. General Fenton has supported that.

So, our posture has increased. Again, I can't speak to the other combatant commands. But I have also put my money where my mouth is because I have a—my senior enlist advisor is sitting behind me is a Navy Seal, so I needed some SOF too in the headquarters.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely. Thank you. So, you would agree, Admiral, that those relationships that those SOF personnel develop in your region are extremely important. Is that correct?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, ma'am. Their ability to operate persistently with our partners for training, for increasing of combat capability, and then ultimately, should there be conflict, to have them in the right place is critically important to me.

Senator ERNST. Very good, and throughout the morning, I have heard my colleagues talk about relationships and how important they are. Whether that is nation to nation, member to member, mil to mil, all of that is very important.

So, I have worked with a number of members in a bipartisan way here on some of the COFA nations and the Convene Act. Can you speak to the relationship that those COFA nations have and how that help stabilize the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, ma'am. Before I do that, I do want to thank you for passing the COFA agreement with the funding required. That was critically important to our national security.

We defend those islands like they are our Homeland. Those COFA states contribute more military members per capita than anywhere else. We value their service and their importance. But bottom line is the right force in the right place at the right time to deliver the right effect. That is what we look at.

In many cases, those are SOF forces. Especially with smaller nations, they can go in. Or if they don't have militaries, there is an opportunity for our SOF to work with police forces and other island capabilities that provide benefit.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much, and General LaCamera, kind of staying on the theme of these relationships, I am going to throw you a little bit of a softball. This was not a scripted question but because I know that you have a personal relationship with the person I am going to reference, and he is a hero to many.

The last remaining Medal of Honor recipient from the Korean War is Colonel Ralph Puckett, and the Korean President, President Moon, South Korean President, President Moon was here in May 2021 during that ceremony at the White House where Colonel Puckett was given his Medal of Honor.

Can you speak just briefly in the minute I have left about the significance of the President being here from South Korea during that award ceremony? Tell us a little bit about Colonel Puckett and his service to South Korea and the United States so that we can honor him today.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. Yes, Colonel Puckett, if there is one thing he taught me many years ago as a Lieutenant all the way up as my Honorary Colonel of the regiment, the ranger regiment is that combat is simple blocking and tackling.

So, picture yourself, brand new, Second Lieutenant, sail over to South Korea. Land in the Pusan Perimeter and are told to stand up a ranger company as a Second Lieutenant. He stands it up, he fights.

He is wounded. He tells his folks to leave him there. He still, from his wounds, I think he still had many surgeries, and they still leak. He is a national treasure. Hard as woodpecker's lips.

[Laughter.]

General LACAMERA. We would always find him down there in a snowstorm correcting the machine gunners on what to do going forward.

So, the fact that the President of the United States and I believe was President Moon was there to present him the Medal of Honor—or he was there when he got the United States Medal of Honor, and then last year, during the State visit, he received the Korean version of that.

His service is legendary all the way through. I think if you were to talk maybe even to Chairman Reed who probably remembers Colonel Puckett at the Academy, Ranger Puckett. He is probably starting to sweat right now.

So, he has mentored and tormented many of us to this location, and he is a national treasure, so thank you.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, General LaCamera. I think he is pretty outstanding, and I had you tell his story because I want folks to recognize that so many of these relationships through so many eras of conflict, that the United States has always been a leader. The men and women that serve in uniform have been recognized by so many nations around the globe. We do face eras of isolationism as well.

It is incredibly important that we maintain leadership around the globe. Our sons and daughters are going forward. They are sacrificing so much for our Nation. But we are being recognized by those nations as well.

Those relationships matter. They will always matter. So, thank you for taking time to honor Colonel Puckett today. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, how does Kim hang on? GDP per capita in North Korea is \$2,000, and in South Korea it is \$35,000. If you go back to the time of the Korean War, the GDP per capita in North Korea is essentially flat and South Korea is a hockey stick. Do the people in North Korea not know the extent to which they are being compromised by their government?

General LACAMERA. Simple answer is, Senator, they have no idea what is on the outside world. He maintains power because he controls information in and controls information out.

Senator KING. They literally don't—they don't have access to the internet or radio broadcasts from other countries? I mean, it is hard to believe that—the border, I mean, the border of North Korea is about 30 miles from Seoul, as you know, and it is hard to believe that they just don't—they don't know the extent to which, as I said, they are being compromised. I am being polite by using the word compromised.

General LACAMERA. Senator, I have read several books on the defectors and met a couple of them, and even knowing what they know right now to go back, they would still go back. I mean, it is tremendous. He is treated as a deity. The brainwashing that has occurred is pretty powerful.

Senator KING. It is astonishing. Admiral Aquilino, I want to give you a hypothetical. You were talking a few minutes about—a few minutes ago about disinformation of the Chinese Communist Party.

What if the Chinese Communist Party came to this country and said, we would like to create an app that 150 million Americans will use, we will have access to all of their data, and it will give us a platform for information and disinformation and propaganda.

Do you think that would be a good idea for us to welcome that hypothetical idea?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I am incredibly, cautious of anything that comes out of the People's Republic of China, specifically in the information space. It is a forum for them to take advantage of our freedom of speech and information, to push and sell their thoughts, ideas, and ability to influence the American public.

Senator KING. This is their policy, is it not? This isn't just something that is random. They have a concrete, deliberate policy of trying to influence us and other countries through information and disinformation.

Admiral AQUILINO. Absolutely it is a part of their strategy—are using the information space to achieve their strategic objectives, and the information space is incredibly strong. The irony of it is their system is so closed without freedom of speech that they are taking advantage of our system of freedom of speech to further their strategic objectives.

Senator KING. It is geopolitical jujitsu. They are using our strength against us, and to go back to my hypothetical, do you

think would be a good idea to allow that app to be on 150 million Americans' phones?

Admiral AQUILINO. I can tell you that in INDOPACOM, I would not allow any of those apps on any of our systems.

Senator KING. I think that speaks volumes. Thank you very much, Admiral, and thank you both for your service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Gentlemen, thank you both for being here, and Admiral in particular, thank you for your final appearance.

I know that is really bittersweet that you won't get to testify before Congress anymore, but I will have you back as a civilian expert 1 day in the future. We have heard a few questions this morning about lessons that Xi Jinping might be taking from the war in Ukraine. I don't think we have heard yet about what is happening in the Middle East.

In particular General—or Admiral Aquilino, I would like to know what lessons you think the Chinese may have learned from watching our largely defensive response to the Iranian backed Houthi attacks on freedom of navigation and commerce in the Red Sea?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think what they have—what they are leveraging and what they learned, Senator, is that the United States is a global power designed to protect the international rules based order in a way that benefit all of the globe, right.

So, the free flow of commerce through the Bab-el-Mandeb, the Red Sea, is an important issue for all nations, and the United States, as the enforcer and supporter of that, they have watched us deliver that effect.

They have taken no action to do that, despite the fact that having—they have three ships there and they have not contributed to the benefit of the global flow of commerce or what it means to all nations.

That ought to be pretty telling to all of us, and they are perfectly comfortable with us doing it. At the same time trying to articulate the United States as an aggressor around the globe, right. It is the example of real, or what is real, versus what they are portraying in the information space that we talked about.

Senator COTTON. Do you think they are fearful or emboldened by the response we have had against the Houthi aggression there?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think they are happy that we have had to take action, and they view it as any distraction for the United States is a benefit for the People's Republic of China. So that is how I think they are looking at it.

Senator COTTON. Okay, let's turn to Taiwan. Do you think the existing Presidential drawdown authority for Taiwan is adequate?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think it is a good start. I think we have identified a lot of the capabilities that are needed to meet the responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act.

I think that—I know for a fact that the Secretary and the Deputy, we have a process in place to review those and ensure that we are getting to the right capabilities at the right magnitude.

Hopefully, again my advocacy is for at the right speed, and I thank the Congress for including that in the supplemental. It is critically important.

Senator COTTON. We have provided \$1 billion in drawdown authority. So far, the Administration has only used \$345 million of that. Do you think they should use the full \$1 billion?

Admiral AQUILINO. Absolutely. I think there is a plan for that. I think there is an ability to produce some of those things that might be part of the slowdown, Senator, and this is about, like I said before, right, all parts of our Government and our industry have to get together and move faster.

Senator COTTON. The 2023 NDAA provided authority to establish a regional contingency stockpile of American weapons in Taiwan. Would that be helpful?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think that would certainly be helpful toward our responsibility under the Taiwan Relations Act.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Let's get to the bottom line about Taiwan and why it matters. Some people might say, well, Taiwan is just a tiny island, it is so far away, and Communist China claims it as part of its own territory.

Why would it really matter? Like, why should the United States be willing to risk our sons and daughters? Why should we make the massive investment in deterrent capability in your region to stop China from invading and annexing Taiwan? What is the big deal? Could you explain why it matters, Admiral?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, sir. There is a variety of reasons why it matters. First, as it applies to the rules and the rule of law that we follow and adhere to, that has made the world a better place, that has allowed for the prosperity of all nations in the post-World War II environment, that would be under attack, first of all.

That ties all the way to the illegal invasion of Ukraine, right. That is an assault on the rules based order. So, critically important. Second, the democracy, the thriving democracy that exists there, the values, freedom of navigation, all of the things that we value, and the United States' interests are tied to that.

Third, the ability of the United States in the current way semi-conductors are laid out is critically important for all industry and all the things that we have inside the United States, when you look at 90 plus percent of high end chips emit from Taiwan. So, those are just three quick reasons on why it is important.

Senator COTTON. Douglas MacArthur, in a famous memorandum at the outset of the Korean War, referred to Taiwan as an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender. Could you explain a little bit to why General MacArthur thought Taiwan was such critical terrain from a military standpoint?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, certainly it is strategic in its location, fairly close to Japan, close to the Philippines, and in a place where two thirds of the global economy transits in the vicinity of—as it applies to the global need for transport of goods and services.

So, again, it is a strategic location that could have advantages if you were to plant excess of military capabilities on it to restrict or potentially restrict the flow of goods and services.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Cotton. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here, and Admiral Aquilino, thank you very much to you and your family for your decades of service. My very best to you in your future endeavors.

Also, thank you for the courtesies extended to me and my staff during your leadership in INDOPACOM. You noted several times about the linkage between the PRC and Russia, and just as that alliance is very important to those two nations, our allies are very important. In the INDOPACOM area, we have Japan, South Korea, Philippines, India, the United Nations.

Our allies are very important to us, and that is why it is important for us to stand with our allies. You have been asked a number of questions about the need for us to support Ukraine, and that is because our allies are important to us and that—every day that goes by that we are not providing the needed support for Ukraine strengthens Putin's hand and therefore, also, Xi Jinping's. Would you agree with that?

Admiral AQUILINO. I do, Senator. Again, a strategic win for President Putin in Ukraine is a strategic win for President Xi in China, and the allies are so important. We are stronger when we are together. There is no doubt. The linkage of our values, our beliefs are critically important.

Senator HIRONO. That is why are not funding Ukraine is very much of interest to Xi Jinping, not to mention Putin, of course. You also mentioned that the PRC's military buildup, which has been going on for quite a while.

I think our asymmetric advantage, if you want to describe it that way, in terms of our assets, our planes, our ships, et cetera, has been our technological capabilities and our assets.

So do you think we are doing a good job in maintaining our technological advantage in terms of we may have fewer ships, we may have fewer planes, but our technological advantage is there. Do you think we are doing a good job to maintain our technological advantage?

Admiral AQUILINO. I do believe, Senator first let me just say, we have the world's greatest fighting force that has ever been seen. That advantage has helped us keep the peace in many places for decades.

We do have a technological advantage that is second to none, and the key is maintaining it, because the People's Republic of China intends on closing that advantage and ultimately moving in front of us.

Senator HIRONO. I think you know that over the years I have been very a focus on the missile defense of Hawaii, and I would just ask you very quickly, there is a provision directing the DOD to develop a comprehensive plan for missile defense of Hawaii. Do you think that Hawaii is currently protected from ballistic cruise and hypersonic threats?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, as you know, it is my responsibility to defend Hawaii. I take that responsibility very, you know, clearly and of critical importance. Hawaii is defended from ballistic missiles. Hawaii will be defended from cruise missiles should there be

a threat that shows itself in the vicinity, and no one is defended from hypersonic missiles as we sit here today.

Senator HIRONO. Not yet. Working on it, I know. I also note in your written testimony that you address the establishment of the Joint Task force, regarding Red Hill.

I want to commend you for the leadership that you have provided and working with the community, and you acknowledge the importance of rebuilding trust in the local community with regard to Red Hill. But it goes for our military installations, not just in Hawaii, but everywhere and the need to build community support, and so, I commend you for your acknowledging that.

You were also asked about our recent support for the COFAs. Now, that agreement took many years to reside. Is there anything more we can do to support, in addition to the funds that are—will be provided to Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau in this agreement, are there more things we can do to support these island nations, which serve as a bulwark against China in the Indo-Pacific AOR?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Thanks. You know, we have worked with all of those island nations to do a couple of things. Number one, make sure that they can understand their maritime domain awareness and have situational awareness when threats might be in their vicinity. So that is one aspect.

Second, we have provided some understanding on, you know, what might it mean for increased storm severity and other environmental issues that would impact, and we have helped on the construction side to ensure that anything that the Department of Defense builds is resilient against any of those threats.

Third, we provide assistance like in Palau, we have a deployment of Seabees that go there and support the future cooperation that we do militarily, as well as from other community service events. So that is what right looks like to me, and we got to continue to do that.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Admiral, I want to thank you and your wife, Laura, for your exceptional service over the years. I want to extend my wife and I, our appreciation to you and your family, and your daughters. You have done a really, really exceptional job.

So, you are going to be miss. I hope you don't go very far away, and General, thank you for your continued great service as well. I want to dig into the supplemental a little bit more. I know you have gotten a lot of questions on it, but I ended up supporting that bill. It wasn't perfect.

There is a lot of things I didn't like about it, but I did it primarily because if you look at it, it is actually primarily focused about rebuilding our brittle industrial capacity to produce weapons and weapon systems for our own military, for our own defense, and enhance our industrial base, which unfortunately has atrophied. It includes the capacity to produce everything from subs. \$3 billion for subs, but with AUKUS, it is actually \$6 billion—\$6 billion.

It is \$5 billion for 155 millimeter Howitzers ammo, and it is everything from anti-ship systems, Harpoons, Tomahawks, HARMSs, switchblades, it has all in this. 60 percent of this bill goes to building our industrial base.

So, with that, would our military and Taiwan's, and our industrial ability to deter a war in the Taiwan Strait be enhanced by passing this defense industrial bill?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, absolutely, and I appreciate the support of you and the Congress to identify those needs, again, both whether they are for Ukraine or directed toward the Indo-Pacific, as you point out. They absolutely, that bill absolutely supports the increased industrial base requirements for ships, submarines, weapons, and other things. Critically important.

Senator SULLIVAN. General, on the Korean Peninsula as well? I mean, \$5 billion for 155 millimeter Howitzer rounds produced in America. That is not insignificant.

General LACAMERA. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. So without it, you would think we would have less deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula?

Admiral AQUILINO. The funding in that bill is absolutely critical.

Senator SULLIVAN. General.

General LACAMERA. Yes, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. You know, one criticism of the defense supplemental is it does not prioritize the correct demand signal for the threats we face, including in the INDOPACOM theater. I find a little curious, since I worked directly with you and your team, Admiral, to shape the bill to give you the weapons systems that you think you need.

I would say you are probably the most expert person probably in the world on what you need to deter a war in the Taiwan Strait. So, you think that criticism is accurate, that it doesn't hit the correct demand signal that you need since you shape the bill? I know that for a fact since we worked on it.

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, from my review, again, as it applies to the items I have required or asked for in the independent assessment for 3 years, 1,254 last year, and a 1,302 this year, that bill absolutely gets after my requirements.

Senator SULLIVAN. Another, one of the views of some of the critics is that we shouldn't focus on assisting Ukraine because that takes away from defending and deterring a war in the Taiwan Strait. So, Putin can roll over Ukraine, but will be strong in the Taiwan Strait. Does deterrence work that way in your experience?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, sir. As I have testified, the global threats are inextricably linked.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, deterrence isn't divisible. You can't be strong in the Taiwan Strait but let an authoritarian role over someone we are trying to support in other part of the world. Do you think that works?

Admiral AQUILINO. No, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. General, do you think that works that way? Deterrence? It is divisible? We will be strong here, but weak over there, but everything is going to be good.

General LACAMERA. No, Senator. The world is getting smaller, not larger.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask one final question, and it goes to this Administration's focus on these issues. Admiral, you have, I think, done a great job in this billet, so thank you again. But you have been talking about overmatched. You have been talking about trending in the wrong direction. You just said we haven't faced a threat like this, that is China, since World War II. To me, this is the 1930's all over again.

Authoritarian dictators are on the march. They are very aggressive. We have seen this movie before. The big differences in the late 30's and early 40's, before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt undertook a massive rebuilding of our military, tripled the size of the U.S. Navy. A lot of people don't know that.

By December 1941, we had actually tripled the size of the U.S. Navy. So, we were on the way. Unfortunately, this Administration and this President are putting forward budgets that shrink the Navy year after year.

President Biden recently in the State the Union said, hey, this is a really dangerous world. I am like President Roosevelt. No, he is not. No, he is not. He is going in the exact wrong direction. He is shrinking the Navy, shrinking the Army, shrinking the Marine Corps.

This budget pushes the building of a new carrier by 2 years. As Senator Blumenthal mentioned, it goes to one sub a year, which nobody thinks is a good idea.

So what kind of message do you think, as we are talking about deterrence, to Xi Jinping or Putin, a Biden administration budget, third year in a row, that shrinks the military, shrinks the Navy, is sending to our adversaries and I know it is difficult question for you, but did you support of a budget that pushes the carrier industrial base building out and brings us down to one sub a year, which again, nobody on this Committee thinks is a good idea?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, as I have laid out to the Committee that, you know, my view of the threat and it has increased both capability and capacity with no signs of slowing down. I certainly have advocated for a couple of things. Number one, no reduction in combat power from the Indo Pacific theater.

Senator SULLIVAN. Are you game being overmatched right now?

Admiral AQUILINO. Right now, again, I am confident in our forces that in crisis or conflict now, the United States would prevail, but the trend is going in the wrong direction. So, I have advocated for increased capability, the modernization we need and the capacity we need to maintain overmatch.

Senator SULLIVAN. One final question, and you mentioned 7 percent increase, I agree with you, of the Chinese budget. It is probably much more. We had a hearing with the DNI and the DIA Lieutenant General. It was classified, but I am going to say what they said because they have not gotten back to me.

They actually said they thought it was over \$700 billion. I have asked them to come and help make that public and explain it. Really important for the people of this country to know \$700 billion from the Chinese probably, or maybe more.

They have never gotten back to me, so if the DNI or the DIA Director, they are listening, they should get back to me on this, make this public. Do you have an estimate of what they are producing,

either of you, annually? I know they say 7 percent. It is probably double that. What do you think?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I don't know if I have an estimate. Again, I don't know if it is even worth comparing, right. The issue is what is coming off the assembly line, and it is significant. You know, 10 warships, high end warships alone this year. Cruisers, destroyers. Full rate production for J-20's. Increased missile system, satellite systems. To me, that is the metric. Thank you.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, you two are no strangers to the threat that cryptocurrency poses to our national security. As both of you have previously testified, North Korea is using crypto to steal money, evade sanctions, and to fund its nuclear weapons program. In 2022 alone, North Korea stole at least, at least \$1.7 billion worth of crypto.

That is about 6 percent of North Korea's entire economy and as much as a quarter of their annual defense budget. You know, that is a lot of weapons that North Korea is able to build and fire off, paid for by crypto crime. In fact, let's put this in terms of missiles.

Admiral Aquilino, help me out here, do you know how many intercontinental ballistic missiles North Korea can test with \$1.7 billion?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I don't have that specific calculation, but it is more than we would like.

Senator WARREN. It is more than we would like. I like that, but let's do a little math just because it is fun to look at these numbers and eye opening. So, it cost North Korea about \$30 million to test an ICBM.

These are long range missiles that North Korea desperately wants because it could give them the ability to target the U.S. mainland. At \$30 million a test, \$1.7 billion is enough to pay for more than 56 ICBM tests. So, does that surprise you, Admiral?

Admiral AQUILINO. It does not.

Senator WARREN. So North Korea is stealing about 56 ICBMs worth of crypto in a single year, and the threat is not letting up. Just last week, in a span of 2 days, North Korea laundered more than \$23 million worth of crypto that it stole.

Now, North Korea isn't the only one using crypto to threaten the United States and its interests. Dangerous actors all over the world are using crypto to steal and to finance their illegal activities. One example, pig butchering.

Pig butchering is a crypto scam where scammers, often based in China or Southeast Asia, use fake identities to lure people into weeks and even months long online relationships, fattening them up like hogs for slaughter, before tricking them into sending crypto.

General LaCamera, I think you have some experience with this crypto scam. Would you be willing to talk about it for just a minute?

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. Not necessarily with crypto scamming me personally, but I do have some experience with being swatted and the number of social media impersonations that are out there. But I have seen that my face has been used for scamming.

Senator WARREN. Yes, to try to lure people in and think they are dealing with you on this, you know. You have lots of company on this. Last year, more than 40,000 people in the United States lost more than \$3.5 billion in pig butchering crypto scams that we know of.

Now, pig butchering is just one scam. There are many more. A recent study found that these criminal gangs have stolen and laundered more than \$75 billion in crypto in just the last 4 years.

So General LaCamera, would making it more difficult for criminals and rogue states to use crypto to steal and to launder funds strengthen our national security?

General LACAMERA. That would be a qualified yes, but yes.

Senator WARREN. Yes. Okay. I will take yes. Admiral Aquilino, do you agree with that?

Admiral AQUILINO. I do, Senator. I have over 200 fake websites put out on me every month, of which many are soliciting dollars from people who can be fooled.

Senator WARREN. Yes, yes. You know, crypto is the way the stuff is financed and it is helping rogue states. It is helping terrorists. It is helping criminal organizations fund their operations on a scale like we have never seen before.

I have got a bipartisan bill, Republicans and Democrats, with 20 Senators that would put a stop to it. I think it is time to pass this bill. One last note, I am almost out of time but General Aquilino, your command failed to provide this Committee with the information required by law to justify your wish lists.

I remain deeply concerned that unfunded priorities lists are distracting us from making the most of our resources and focusing on grabbing more money for defense contractors. So, we need to get that cleaned up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On time.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. Chairman. Admiral, General, thank you for your service. Admiral Aquilino, thank you for—good luck with your retirement.

I am sure you will be moving to Florida soon. Hope you enjoy it. Price is a little high right now, so I would be patient on buying a house. Last August, had the opportunity to visit to INDOPACOM, hear firsthand how threats posed by Communist China are impacting the United States, especially the Philippines. I had the opportunity to go look at what the Chinese are doing out in the Shoals, so.

On that visit it was clear that America cannot take its eyes off of the regional increased aggression shown by Communist China. It reinforced my confidence that we got the best military in the world, but we got a pretty—we got we got a pretty formal opponent, and they are out to destroy our way of life.

I am increasingly interested in the congested logistics fight, and not just in Pacific, but globally. We are going to have to—if we end up in a conflict, we are going to have to resource critical capabilities and we are going to need—in the first few hours and few days of a conflict, they are going to be decisive, probably in a great power war.

Our goal is, I think all of us want to make sure INDOPACOM is ready to get everything they need for the fight. The last time we fought a great power war in the Western Pacific, we were surprised and not ready. Navy reserve logistic squadrons were not even established until 5 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

But finally, transport squadrons grew to 540 aircraft and 26,000 personnel devoted to the Navy's airborne logistics mission and defeating the Japanese. In the case of the Navy, are you counting on Navy transport squadrons to move logistics into and throughout the Western Pacific, which is thousands of miles?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I am actually counting on all logistics capabilities to support this problem across half the globe. I want to thank Congress for the authorization for the 10 additional tankers, the console tankers. We intend to use those as well.

So maritime sealift, the MSC forces that the Navy provides a critically important. I have also advocated with General Van Ovost for not only the tankers, but for strategic airlift at a capacity that will be acceptable. As well as airborne refueling capability. All three of those have been identified as critical needs for INDOPACOM.

Senator SCOTT. So, the Air Force has recapitalized about 50 percent of their C-130's. The Marine Corps has done 100 percent. The Navy hasn't had the opportunity to recapitalize any of its 32 year old fleet. Does that concern you?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, the need for intra-theater lift—again, when you talk about half the globe, the modernization of those airplanes is important, and I certainly advocate for all the services to be able to provide those capabilities when needed.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think overall that we are heading in the right direction?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think as we work toward modernization, we have the right view. We have to work at speed, and we have to all get on board.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Scott. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, thank you both for your service. Admiral Aquilino, I want to echo the comments made by many of my colleagues here. Thank you for your 40 plus years of service to the Nation.

We wish you well in your next endeavors wherever they lead you but appreciate your service. This question is really is for both of you, and it deals with the continuing need for global stability with all of the challenges that we have, particularly in INDOPACOM. But the Army's new multi-domain task force, I believe, is probably the centerpiece of the Army's efforts to respond to these varied global challenges, as I said, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

When forward positioned, these task forces will enable the U.S. military to freely operate within a very contested environment. So, I would like both of you to respond, if you can elaborate a little bit, on the critical role that these multi-domain task forces are going to have in the Indo-Pacific region and how do they facilitate your ability to safely maneuver Joint Forces within your commands?

Chairman REED. Yes, thanks, Senator. So, first, I will thank General George, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General McConville for it, before him on, developing and having the vision for an MDTF, critically important in my theater. As we implement it, the key for that task force is to deliver all the capabilities that have been designed to go with it.

So, the anti-air capabilities, the anti-ship, and anti-land attack capabilities that go with it. Those are some of the things we have to go faster and deliver to those MDTFs to realize the entire warfighting capability of that force. But I am absolutely supportive of what the Army has done to contribute to my theater.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you, General.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. Well, I don't own one of the MDTFs. We do think of it—and, you know, that is the noun. I do, do the verb, multi-domain operations, and since we already sit inside the A2/AD bubble, it is a little bit of a different problem set for me to solve. But the next fight is going to be combined, joint, interagency, and it is going to be multi-domain, and, you know, I will probably be asking the Admiral for one of them, if hostilities begin again.

Senator PETERS. Very good. Thank you, General. Admiral, the Air Force plans to invest \$5.8 billion over the next 5 years with the goal of fielding 1,000 collaborative, combat aircraft by 2030.

Now, these CCAs will clearly play a significant role in any future combat, particularly in a contested environment, and successfully operating in these impermissible areas will require joint training across Active Duty, Reserve, as well as guard components in a wide range of environments, which will, mimic potential conflict zones.

So, my question, for you, sir, is how do you envision these collaborative combat aircraft being utilized and integrated into the Indo-Pacific? Then specifically drilling down a little bit, how could active duty, reserve, and guard components best prepare for this CCA integration and training, given the near-term threat that we have in your command now?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So, when I think about CCAs, that is one aspect of the all-domain, unmanned, collaborative, cooperative, and ultimately integrated all domain capabilities to be able to prevent conflict in my theater.

So along with the CCAs, right, there is unmanned undersea, on the sea. Those are above the sea, and that is absolutely aligned with the approach that we believe will be valuable to both deter and then fight and would, if need be.

So, I am certainly supportive of the CCA piece. Again, on a common theme, faster, faster, faster. I am not sure 2030 is soon enough. So, we have to do that. As it applies to the training, I am confident that the Air Force will design an approach such that all Forces, Active, Reserve, Guard, can be trained and ready to employ.

From my seat, I don't separate those. We have a total force concept, and in my perfect world, it doesn't matter if it is an Active Duty, Reservist, or a Guardsman. When they show up, they are ready to fight, and they are ready to execute their mission set. So that is what I rely on Air Force to deliver.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman. Admiral, again, and General, good to see you both. Go to an Air Force asset, do you consider the F-15 Strike Eagle to be a capable aircraft? Is there a use case for F-15s in the Indo-Pacific operating in concert with Gen-5 fighters?

Admiral AQUILINO. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator BUDD. In its fiscal year 2025 budget, Air Force plans to divest 26 F-15 Strike Eagles, and at the same time buying less than expected F-35, F-15EXs and other fighters. So, are you concerned about the increasing fighter gap, or the fighter capacity gap with China?

Admiral AQUILINO. I am absolutely concerned.

Senator BUDD. Different topic, Admiral. The 2023 NDAA required the DOD to establish a standing Joint Force headquarters at INDOPACOM. That requirement included a deadline for the JTF to be set up by October 2024. Could you give us a status on the efforts to establish that JTF and any obstacles you might be facing, and any assistance that we could provide?

Admiral AQUILINO. At this point, Senator, I think we are on path. My view of the command and control in the theater has evolved over 3 years, and we can talk about some of that in the classified level.

That I can tell you is, I advocated and stood up JTF Micronesia as a way to, number 1, align our capabilities in Guam. number 2, that was in the near term. In the mid-term it was designed to be a forward station warfighting JTF headquarters, and what I have learned is that I don't think that happens soon enough.

So, I have proposed and am briefing out throughout my leadership an approach to put in place a permanent joint task force headquarter construct. At this point, I haven't identified any needs, but I will always inform Congress as it applies and goes forward, and you will see that in any follow on report requirements that you direct me to deliver.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. Now, my colleagues have already asked about funding for munitions, and I believe that you have requested \$3.3 billion for military construction in the Indo-Pacific Area of Responsibility. So, what kind of projects will this request money go toward and where will it be located?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I will give you all the details, but right now we are looking at 212 projects across the entire theater in almost every nation.

Those fundings are required, and they support our partners and allies' ability to build out their infrastructure such that we can operate with them in places that are needed. But it applies to runways, seaports, fuel capability, munitions storage. Those are the key aspects of it.

Senator BUDD. You mentioned in runaways, but is it fair to say that these investments, particularly in things like airfields for dispersed operations, will be key to deterring China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Absolutely.

Senator BUDD. So why weren't these items included as part of the Air Force, Army, and Navy's respective budget request?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator, that is a better question for the service components.

Senator BUDD. Admiral, the Administration says that it's prioritizing China in its pace—as its pacing challenge, but you have just sent us a list of unfunded requirements totaling more than \$11 billion. It is nearly three times more unfunded requirements than you had last year. It seems like something doesn't add up.

So, how can the Administration say that it is prioritizing China if it won't provide you and INDOPACOM with the resources you need to deter Beijing? That is Admiral, a bit of a rhetorical question. So, the Biden administration, they just sent over an \$895 billion defense budget request.

Your unfunded requirements is just an \$11 billion total, and just 1 percent of that, that is 1 percent nearly of the total amount requested by the Biden administration. Yet the Administration seemed that they couldn't find the money. I am even told that there is \$11 billion in unused Pentagon funds that just expired.

So, I think we all understand that this is a very dangerous time with China on a war footing and conflict increasingly likely in the Indo-Pacific. The only way that we are going to avoid war or win if it comes, is if we put our money where our mouth is.

That means that if we say China is the priority, then we have got to act like it. So, thank you for your testimony and thank you for your many years of service.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Budd. Senator Duckworth, please.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Admiral Aquilino, General LaCamera. Thank you for being here today, and, of course, thank you for your many decades of service. I am concerned about the needed investments in our medical ecosystem and infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region.

As INDOPACOM prepares the Joint Force for conflict with a near adversary, our ability to provide lifesaving care for servicemembers must remain a priority. The conditions in the Indo-Pacific with remote islands will strain our ability to medivac wounded servicemembers to row three and four medical facilities.

The golden hour for providing critical medical care won't exist, and to improve the outcomes for servicemembers who will likely receive critical medical care near the frontlines, we must pre-position lifesaving supplies like blood and class eight medical supplies as far forward as possible.

Admiral Aquilino, how is INDOPACOM working across the Joint Force to ensure critical medical supplies such as blood and class eight medical supplies are pre-positioned across the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. You know, we have incorporated this aspect in the medical care of our forces in our last set of exercises. We rehearsed some of it. We moved some medical capability forward as a part of exercises.

So, again, we take it very seriously. We need to make sure that we can do it and execute at the time of need, which is why we practice and rehearse. Additionally, we do have allies and partners in the vicinity, and we have to make sure that the medical care that is available there, a, we have access to it at the scope and scale

needed, and we coordinate with our allies and partners to do that. So that is how we are taking it on.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. You actually addressed my next question somewhat, and in fact, we have allies and partners like the ROK, like Japan, like Singapore that have medical facilities that meet JACO standards, which is the Joint Accreditation Agency for the United States hospital system.

Admiral, allies and partners, as you said, will be critical. Given the amount of—now given the amount of blood that would be needed during a potential conflict, how are you coordinating, how is INDOPACOM coordinating with other interagency partners to gain access to blood supplies in foreign countries across the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think those discussions are ongoing with my—from my doctor across the region and our allies and partners. As a part—we highlighted it as a part of those exercises and assets. We have not certainly pre-positioned at this point in time, but we have to have the places to do it when needed, and we are doing those assessments.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, the blood cannot really be pre-positioned, but having established agreements to access those blood supplies—but it also means that those blood supplies have to be certified to be given to U.S. servicemembers, which some of them may not if they don't have—if they have not complied with our requirements.

So, I think all of that is critically important. It is good to hear that you are addressing the issue. As you all know, I have been a vocal advocate for a combat credible logistics network, shifting a little bit. The ability for the United States to project to Joint Force in the Western Pacific would depend on our intra-theater lift capabilities.

INDOPACOM will have to grapple with moving troops, supplies, and equipment across a complicated island chain network, and you and I have had conversations on this, requiring significant investments in watercrafts, floating piers, and roads.

Admiral, where do you see how current gaps in intra-theater lift in the Indo-Pacific region, and what role do you foresee the Army Corps of Engineers having in tackling this issue?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. Again, the approach—the Army component has actually moved some watercraft. Some have gone to Japan now.

So, to probably put those forces in the right place, posture wise, is critically important. The intra-theater lift piece, I have concern on the overall capacity aspect of it, whether it be C-130's, you know, C-17s, or C-5s, as it applies to the lift—the airlift piece.

Then on the sealift piece, those forces have to be ready to be shot at, right. So, the contested aspect of it, they have to be able to operate in ways where they can't be targeted, and we have to train and rehearse those aspects. So, those are the things that concern me.

Senator DUCKWORTH. That is also true for the medivac piece, right. We are going to have to fight in. We can't just go in and pick up our wounded the way we have in other theaters. I think we are going to have to fight our way in to pick up our wounded and fight our way back out as well.

One final question. In peacetime, leveraging our civil works program, and the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Coast Guard are important for building cooperation. What new areas can we collaborate with our allies and partners using examples like the successful Sister Rivers Exchange Program as a model?

For example, the Mekong River and the Mississippi River initiatives are a good example.

Admiral AQUILINO. I think it is. Our construction forces, and not just the Army Corps, but the, you know, the Air Force red teams, the Navy Seabees.

Again, those provide some significant training for those allies and partners to build their capacity to help themselves more often. So, we have seen some benefits there, and we will have to continue to do that.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Admiral. I yield back, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, both of you. Admiral, thanks for your service. You came here about the same time I did 3 years ago. Time flies when you are having fun, right.

It goes by quick. This is for both of you. After President Trump's summit with Kim Jong-un, we announced that we were suspending large exercises like Foal Eagle. Given North Korea's escalation, is it time to go back to that, or are we going to continue to do the small ones? General.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. I would say we are doing large exercises. Just finished Freedom Shield. Added live, virtual, and constructive training to it, and then given the training—we talked about the strategic assets that visit the peninsula. Those are all training events for me, and incorporating and making sure that we know how to properly employ them if we need to.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Admiral.

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, as it applies to the DPRK, again, we support General LaCamera to ensure that he has got all the assets needed to do a full scale, full blown exercise set. Across the rest of the theater, we have increased the scope and scale of all of our exercises with our allies and partners.

For example, Keen Edge was perceived—was a bilateral United States, Japan exercise in the past. We just executed that full blown event as a trilateral event with the Australians, and we have done that across all of the critical exercise, Balikatan with the Philippines, Cobra Gold with Thailand, Talisman Saber with Australia. So, scope and scale is increased everywhere.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Admiral, on your way out the door, we need a tanker in the Indo-Pacific. KC-46, I always ask about this. Are you confident in the 46, the availability and the durability?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I am confidence the right tanker to fill our holes, but I am concerned about the magnitude and our ability to deliver enough tankers in this theater in time of crisis.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, thank you. I think we all agree on that. You know, China conducts these circling around Taiwan quite often. Is there going to be a giveaway to one of these days when one of them is not an exercise, it is an actual attack? I mean, will we be able to distinguish that, and how will we be able to do that?

Admiral AQUILINO. Well, we watch the behavior and actions of the PRC each and every day. We do have some concerns on what it would look like and how it would look like. But again, we watch it every day. I would like to—if you want a different conversation, we have to do in a classified level.

Senator TUBERVILLE. All right. Are you concerned about nickel for submarines? I know that in our State, we make submarines, and it is very hard to find, and it is going to be a problem as we go along. Are you familiar with that?

Admiral AQUILINO. So critical minerals across the United States is an issue that I am watching. It is not in my job jar. What is required for me is for that warfighting capability to be ready, available, sustainable, and be able to execute when needed. If there is critical minerals or supply chain issues, that certainly concerns me.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, and I know this is not either one of your purview. You might not want to answer this. I just like to ask you, most of you, because you have a huge job in our military. We are looking to pass more supplemental money, and obviously for Ukraine, for Taiwan, for Israel. Admiral, can Ukraine beat Russia?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. Absolutely. I think they are demonstrating that in each and every day.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What does a win look like at the end of the day?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think that the Ukrainian territory is restored.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Including Crimea?

Admiral AQUILINO. Again, I will leave that to General Cavoli and to the policy side. But, you know, a place where the Ukrainians can operate in their sovereign territory, with the freedoms and values that they want to project, that is what right looks like.

Senator TUBERVILLE. General.

General LACAMERA. Yes, I think they can win. I will leave it at that.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, earlier today downstairs, we talked a little bit about militarization in the South China Sea. They now have the world's—the Chinese have the world's largest Coast Guard.

They use—it as part of a strategy to assert dominance. You talked about how they are now claiming it as territorial waters. They use coercion and intimidation tactics to bully countries including the Philippines and a country we have a mutual defense treaty with.

The Chinese are regularly intimidating Philippine vessels at the Second Thomas Shoal and continue dangerous and escalatory ac-

tions that threaten peaceful shipping in one of the world's busiest waterways.

Late last year, China was upset when the USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, named after my wife, continued routine operations in the area after conducting joint patrols with the Philippine Navy, lawful patrols.

So as you finish your time as the INDOPACOM Commander and prepare to hand the reins to Admiral Paparo, can you talk about what you have learned about China's actions in the South China Sea and what would happen—we discussed this a little bit downstairs, some concerns about if there was actually, you know, some engagement, like escalatory, between China and the Philippines, and if maybe somebody had gotten hurt.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. So again, we continue to articulate that Article 5 of the Mutual Defense Treaty applies if the Philippine—as our allies, the Philippines, were to be attacked, and then that would change a bit of the scope of what is happening there at Second Thomas Shoal.

So, I articulate that the bullying behavior is broad, and it is across the region, from India to the—Malaysia, to Vietnam, all across the region. I think that it would be beneficial for China to be able to interweave into the international order that all countries have defined. I believe there is a peaceful way out of this.

There is a place for China in this world. They are just going to have to understand that the nations of the globe require a set of international standards and behaviors that are acceptable, and what they are executing now is not.

Senator KELLY. How do you feel our relationship is with the Philippine government with regards to Second Thomas Shoal and anything we could work on there. I am going to be in the region next week and that is something—if there was something that you specifically would raise with President Marcos or the Philippine Navy, what would that be?

Admiral AQUILINO. I have sat with President Marcos twice in the last three and a half months. Number 1, I thanked him for his leadership, for articulating what is acceptable and what is not. Incredibly impressed by Minister of Defense Todoro's leadership as well, as well as my counterpart, General Broner.

So, they are fighting for their sovereignty. They are fighting for the international rules based order, and we continue to support them both, in legal domains, in the information space, and in the military space as we execute joint patrols and other cooperation activities in the form of maritime domain awareness.

So, again, my message to the Philippines is always, you are our ally, we are with you, and we are here to help maintain the peace, as well as their sovereignty.

Senator KELLY. Just for my own, you know, personal, information, what is going on around Scarborough Shoals? I spent a lot of time down there when I was, in Westpac. Is there similar Chinese activity in that area?

Admiral AQUILINO. There is absolutely similar coercive, and actions being taken to prevent Philippines from being able to fish there and operate in that vicinity.

Senator KELLY. All right. Thank you, Admiral. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and both of you, thank you for your service. I mean it sincerely. I think the candor by which you answer these questions and your availability or accessibility to the Members of this Committee, and I know others is very much appreciated.

For me, as a newer member and certainly focusing a lot of my time on this Committee on the Indo-Pacific issues, your expertise, your service is—the people from Missouri appreciate it, too.

So, just wanted to say that. Following up, I feel like I—Senator Kelly stole the question that I wanted—

[Laughter.]

Senator SCHMITT. We have recently written a letter actually to Secretary Austin about this ongoing harassment that happens with the fishing in the South China Sea and particularly the Filipino vessels.

It just feels like this thing is—that there is a trajectory to all of this. Currently these are, you know, not technically PRC Navy vessels, Coast Guard—I mean, they are all sort of one in the same in many ways, right.

But where do you see—I mean, if you were to predict where this is going and what we need to do to deter—this is sort of a followup to the previous question is, you know, in a concrete way, what are a couple of things that we could do tomorrow to help discourage this, because it does feel like we are headed down a road here and we have got a obviously mutual defense agreement with the Philippines, that this thing could escalate quicker than people probably realize.

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, thanks, Senator. So militarily, again, we execute joint patrols. We operate with our Philippine partners in the vicinity, in order to ensure that we can demonstrate resolve. But I have also advocated for a broad set of the global nations to identify and speak out against this belligerent bad behavior that is not in accordance with the international community's interpretation of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).

To validate the 2016 tribunal against China's illegal claim that that is Chinese sovereign territory, it is not. So, articulating that and not just from the Philippines, not just from the Philippines and the United States. I am talking about the EU nations.

I am talking about the UK. I am talking about the Middle Eastern nations, and I am talking about the Pacific nations, right. This is one step today. This is not an Indo-Pacific problem. This is going to be a global problem.

Senator SCHMITT. Right, and there also, the CCP is now making claims, additional claims in Vietnam, right, and they are sort of marking additional territory.

Who else do you see—sort of I mean, you clearly by China showing their fangs here, there are some folks who maybe didn't want to pick a team, are certainly coming our way.

Which, who else? We got the Philippines, you know, Vietnam. Who are some other—Australia, of course, in the South China Sea there. Who else do you think has sort of seen this aggression for what it is?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. First, a comment on your first point. Number one, the United States doesn't ask any nations to choose. We support the rights of all nations to have sovereign territory as defined by law.

We support their freedoms, their voice in the international community, where everyone gets an equal voice, to be able to articulate their needs and security needs. So that is what we stand for. Again, we are not asking them to pick sides.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, you are not. I know, I know.

Admiral AQUILINO. That said, all of them, right. I have asked for this discussion globally, and I have worked with General Cavoli to help identify this, and we are seeing it from United Kingdom and the European Union (EU) nations.

More of them are going to deploy to the Pacific. The ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] are critically important. The centrality of ASEAN is important to the region, and it is not that they are not seeing it. It is a concern about speaking out and being at risk for follow on PRC economic coercion and other behaviors that will negatively impact their nation.

So, the concern is not do they see it. It is, will they be able to talk about it.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, it is certainly my hope that whether it is a Belt and Road Initiative or BRICs, that other countries are seeing this and the levers that China has and once they have got their hooks into you, they are real.

General, I want to ask you, I know that traditionally there has been, you know, sort of a—the Korean Peninsula was its own sort of thing. The South China thing was its own sort of thing. I think that we have, realized that this is all obviously very interconnected. What—how do you see this moving forward?

Because clearly, what we do, our friends and our allies, and the support that we have in the Korean Peninsula, and those strategic alliances that we do have matter, I think, for deterrence with China. How do you see that as a development? I think you have been a great leader on this point.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. I think that what starts locally goes regional and globally pretty quickly, and we are seeing it. You know, there have been—there were impacts with COVID.

There were impacts with Ukraine globally that we feel on the peninsula, and you know, our focus is on protecting the Korean people, my United Nations—as the United Nations Commander, it is to maintain the armistice.

But it is to react. You know, the inherent right of self-defense never goes away. So, we will protect ourselves. Response requires consultation with our Korean allies, and then any kind of retaliation or further escalation, I think we have always got to be prepared for if somebody tries to take advantage of an incident or crisis someplace else in the Indo-Pacific.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you both, again. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. Thank you, Chairman Reed, for holding this hearing. I would like to thank you, Admiral Aquilino, for your service.

Of course, I wish you so well in your forthcoming retirement, and you and your family will maybe get to travel for fun now that you are going to retire, and that will be a little bit different.

Of course, General, we thank you for being here today and for your service as well. I want to talk a little bit about autonomous capabilities, because during one of my visits to Central Command, I visited Task Force 59, and I was deeply impressed at just amazing things that are doing. Their ability to utilize autonomous capabilities to quickly apply lessons learned, it is not only innovative, it is also really effective.

So, Admiral Aquilino, can you elaborate how Indo-Pacific Command is integrating these autonomous capabilities and leveraging that commercial off the shelf technology to enhance our strategic posture? How do these initiatives like Task Force 59 really help us in managing costs and compete with China?

Admiral AQUILINO. Thanks, Senator. So, we have been experimenting and rehearsing and practicing with unmanned capabilities in the Pacific Fleet and in INDOPACOM now for going on 6 years. We didn't generate a separate task force to do it. It is run out of the Pacific Fleet headquarters.

So, those efforts are critical to our approach for both deterrence and then for our ability to fight and win. As a matter of fact, Admiral Perot is a Pacific Fleet Commander. As we sit here as executing an integrated battle problem that's got about 20 different unmanned capabilities being integrated into our exercise.

So, pulling those together, being able to deliver them, being able to command and control them through the required autonomous and command and control links that we need, that is where the focus is. So not just what does that thing do. It is, how do you take a thousand of them and be able to employ them in a way that is effective.

Senator ROSEN. That is fantastic. Thank you. I am going to keep with you, Admiral, and talk about, assisting our partners because it has been widely reported that during Taiwan's recent democratic election, they experienced a wide range of cyber-attacks throughout their networks. It is why I led the Taiwan Cyber Security Resiliency Act.

This legislation is included—was included in last year's NDAA, and it helps Taiwan prepare to counter exactly this kind of attack that they faced, and so, it is, again, just another step in assisting our partners and allies to defend against their potential vulnerabilities. So do you think—you know, Taiwan supply chain.

We have seen so many supply chain issues in the last few years for various reasons. Do you believe Taiwan supply chain is another potential area that could be targeted by bad actors. How would taking actions to firm up Taiwan's defense supply chains, including through enhancing our cooperation between our defense industrial bases, maybe help deter China from future aggressive actions?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, Senator. I wouldn't limit the issue. It doesn't just apply in one place. It applies all across the region against all our allies, partners, and friends. The ability to protect both our civilian critical infrastructure as well as our military critical infrastructure is important.

Our security challengers intend and are rehearsing and practicing and attempting to go after all of it. So, my partnership with the Commander of USCYBERCOM—General Hawk has been to my headquarters. He understands our priorities.

He has got forces cooperating with all our allies and partners and friends to be able to tighten up their networks such that they can't be intruded against or used against us.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I am going to continue on this chain a little bit, but going over to you, General, I want to talk about defending ourselves against unpredictable adversaries, because the September 11th Commission report famously identified, and I am going to quote, a failure of imagination as a critical shortfall of our defense at that time.

I think our ability to create and innovate, we think about Task Force 59, using things commercially available, what we develop, what we invest in, and so North Korea has really proven to be resourceful and unpredictable adversary.

How is United States Forces Korea, excuse me, actively working to foster a culture of creativity, of imagination, innovation, critical thinking, and anticipation of what North Korea might be doing in its strategic planning and defense operations so we can better understand what we think the new and emerging threats are there.

General LACAMERA. Thanks, Senator. I don't think DPRK is unpredictable. He's laid out his goals of what he is going to do, and we are not surprised by that.

So, he is on a trajectory to accomplish those. We just finished Freedom Shield, our exercise, and I can assure you that taking lessons learned from different places on—around the globe and throwing different curveballs at the staffs and the Component Commanders on how to think and act differently, as the Admiral has challenged us to do.

I have quoted that we cannot have a lack of imagination. We can't think that the attack is going to come from one direction. We have got to think about it in different directions. Our big challenge is turnover and making sure that we are constantly going back and revisiting.

I have also challenged him. It is either adapt or perish, and so we have got to continue to focus on what the threat is going forward.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I know my time is up, but I have a question for Admiral Aquilino about his retirement. It is kind of a fun one. Could we give him the last word for that?

Chairman REED. Absolutely.

Senator ROSEN. Admiral Aquilino, you know, your commitment, service to our Nation, deeply appreciated. We are so grateful for your sacrifice. So, what is your advice for the next command as you leave? What insights do you have and what would you tell us that we should be paying attention to?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I think, first of all, I have been working with Admiral Paparo now for 3 years here and for the last 30. He understands the theater. I would give him a one word set of guidance, and that is deliver.

Senator ROSEN. I think that is a good word. Thank you. It is great to end on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen, and gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. I want to make one point before I conclude, and that is, several of my colleagues have criticized President Biden for sending up a budget of \$886.35 billion.

Which, by simple arithmetic, increases the unfunded priority list. What they fail to recognize or ignore, that the President was legally required to send that number up. There was a limit established from the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, and the reason we passed that act was because there was serious threat of a default on our national debt.

I can assure you, if we default on our national debt, the issues and the problems and the questions you would be getting today would be much more, indeed exponentially more difficult because it would have set off an international economic collapse.

So, it is Congress that has established a limit, and it is Congress that must deal with that limit, and I think that has to be made. Finally, let me add to the commendation and congratulations to you, Admiral Aquilino, and your family for distinguished service, for—and I think direct might be the word we would use as your nickname if it wasn't long, and it would be direct, and we appreciate that very, very much, sir.

General LaCamera, I have had the privilege of working with you since you were a Battalion Commander in the 10th Mountain Division. Thank you for your service and your courage. Please, thank the families that are so important, and the men and women who serve in uniform in the United States in your Commands.

With that, I would adjourn the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

EXERCISES AND CAMPAIGNING

1. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, campaigning in the Pacific plays a key role in our National Defense Strategy to deter China. The Services are responsible for providing the forces and funds for your execution in the priority theater, but there is a \$580 million campaigning shortfall in fiscal year 2025, which you have listed as #3 on your unfunded priorities list. Can you talk about the role campaigning plays in the Pacific, and in particular, how important it is to our overall strategy in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, campaigning is the centerpiece to our overall strategy in the region; it normalizes our presence and strengthens and stabilizes our relationship with our allies and partners. Campaigning also allows me to move my assigned forces throughout the theater to create a deterrent effect and be postured to respond to crisis. Without it, I am not able to fully employ the assigned forces.

INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND INFRASTRUCTURE

2. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, across your theater, facilities are in a State of disrepair, impacting our readiness and ability to mobilize forces quickly. In particular, Guam is still trying to recover from the damage of Typhoon Mawar, which is in the billions of dollars, and I noticed you have over \$3 billion dollars in military

construction projects on your unfunded priorities list. How does crumbling infrastructure in the Pacific impact your ability to conduct deterrence?

Admiral AQUILINO. Infrastructure in the Pacific cannot support the joint force across the continuum of response options. If priority infrastructure requirements defined in INDOPACOM's Independent Assessment are not resourced, INDOPACOM will not have the flexible, resilient, distributed force posture needed to deter aggressors and, if deterrence fails, fight and win.

Coastal infrastructure in the Pacific must withstand uniquely harsh conditions including humid, saline-rich environments and coastal erosion, storm surge, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as Typhoon Mawar. In addition to building new capability, INDOPACOM is working to repair and restore aged infrastructure throughout the theater, much of which dates back to WWII. This challenge is further complicated by the fact that in the Pacific, construction, repair, and maintenance materials and workforce are more costly and time intensive to obtain and employ.

3. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Aquilino, what additional risk is introduced when the Department of Defense (DOD) fails to adequately resource necessary military construction projects in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. INDOPACOM's prioritized military construction projects are required to deliver joint posture requirements to the force. Without timely planning, design, implementation, and construction of key infrastructure, INDOPACOM and the joint force would not have the footprint to deliver integrated deterrence and achieve our mission.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND INVESTMENTS IN DATA

4. Senator KING. Admiral Aquilino, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has changed the nature of warfare, specifically regarding the application of AI and other significant technology to efforts by the Ukrainian Defense Forces. It is important that these considerations are utilized across other areas of responsibility (AOR), to include U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), to maintain pace with strategic and near-peer competitors.

The war in Ukraine has shown us that investments in data, artificial intelligence (AI) and computing are what's going to allow us to stay ahead of the curve in a future conflict. How is your AOR thinking about taking a more data-driven and AI-enabled posture?

Admiral AQUILINO. Maintaining our joint warfighting advantage requires us to outpace our challengers and urgently deliver advanced capabilities. Some examples of how we're approaching this in the USINDOPACOM AOR include the Joint Fires Network (JFN), the USINDOPACOM Mission network (IMN), and the Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability (PMTEC).

JFN is USINDOPACOM's mechanism to integrate and synchronize effects across the battlespace. The IMN is a secure, zero-trust, data-centric environment that allows USINDOPACOM to rapidly share information and a common operating picture with allies and partners. Finally, PMTEC enhances U.S. allied and partner training by enabling realistic, joint, and combined training ranges to improve our future operations and exercises by using Stormbreaker, an AI-based gaming and simulation capability.

5. Senator KING. Admiral Aquilino, how are Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) efforts going?

Admiral AQUILINO. We are making progress toward partner integration in line with the CJADC2 Campaign Plan 2030 FVEY Addendum. INDOPACOM's Mission Network (IMN) proved successful during Keen Edge 24 by integrating two partners, enabling trilateral operations.

MISSION DATA PLATFORM

6. Senator KING. Admiral Aquilino, Mission Data Platform (MDP) is INDOPACOM's proven coalition warfighting environment that supports over 7,000 users from 6 countries with live data integrations to numerous authoritative DOD and partner data sets. It delivers data-centric application security to a large suite of applications, including real-time chat with automated language translation, a multi-domain Community of Practice (COP) with capabilities for geospatial analysis,

and document generation. We commend the success of Mission Data Platform to enable partner collaboration. What is your plan to scale this capability?

Admiral AQUILINO. INDOPACOM decommissioned the MDP in April 2024. The MDP pilot began on Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System (CENTRIXS) as a method of providing data-centric collaboration and mission data sharing across multiple network-centric security domains. The MDP demonstrated promise in this area, but cost and cybersecurity policy limited full-scale theater deployment. The development of the INDOPACOM Mission Network (IMN), our zero trust, data-centric approach for mission partner information sharing, reduced our reliance on a third-party data-centric capability. In addition, we assessed that the MDP would not fully integrate with security principles in our new architecture that conform to Department of Defense guidance. At the same time an INDOPACOM review of our modernization efforts identified potential duplication of effort in the mission data space, specifically in common operation picture (COP)-like capabilities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

POWER BEAMING

7. Senator MANCHIN. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, currently, the DOD's Operational Energy Office is focused on wireless power beaming technology. Wireless power beaming offers amazingly flexible energy supply by transferring power from a battery to a device of ones choosing. This technology, combined with Space Solar, offers promising, powerful renewable energy to anywhere on the globe. For example, power beaming an unmanned aircraft that performs intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations would provide ISR collection capabilities around the clock without the requirement to refuel or the risk of being denied power. However, the Chinese Communist Party is already accelerating research on the topic investing \$30 million in facilities alone. The military application of this technology is numerous especially in the Pacific and it is crucial we have first mover advantage to prevent our adversaries from leveraging the influence that comes with such a technology. Considering the importance of this emerging technology and the capabilities it offers, I am requesting a point of contact from your staff to work with my staff on this matter.

Admiral AQUILINO. Admiral Aquilino. USINDOPACOM supports the continuous development of new and innovative technology, such as wireless power beaming, to solve logistical challenges presented in the theater. Your staff may work with Mr. David Cox, the USINDOPACOM Director of Legislative Affairs, on this matter.

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

SMALL MODULAR MICROREACTORS

8. Senator MANCHIN. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, we expect our servicemembers to perform in austere, challenging environments and completely disconnected if need be, but modern warfare relies more than ever on resilient energy production. China knows this and already has countermeasures for targeting both commercial and military fuel shipping vessels. To help alleviate this vulnerability, I believe small modular microreactors are a strategic energy source necessary in this contested logistics environment. Project Pele is the only microreactor being built by DOD that can close this gap. Housed in one 20-foot shipping container, and providing 5 megawatts of power continuously for 5 years, Pele can replace 6 diesel generators that require over 3 million gallons of fuel annually. How can my staff work with Indo-Pacific Command and United States Forces Korea to ensure Project Pele and similar technology is being incorporated into United States operational plans and exercises to better equip our Forces to gain advantage in a contested logistic environment such as the Pacific?

Admiral AQUILINO. We are working in close coordination with the DOD Strategic Capabilities Office and understand that the earliest INDOPACOM could see fielding of Project Pele is fiscal year 2030. Certainly, alternate energy solutions, such as hydrogen fuels that our regional Allies and Partners have heavily invested into, would reduce strain on our logistics requirements, but for now, I would emphasize the need for increased investment in forward fuel storage, expeditionary power generation, and distribution systems to support our operational requirements. Additionally, it is critical that if approved for use, any such mobile nuclear reactors be placed in resilient and safe locations that are not susceptible to damage from regional weather threats such as sea level rise, earthquakes, or tsunamis. Moreover, should there be a crisis or conflict, my forces would be tasked with securing all mobile nuclear reactors, possibly distracting them from more pressing operational missions.

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

RIDGE RUNNER

9. Senator MANCHIN. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, in my State of West Virginia, the West Virginia National Guard hosts the irregular warfare exercise, Ridge Runner, every year that brings foreign partners to West Virginia to exchange lessons they've learned deemed beneficial in a potential conflict against a peer adversary such as Russia or China. The exercise offers a wide range of training scenarios including simulated cyber threats and attacks on critical infrastructure, which continue to be increasingly relevant. This past year, Ridge Runner had over 420 participants including from Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova, Georgia, and the United Kingdom. This year we've expanded participation to partners in the Pacific including Japan, Taiwan, Australia, Mongolia, and Nepal. How could Ridge Runner offer value to both of your commands in future exercises, and would your training commands be willing to touch base with our folks that run the exercise?

Admiral AQUILINO. Exercise RIDGE RUNNER provides value to INDOPACOM by affording us the opportunity to synchronize with partners and allows for reciprocal access for US SOF into countries within the INDOPACOM region. The West Virginia National Guard's Ridge Runner Irregular Warfare Training Program offers the ability for US SOF to train its partners in irregular warfare supported entirely through the West Virginia National Guard with dedicated funding for staff and programmatic elements. Most recently, in Ridge Runner (RR) 24-01, executed 03APR-26APR24, SOF partners from Mongolia received academic Irregular Warfare Center classes, as well as high caliber tactical training, providing them critical irregular warfare and resistance knowledge and training to bring back to Mongolia.

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

10. Senator MANCHIN. Admiral Aquilino and General LaCamera, prior to the posture hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, I personally spoke to you both requesting your thoughts on Ridge Runner and whether you would be interested in a principal level meeting or to observe a portion of the Ridge Runner exercise in the future. Please repeat your responses for the record.

Admiral AQUILINO. Admiral Aquilino. I have encouraged my successor to observe a portion of Ridge Runner in the future.

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND RESOURCING AND POSTURE

11. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, as you pointed out in your testimony, this decade presents a period of increased risk highlighted by the People's Republic of China's (PRC) nuclear and conventional buildup, malign behavior, and "no limits" partnership with Russia. While INDOPACOM has done much to posture our Nation to counter China's aggression, there is still more to do as indicated by the unprecedentedly large Unfunded Priorities List (UPL). What are the risks if the INDOPACOM UPL is not resourced?

Admiral AQUILINO. Leaving the UPL unfunded hampers our ability to be postured in the right location, with the right capabilities to provide creditable deterrence. This would further embolden the PRC's dangerous, coercive, escalatory, and unlawful behavior and push our two nations toward crisis. In the event of conflict, the risk to our ability to fight and win increases.

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what United States, allied, and partner military capabilities do the Chinese believe are most threatening to their ability to conduct a successful invasion of Taiwan?

Admiral AQUILINO. The PRC is most threatened by capabilities that would undermine the PLA's numerical overmatch, obstruct their joint island landing, and impede PLA's ability to conduct a military campaign against Taiwan. The PRC will rely on speed and overmatch as key elements of their Taiwan landing campaign and are sensitive to any United States and allied capabilities that could delay or slow the invasion's progress and allow for counter-intervention forces to marshal. PRC's concerns would include systems that would bring both kinetic and non-kinetic effects, which could affect their operations.

ENHANCED DEFENSE COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PHILIPPINES

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what is the State of infrastructure in the communities around Enhanced Defense Cooperation Arrangement (EDCA) sites in the Philippines?

Admiral AQUILINO. Infrastructure around the nine EDCA sites in the Philippines is underdeveloped. While DOD investments are expressly at EDCA sites, DOD construction activities may generate economic activity that will benefit the surrounding communities. DOD is also working with DOS, DOC, USAID and other international partners to generate economic and infrastructure development in the Philippines, including a USAID funded pharmaceutical manufacturing facility near Basa Air Base.

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, is the United States building infrastructure around EDCA sites that both benefits the local community and makes access easier for United States and Philippine Forces?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes, DOD projects at the EDCA locations have the collateral benefit of supporting the local economy and creating jobs. To date, the United States has awarded all of our infrastructure contracts to Philippine or Philippine joint-venture companies, generating economic growth in local communities, and employing local labor. Our primary focus at EDCA locations is to improve bilateral military modernization and to expand training opportunities, as well as position our forces for response to HA/DR events.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, have you seen any evidence of PRC influence operations focused on communities near EDCA sites?

Admiral AQUILINO. The PRC continues to conduct a wide spectrum of influence operations globally with the intention of undermining United States alliances and partnerships and to promote the PRC's agenda and objectives. The PRC frequently works to co-opt regional or local organizations as part of these efforts and we see this activity occur throughout the region, including in the areas near our EDCA sites.

MARINE LITTORAL REGIMENT AND MULTI-DOMAIN TASK FORCES IN UNITED STATES
INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the Marine Corps artillery regiment based in Okinawa, Japan is in the process of being re-organized as a Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) by 2025. 3d MLR, stationed in Hawaii, has participated in Exercise Balikatan since 2022 in the Philippines. Under Marine Corps Force Design 2030, MLRs are postured to serve as a stand-in force and execute Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations. This requires them to disperse along the First Island Chain to provide strike and surveillance capabilities. What feedback have you received on MLRs from allies and partners in the region?

Admiral AQUILINO. Allies and partners in the region have been able to see and interact with both the 3d Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) in Hawaii and the 12th MLR in Japan. The 3d MLR was employed during the recent Rim-of-the-Pacific exercise, and elements of it were deployed to the Philippines for last spring's Exercise Balikatan. While in the Philippines, they directly interacted with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as well as with other participating allied nations, to include the French and Japanese. Elements of the Japan-based 12th MLR were recently deployed to Japan's Southwest Islands within Exercise Resolute Dragon with the Japan Ground and Air Self-Defense Force. We have received only positive feedback from our allies and partners on the MLR's usefulness within the Indo-Pacific, as well as their ability to work with our allies and partners.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what are the most import capabilities that USMC Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) and Army Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF) bring to deter and, if necessary, defeat a PRC attack on United States, allied, or partner forces in INDOPACOM?

Admiral AQUILINO. Both the Marine Corp's Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) and Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTF) provide us a tactical level capability to find, fix, track and target hostile units, and most importantly, rapidly share that information across the entire joint force so other units can also strike those targets. When located near allied or partner forces, they can also share that information with them, serving as a force-multiplier.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, how important are Landing Ship Medium (LSM) and Army watercraft to solving the contested logistics problem and moving combat power around the AOR?

Admiral AQUILINO. Landing Ship Medium (LSM) and Army Watercraft Systems (AWS) represent a portion of our requirement for overcoming the complex logistical challenges presented by the Indo-Pacific's archipelagic terrain. These vessels provide access to both traditional and non-traditional sea lines of communication enabling operational movement and maneuver from land to sea and back to land. Without capabilities delivered by U.S. Transportation Command, Military Sealift Command and our allies and partners, and the robust presence of LSM and AWS capabilities, the joint force would be heavily reliant on movement of forces and materiel by aircraft. Heavy use of aircraft as a contested logistics solution for the movement of combat power is limited in capacity, costly in dollars, and poses an increased risk to mission and forces. LSM and AWS enhance operational flexibility and resilience by providing a stand-in capability bringing intra-theater distribution and lessening burdens on air and sea movement of combat power.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget forecasts orders for eight LSMs over the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), none of which would deliver before 2028. Each MLR requires nine LSMs for organic mobility. Until the requisite number of LSMs arrives, MLRs will use a mix of leased commercial vessels, Expeditionary High Speed Transports, and Landing Crafts Utility (LCU), none of which has the capability and capacity of the LSM. Will MLRs equipped with this mixed type of organic mobility change the way you employ them in your AOR?

Admiral AQUILINO. All our land and air forces require mobility to get into place before or during a time of crisis. The entire joint force will require mobility to sustain themselves once a crisis begins. There is a paucity of air and sea lift available for the entire joint force, not just the Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR). The sooner we can get additional lift into the western Pacific, the better. That includes the Landing Ship Medium (LSM.) Until they come online, we will use everything that is available, to include a mix of leased commercial vessels, Expeditionary High Speed Transports, and Landing Crafts Utility (LCU). Our employment of the MLRs would likely remain the same, but the response time would be slower.

UNITED STATES' WAVERING SUPPORT OF UKRAINE AS VIEWED BY CHINA

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, some of my colleagues have argued that deterrence is divisible—that you can let an authoritarian regime roll over a friend in one part of the world without dangerous repercussions elsewhere. I disagree. The Taiwan Relations Act requires us to be capable of defending Taiwan. We publicly promised to support Ukraine, yet we have not delivered timely military assistance by failing to pass the National Security Supplemental. How does this affect the PRC's view of our resolve to defend Taiwan if they attack the island?

Admiral AQUILINO. The CCP has closely watched events in Ukraine to gauge the potential international response for any future military action in Taiwan. Beijing understands Ukraine and Taiwan are different situations and actions taken vis-à-vis Ukraine would not necessarily apply to Taiwan. However, they will repeatedly message that the United States is an unreliable partner and Taiwan would be foolish to rely on United States or international support, hoping to translate that message into reality. I think our continuing efforts to support Taiwan's self-defense needs send the right message about United States resolve to PRC leaders.

SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY

21. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, South Korea has drastically increased its munitions production since the renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It has also completed several large foreign military sales of modern weapons systems produced in South Korea to many of our European partners and allies. All indicators are that South Korea's defense industrial base is strong and it seems to have a lot of excess industrial base capacity to cover its domestic military needs and while simultaneously exporting record amounts of military equipment. It is producing very high quality tanks, self-propelled howitzers, aircraft, and ships. In fact, the Secretary of the Navy was in Korea earlier this month to learn more about their naval shipbuilding industry. I know Secretary Del Toro toured two South Korean shipyards recently and has encouraged South Korean and Japanese companies to invest in shuttered United States shipyards. Should we look to South Korea to address some of our manufacturing bottlenecks, particularly on munitions and equipment that we need to field quickly on the Korean Peninsula and in INDOPACOM more broadly?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE TRILATERAL AGREEMENT

22. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, does the Trilateral Missile Data sharing agreement between the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the United States now mean that any of the three countries can cue the other with target-quality data to shoot down an incoming missile off of another's sensor data?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY MODERNIZATION

23. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, do advances in South Korea's military power factor into its decisionmaking to help defend Taiwan should a conflict occur in the Taiwan Strait?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

24. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, is South Korea's military expansion aimed solely at deterring and defeating an attack from North Korea?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

25. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, has South Korea's military modernization changed any planning factors as you seek to deter, and if necessary defeat, North Korea?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General LaCamera, have any recently fielded South Korean systems created a significant capability gap compared to North Korea?

General LACAMERA. [Deleted.]

SUBMARINE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is working hard to erode our strategic advantage in the undersea domain by launching new nuclear attack and guided missile submarines. There are justified concerns that we will diminish our submarines' advantage by not building enough new attack subs and not getting the ones we have into and out of maintenance on time. Something like 40 percent of our sub fleet isn't deployed because of maintenance backlogs. In light of the PLA Navy's numerical superiority how important is submarine construction and maintain to deter and defeat the PRC in a conflict?

Admiral AQUILINO. Our submarines are critical to both deterring adversaries and prevailing in conflict. The United States, currently enjoys an asymmetric advantage in the undersea domain which is essential to our National Defense Strategy. Delays in the delivery of new submarines, or from maintenance to operation, increase the risk of adversary miscalculation, and erode our strategic advantage.

Hence, completing new construction and maintenance on time is crucial to our undersea dominance and to deterring the PRC's expansion.

Near-term submarine industrial base (SIB) investments are critical to reduce the backlog in attack submarine (SSN) maintenance and new construction to meet the 2.33 *Virginia*-class (VACL) per year production rate needed to support Navy's requirement, while also delivering *Columbia*-class SSBNs on time to support our strategic deterrent.

DETECTING CHINESE INVASION OF TAIWAN

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, I know that some senior officials in the Biden administration are wary of your campaigning initiative. They consider it too provocative because we are operating in the First Island Chain. Your critics believe that we need to emphasize stand-off capabilities and operate from the Second Island Chain. Do you agree with the criticism that INDOPACOM's campaigning initiative is too provocative?

Admiral AQUILINO. Senator, I do not believe INDOPACOM's campaign initiative is too provocative. A key tenet of the INDOPACOM strategy is supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and the only way to truly do that is to sail and operate across the totality of international airspace and waters. Additionally, operating within the First Island Chain assures our key allies and partners by demonstrating our resolve and willingness to meet them on their home terrain.

If we elect to stay out of the First Island Chain, we deter ourselves, undermine our allies and partners, and implicitly support the PRC's illegal claims. By safely operating within the First Island Chain, within international airspace and waters, alongside our allies and partners, we demonstrate the presence and resolve necessary to limit provocative adversary activity.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, do you think that we can deter and, if necessary, defeat the PLA operating primarily from the Second Island Chain?

Admiral AQUILINO. No. Operating exclusively from the Second Island Chain puts us at a distinct disadvantage and jeopardizes mission success. Our ability to deter/defeat PLA while operating primarily from SIC requires additional capacity in air refueling, long range fires, fighters and bombers. Forward basing increases on station time during competition which enhances deterrence and sortie generation rate during conflict.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, has the PRC's response to our operations and exercises in the AOR changed over the past year?

Admiral AQUILINO. The PLA continually monitors our military activities in the AOR. In general, the nature and type of reactions has remained relatively consistent. The one exception to this was a notable increase in non-standard intercepts of U.S. and allied military aircraft operating in international airspace throughout the first 10 months of 2023. We believed this was an intentional effort by the PRC to shape our activities. After President Biden and Chairman Xi agreed during their November 2023 summit to reduce tensions, these non-standard activities ceased, supporting our assessment they were intentional.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, is there a difference with how the Chinese military responds if we are inside the First Island Chain compared to other areas in the South China Sea?

Admiral AQUILINO. In short, the degree of PRC angst and the assertiveness of their physical and messaging responses are proportional to the distance we operate from the mainland. In part, this is a reflection of our proximity to activities the PRC considers more sensitive, such as exercises, new equipment testing, or weapons testing that generally occur closer to the mainland. It is also part of the PRC's attempts to re-characterize international air and maritime spaces as "Chinese territory." PLA and para-military elements repeatedly assert the notion we are intruding on sovereign Chinese territory without their permission. Beijing also uses what is often called "lawfare" to apply domestic law in international spaces or to manipulate legal constructs to support their excessive claims. It is critical we not accede to these unwarranted and illegal excessive claims and continue to operate wherever international law allows, even if the PRC objects.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, the Wall Street Journal ran an article on March 19, 2024 about training assistance the United States military is providing Taiwan on Kinmen Island. Should there be caps that limit the number or types of United States personnel on Taiwan's territory?

Admiral AQUILINO. As a general matter, without getting into specific locations, I don't think we should place arbitrary limits on the employment of forces anywhere in the AOR. We should have the flexibility to base those kinds of decisions on the requirements of a given situation.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what is the current State of interoperability and joint planning between the United States and Taiwan militaries?

Admiral AQUILINO. Multiple USINDOPACOM offices, plus our service components, conduct regular engagements focused on assisting Taiwan through our responsibilities as a part of the Taiwan Relations Act.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, as you noted at your hearing, the PLA is on schedule to meet Xi's directive to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. Do you see changes in PRC military exercises that indicate Xi's confidence level in the PLA is growing?

Admiral AQUILINO. Yes and no. I think we have to be honest in acknowledging the strides the PLA is making in several areas. I suspect Xi Jinping sees and acknowledges that as well. But I think Xi also understands just how difficult a Taiwan invasion would be, how many complex pieces would need to fit together, and how many variables he wouldn't be able to control. In this realistic view, Xi almost certainly understands the PLA is not ready to invade Taiwan. His confidence may be growing, but not to the level where he is likely to order a military option in the next couple years. We also should consider the negative impact the extensive and ongoing corruption cases have on his confidence in the PLA.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, you and I have talked about economic deterrence in the Taiwan Strait. Are we doing enough now to send the message to Beijing that military action against Taiwan will incur a massive economic cost for them?

Admiral AQUILINO. Economic deterrence is an important element of integrated deterrence, which requires a whole-of-government approach. We have demonstrated superiority at sea, with an ability to control all sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Chinese leaders recognizes this, and, by extension, that China's trade is fully held at risk, allowing USINDOPACOM to offer our capabilities to underpin economic tools of deterrence in the trade space that the rest of the interagency might consider. More can always be done and we stand by ready to support.

REPAIRING DAMAGED SHIPS IN THEATER

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, offsetting the PLA Navy's numerical superiority means we have to keep our ships in the fight after sustaining battle damage. I am concerned by the lack of major ship repair yards in your AOR. In the event of a conflict, bringing a battle-damaged ship all the way back to Hawaii or the West Coast for repair is not a winning strategy. What groundwork is being laid now—or needs to be laid—to conduct in-theater repairs for ships and submarines?

Admiral AQUILINO. The Navy has implemented a Ship Wartime Repair and Maintenance (SWaRM) exercise program to advance repair and maintenance capabilities with in-theater partners. These exercises consist of more complex work packages for the local private sector, expeditionary maintenance from a U.S. Regional Maintenance Center, and battle damage assessment and repair table-top exercises with submarine crews and in-theater Navy engineering and production personnel.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, there are statutory and regulatory obstacles to conducting more complex maintenance and repairs to United States ships overseas, even in ports of our closest allies like Japan. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages in using our allies' labor force and infrastructure for in-theater ship repair during both peacetime and war?

Admiral AQUILINO. 10 USC 8680 prohibits execution of ship repair or maintenance in foreign shipyards, except for Forward Deployed Naval Forces and Voyage Repairs. During peacetime, the primary advantage of using our allies' labor force and infrastructure for in-theater ship repair and maintenance is developing processes and relationships that will be required to efficiently execute repair and maintenance during wartime. Other advantages include visibly (information environment) exercising these partnerships and providing some minor relief to in-theater Navy repair capacity during peak workload periods. During wartime, the advantages of reduced transit time and distributed repair and maintenance capabilities across the region will ensure more mission ready ships for the fight. As for disadvantages, executing large work packages at allies' facilities, outside of our fleet concentration areas, can be cost-prohibitive due to required security, quality of life services, transportation and temporary lodging, at these locations. Adverse impacts to crew quality of life in off-base, foreign locations preclude executing long, complex maintenance at such facilities. Currently, the only suitable locations for complex maintenance and repair availabilities are the United States Navy facilities at Yokosuka and Sasebo, Japan.

TYRANNY OF DISTANCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

38. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, Alaska is closer than Hawaii to many of the potential areas of conflict, yet there is no U.S. Navy infrastructure for ships or submarines in Alaska. Given the considerable talk of the "tyranny of distance," what are your views on a Naval Support Activity or other permanent Navy infrastructure in Alaska that could support Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) ships?

Admiral AQUILINO. Additional support in Alaska has potential to align with the overarching INDOPACOM posture strategy of distribution and diversification but would require more study to determine the exact locations and capabilities that might be needed to best support the joint force.

ALASKA SPECIFIC CONCERNS

39. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, will you encourage Admiral Samuel Paparo to bring a carrier strike group to Northern Edge 2025?

Admiral AQUILINO. PACFLT is currently reviewing their ability to support PACAF with a full carrier strike group (CSG) in Alaska for the exercise.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, in your personal opinion, what force posture and/or capabilities are missing in Alaska that would put the INDOPACOM Commander in a better position to deter and defeat the PLA?

Admiral AQUILINO. The value of forces in Alaska to deter and defeat the PLA reside in our ability to deploy forward in competition and conflict. We assess the assigned force posture in Alaska is adequate at this time.

CHINESE POSTURE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, what is the military significance of the Solomon Islands-PRC pact?

Admiral AQUILINO. Unless the agreement has secret elements we don't know about, I would say the pact has minimal military significance for the PRC. The importance of the pact is mostly about the PRC's growing influence and ability to shape Solomon Islands' decisionmaking, investment priorities, and external relations. It also advances the PRC's Belt and Road initiative in the region. As a sovereign nation, Solomon Islands certainly can decide for themselves who they should or should not have relationships with. However, they would be wise to consider whose best interests Beijing has in mind.

CHINESE MARITIME ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE IMPORTS

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Aquilino, is it important for the United States military to be able to conduct sea control and sea denial operations against PLA Navy vessels and Chinese oil tankers and merchant ships in the various straits that lead to the South China Sea and Pacific Oceans?

Admiral AQUILINO. I think the answer is clearly yes. Any sound strategy for countering a PLA military campaign anywhere in the region, whether it is Taiwan, the Senkakus, or the South China Sea, will require sea control and sea denial of these critical waterways. Moreover, the ability to execute sea control and sea denial is critical to ensuring secure maritime trade and logistics routes and enable joint force maneuverability against any potential adversary.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

43. Senator BUDD. Admiral Aquilino, can you please explain the value of Special Operations Forces in your AOR?

Admiral AQUILINO. SOF value proposition in an Indo-Pacific conflict is to create strategic, asymmetric advantages for the United States. SOF possess discrete, tailored, and highly technical expertise to perform highly specialized missions. SOF also builds upon our persistent global access to provide us with flexibility and agility for trans-regional effects to counter strategic competitors. SOF are ready and capable to respond on extremely short notice to execute core activities that are as relevant today as ever for a conflict scenario. Importantly, SOF leverages relationships and practical experiences in working with the interagency and a wide array of allies and partners to better understand the Indo-Pacific environment and contribute to integrated deterrence and, if required, prevail in conflict.

44. Senator BUDD. Admiral Aquilino, what impacts, if any, do you expect to theater operations given planned force structure and personnel cuts to Army Special Operations Forces?

Admiral AQUILINO. Proposed ARSOF cuts increase risk to INDOPACOM's mission to deter and respond to crisis. Due to ARSOF's widespread influence with INDOPACOM's partners and allies, they are critical to campaigning and setting the theater in a warfighting stance. SOF are critically important to training our partners and increasing combat capability and play a very important role in the INDOPACOM AOR.

45. Senator BUDD. Admiral Aquilino, have you or your command been consulted on the assessment of optimal force structure for special operations forces required by section 1075 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act?

Admiral AQUILINO. ASD SO/LIC and USSOCOM established three 1075 working groups co-led by DASD SOPP and the Joint Staff J8, with members from across the USSOCOM staff to develop responses to the six elements listed in section 1075 of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA. SOCPAC represents INDOPACOM in these working groups.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET POSTURE

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. The Committee will come to order. Good morning. The committee meets to receive testimony on the President's Budget Request for the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2025.

Witnesses this morning are Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller, Mike McCord, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General C.Q. Brown, Jr.. I would like to take a moment to recognize that this is General Brown's first posture hearing before the committee as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

We are grateful for our witnesses, for their service, and for their testimony today. This is a critical moment for our National Security. There is broad consensus among Congress, the White House, and the Department of Defense about the threats we face.

We know that China seeks to challenge the security and economic interests of the United States and our allies, and that it increasingly has the ability to do so. We know that Vladimir Putin is committed to recreating a vision of the old Soviet empire, and that his war against Ukraine is one step toward that vision.

We know that Iran is seeking to exploit the war between Israel and Hamas, and expel the United States from the region, and further sabotage the free world rule in the Middle East. It is worth noting that each of these threats I just mentioned can be addressed

through the National Security supplemental that the Senate passed nearly 2 months ago.

The bill would support Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, provide humanitarian relief in Gaza, and replenish the U.S. defense industrial base. Indeed, the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the separate fight for freedom in Ukraine demand our immediate attention.

The most important step Congress can take right now is to pass this legislation, and I urge the House to vote on it. Last month, President Biden released his fiscal year 2025 budget request for the Department of Defense with a top line of \$850 billion.

I understand that this budget is below what the Department had planned for fiscal year 2025, but it adheres to the cap set by last year's debt ceiling agreement, known as the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023.

In effect, the Department of Defense had to follow the law and submit this level of funding to the Congress. I expect—we will stand in recess for a moment.

[Recess.]

Chairman REED. We will resume. Senator, it's a liability of being unusually tall.

[Laughter.]

Chairman REED. Again, the Department is responding to the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 in terms of the budget they had to present, and I expect there will be a discussion today about whether the top line is adequate to meet the National Security challenges we face.

This was a demand by Republicans in the House in order for us to pass the debt ceiling, and that has constrained your operations and your budgeting, and we understand that. With those limits in mind, the President's defense budget request well to the national—aligns well to the National Security threats before us.

As the National Defense Strategy makes clear, the United States is in a long term strategic competition with China and Russia, and we will continue to face persistent threats from Iran, North Korea, violent extremist groups, and issues like climate change.

During today's hearing, I would ask for witnesses to explain how the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request supports the National Defense Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review, and the Missile Defense Review.

Keeping our competition with China front and center, this budget request includes \$9.9 billion for priorities covered by the Pacific Defense Initiative, or PDI. I am encouraged by the progress we have made through PDI thus far, and this committee will continue working to help improve the design and posture of the Joint Force in the Indo-Pacific region.

This should include strengthening logistics, modernizing infrastructure, conducting exercises and training, and building the capabilities of our allies and partners. Indeed, our approach to the Indo-Pacific should continue to be informed in part by lessons drawn from the European Defense Initiative, or EDI, which has played a decisive role in strengthening U.S. force posture and enhancing the readiness of allies and partners in Europe over the last 10 years.

The Department's fiscal year 2025 budget request includes \$2.9 billion for EDI related investments and \$300 million for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. I am encouraged that the President's budget request would provide significant funding to strengthen America's cyber defenses and develop cutting edge technology such as hypersonics, microelectronics, artificial intelligence, 5G, and quantum computing.

Our strategy toward China and Russia should not be defined in dollars by how much, but rather where and why we are investing to achieve the greatest comparative advantage. I am also pleased to see that this budget request prioritizes taking care of our men and women in uniform by providing a 4.5 percent pay raise and increase in basic needs allowance eligibility, expanding the benefits for military families.

These actions are an important message to the force at a time when recruiting is particularly challenging. With regard to our nuclear strategy, this budget request supports important steps for the modernization of our nuclear triad.

Given Putin's reckless behavior and China's rapidly growing nuclear capabilities, we must continue to modernize our strategic forces to reassure our allies and deter aggression from our nuclear arms competitors. Even as we modernize, we should seek ways to promote strategic stability, reduce the risk of miscalculation, and if possible, reduce nuclear stockpiles.

Finally, the proposed investment in next generation combat aircraft, tactical vehicles, and naval vessels is a prudent decision. However, there are a number of long standing challenges for our defense acquisition system that must be addressed to effectively field these platforms.

I understand that the military services have made difficult but practical decisions in this budget request to identify supply chain problems, pinpoint shortages of critical materials, and to reinvigorate the defense force.

In particular, the Navy has requested \$2 billion to improve the capabilities of the submarine industrial base, and I would appreciate our witnesses' views on how Congress can help to overcome these issues.

Again, I thank the witnesses for their participation today, and I look forward to their testimonies, and now, let me recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today's hearing is an opportunity to take stock in our National Security over the past year and examine how the Department of Defense is preparing for the future. Unfortunately, the security environment, as we all know, has deteriorated significantly since we last had this hearing.

Armed conflict is ongoing in multiple continents. Regional instability threatens peace and prosperity and freedom around the world, and several malign nations are forming a new axis of evil. We are approaching a window of maximum danger.

Despite this, our Government is failing to modernize our defense capabilities and to provide sufficient resources to fund our National Defense Strategy. Xi Jinping will continue China's historic military

modernization with another 7.2 percent defense budget increase this year.

China's military production rates, advanced training improvements and innovation strategies are troubling, and they are stunning. In addition to Xi's designs in Taiwan, there is a very real prospect of Chinese action against our Filipino treaty allies in the South China Sea. Both will test American resolve.

Outgunned and outmanned, the brave defenders in Ukraine have exceeded expectations in holding the line against the Russian dictator, Putin's army. If Congress passes a supplemental, we can help Ukraine win. But to make that happen, the Biden administration will need to articulate a real plan for provisioning and training Ukrainian forces at scale once Congress passes the supplemental appropriation bill.

I share the chair's comments about the decision that the House of Representatives, led by the speaker, will have to make this week. This is an occasion that history will look back on. This is a time for statesmanship and bipartisanship, and I certainly share the chair's hope that this supplemental will be enacted and signed into law very, very soon.

I am disappointed in the drip, drip, drip approach to military aid that has characterized this Administration's policy thus far. As to General Brown, I would appreciate your comments on the situation in Ukraine, and whether a more timely, aggressive posture toward training and equipping the Ukrainians is called for after the hopeful passage of the supplemental.

U.S. strikes in Iraq and Syria led to a temporary pause by Iran backed terrorist groups, but those attacks have restarted. By contrast, we have still not figured out how to compel the Houthis to stop attacking maritime trade.

I would remind my colleagues that Central Command for National Defense Strategy was supposed to be an economy of force theater in which we relied upon our allies. Instead, the Administration has ignored our allies and partners for the most part in the Middle East, and the damage to long term U.S. interests could be profound.

We face threats on multiple fronts. On top of that, the threats are worsening at a pace that our National Defense Strategy simply does not contemplate. Secretary Austin and General Brown, I would welcome both of your comments on whether you think it is time to actually rewrite that National Defense Strategy.

Is it adequate for the threats that I have mentioned? Let me say this with regard to my good friend's comments with regard to the caps in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. I disagree that the Administration was prevented from asking more for National Security and national defense than is contained in the Fiscal Responsibility Act cap.

As a matter of fact, the President's budget request for fiscal year 2025 with regard to domestic spending is some \$76 billion over the fiscal responsibility cap, and for some reason, the Administration chose to adhere to that cap only with regard to our most important duties, and that is defending this country and making sure our National Security is in order.

So, we will have a discussion about that, and I do have confidence that working together with Members on either side of the dais, the chair and I will be able to work alongside the Committee Members and get closer to where we need to be with regard to defending our country and keeping the peace.

What is alarming more than that, and it should be clear to Members on both sides of the aisle, is that our budgetary resourcing does not meet even the inadequate defense strategy we do have. We are dealing with a recruitment crisis, a languishing industrial base, an acquisition bureaucracy, and massive maintenance backlogs.

We need to invest more, and we need to invest more wisely. We should cut red tape, speed up the acquisition process, guard against unnecessary requirements, creep and use more innovative companies, which can respond to defense needs at the speed of relevance. More military spending is absolutely necessary, but it alone will not fix our problems.

We can never directly outspend the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, for example, and there are other forms of predatory investment. However, we have the deepest and broadest capital markets in the world.

They can be used on behalf of the American people living inside the United States, and we should actively work to bring those capital markets to bear outside the United States for National Security purposes. Mr. Secretary, you championed the Office of Strategic Capital, and the team there can do this work if you direct them to it.

Mr. Secretary, we have much work to do. No time to lose. Unfortunately, the time—the last time we were together, we discussed what I can only describe as, and I must say this, the contempt with which the Administration has treated Congress. When we pass a law and the President signs it into law, that is the law of the land, and we would appreciate it being adhered to by the Administration.

Your responsiveness to many of my simple inquiries, Mr. Secretary, has been lacking, to say the least. To take but two examples, you failed to follow the law and canceled the sea launched cruise missile again. We will of course have to revisit that in the NDAA.

You have decided not to implement my provision from the Merit Act, again, which has been enacted by both houses and signed by the President. Your Department has also failed to act on simple provisions of the law, which would help repair the relationship between you and the elected representatives of the public in Congress.

I hope we can fix these issues this year. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker, and now, let me recognize Secretary Austin for your testimony. Mr. Secretary, please.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LLOYD J. AUSTIN III,
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

Secretary AUSTIN. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thanks for the oppor-

tunity to testify in support of President Biden's proposed fiscal year 2025 budget request for the Department of Defense.

I am pleased to be joined for the first time by our outstanding Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General C.Q. Brown, and I am also glad to be back with Under Secretary of Defense Mike McCord, the Department's comptroller.

[Protest interruption.]

Chairman REED. The committee stands at ease until the Capitol Police restore order.

[Pause.]

Chairman REED. The committee will be in order. Secretary Austin.

Secretary AUSTIN. Let me start by thanking this committee for all that you do to support the U.S. military, our troops, and our military families. As Secretary, I have always been guided by three priorities, defending our Nation, taking care of our people, and succeeding through teamwork.

Our budget request for fiscal year 2025 will advance all three of these priorities. First, the President's request will invest in cutting edge capabilities across all domains, and that includes \$48.1 billion for naval and shipbuilding capabilities to strengthen and modernize our fleet, and \$61.2 billion to reinforce U.S. air dominance, and \$13 billion to bolster Army and Marine Corps combat capabilities.

Our request will also provide \$33.7 billion to strengthen our space architecture, and \$14.5 billion to develop and field cyber security tools. It will direct \$49.2 billion to modernize and recapitalize all three legs of our nuclear triad, and it will sharpen our tech edge through a \$167.5 billion investment in procurement and \$143.2 billion in R&D.

Second, this budget request will support our outstanding troops and their families, and that includes raising base pay and housing allowances, investing in better housing, and making childcare more accessible and more affordable.

The request will also fund vital work to prevent sexual assault and suicide in the military. Third, this request will help the Department further deepen our teamwork around the globe.

Our network of allies and partners remains a strategic advantage that no competitor can match, and you can see its power in our strengthening ties across the Indo-Pacific, in today's expanded and united NATO, and in the 50 country Ukraine Defense Contact Group that I convened to ensure that Ukraine can repel Putin's aggression.

Our budget remains rooted in our 2022 National Defense Strategy. Our request positions the United States to tackle that the Department's pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China, with confidence and urgency.

We will also provide resources to meet the acute threat of Putin's increasingly aggressive Russia. It will help us tackle the persistent danger from Iran, North Korea, and global terrorist organizations, and other malign actors.

It will help us continue to deter aggression against the United States and our allies and partners, and to prevail in conflict if nec-

essary. Now, today I want to underscore three key messages. First, even as our budget request——

[Protest interruption.]

Chairman REED. The committee stands at recess until the Capitol Police can restore order. The committee is in recess.

[Recess.]

Chairman REED. Let me once again reiterate that is not appropriate for comments or demonstrations by the spectators and audience here. We are conducting a hearing, and we will do so. We are——

[Protest interruptions.]

Chairman REED. I will direct the Capitol Police to remove the demonstrators. Mr. Secretary, you are recognized for your remarks.

Secretary AUSTIN. Thank you, Chairman. Again, I want to underscore three key messages. First, even as our budget request abides by the mandatory caps set by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, it is aligned to our strategy.

We made tough but responsible decisions in this budget that prioritize near-term readiness, modernization of the force, and support our tremendous troops and their families. Our approach dials back some near-term modernization for programs that are not set to come online until the 2030's, which will require top line growth and on time appropriations in future budgets.

Second, we can only fully reach the goals of our strategy with your help. I am grateful that Congress passed the fiscal year 2024 appropriations in March, and the single greatest way that Congress can continue to support the Department of Defense is to pass predictable, sustained, and timely appropriations.

My third and final message today is that the price of U.S. leadership is real, but it is far lower than the price of U.S. abdication. As the President has said, we are in a global struggle between democracy and autocracy.

Our security in these turbulent times relies on Americans' strength of purpose. We remain determined to meet this moment, and that is why our budget request seeks to invest in American security and in America's defense industrial base.

It is also why the Administration has requested nearly \$60 billion in a National Security supplemental for the Department of Defense, and that supplemental would support our partners in Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan, while making investments to increase submarine production.

About \$50 billion of this supplemental would flow through our industrial base, rushing aid to our partners while creating good American jobs in more than 30 states. I would like to thank all those who have worked to pass an effective funding package. Now we are more than 2 years into the Kremlin's war of aggression against Ukraine, and Putin is betting that the United States will falter and abandon our friends and leave Ukraine in mortal danger.

If the Kremlin prevails in Ukraine, it would embolden would be aggressors around the globe. The United States would be far less secure if Putin got his way in Ukraine. President Biden has warned that Putin will not stop at Ukraine.

If America walked away, we would put the free world in peril and risk unimaginable cost and dangers, and we know that China and others are watching and learning from what Putin does and how we respond. We look to our partners in Congress to help us make the investments needed to strengthen America's security through both the supplemental and the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request.

The U.S. military is the most lethal fighting force on Earth, and with your help, we are going to keep it that way. I am grateful for your support for our mission and for our troops, and with that, I look forward to taking your questions. Thank you, Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE LLOYD J. AUSTIN III

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of President Biden's proposed fiscal year 2025 budget for the Department of Defense.

I am joined for the first time by our outstanding new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General C.Q. Brown. I am also glad to be back with Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Mike McCord. We are grateful for the partnership of Congress and of this Committee in sustaining the most formidable fighting force in history. We remain deeply committed to our mission of keeping the United States secure in a rapidly changing global security environment. Above all, we are constantly mindful that our greatest strategic asset is our people—especially the more than 2 million extraordinary Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve servicemembers who step up every day to keep America safe.

As always, we understand our duty to be the best possible stewards of hard-earned taxpayer dollars. Our request for resources is rooted in our strategy, even as it recognizes fiscal reality. For the third straight year, the President's defense budget request builds on the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS). To responsibly and effectively implement the NDS and tackle the complex challenges we face, the budget hews to the performance-improvement initiatives that we established to improve the Department's capabilities, organizations, and management processes.

This budget request is consistent with the mandatory caps directed by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, allocating \$849.8 billion for DOD programs and initiatives for the coming fiscal year. Under these caps, we made difficult but responsible decisions that focus on maintaining our readiness and taking care of our people. I am confident that our budget request will continue to make the United States more secure. It will continue to bolster our ability to defend our country, paced to the growing, multi-domain challenge posed by an increasingly aggressive People's Republic of China (PRC). It will better prepare us to prevent strategic attacks against the United States or our allies and partners. It will strengthen the unmatched global network of alliances and partnerships that magnify our power and deepen our security. It will expand our ability to deter aggression, even while it prepares our forces to prevail in conflict if necessary. And it will pave the way toward a more resilient joint force and defense ecosystem, built for the security challenges of the 21st century.

The NDS identifies the PRC as the Department's pacing challenge. This budget request therefore focuses on the need to strengthen our integrated deterrence and position the United States to prevail in strategic competition with the PRC.

The budget request will also help us meet additional challenges we face in today's shifting global security environment. The NDS singles out President Vladimir Putin's increasingly aggressive Russia as an acute threat. In February, Russia's unprovoked and indefensible full-scale invasion of Ukraine entered its third grim year. The United States has been the essential nation in rallying support for Ukraine's fight against Putin's aggression and atrocities.

The NDS also highlights the persistent dangers posed by Iran, global terrorist organizations, and other malign actors. Ever since Hamas's vile terrorist assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, the United States has steadfastly supported Israel's right to self-defense; worked to prevent the conflict in Gaza from igniting new eruptions on Israel's northern border; pushed to protect innocent Palestinian civilians and get

far more humanitarian aid into Gaza; and moved decisively to deter Iran and its proxies from taking action that would escalate into a broader regional conflict.

Above all, the NDS demands even deeper investments in the Department's people, who remain the bedrock of America's security. We rely on the service and the sacrifice of our troops and our civilian workforce, and the President's budget request will dedicate the resources, services, policies, and programs needed to faithfully support them and their families.

Our commitment to maintaining enduring advantages for the United States is reflected in the Department's requests for procurement and for research and development—\$167.5 billion and \$143.2 billion, respectively.

Provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act forced tough choices related to further military modernization. The law's topline limitation requires the Department to make targeted reductions to programs that will deliver key capabilities in later years to preserve the joint force's ability to fight and win in the near term. This approach assumes some risk on mid-and long-term modernization efforts not intended to be delivered until the 2030's, but achieving our strategy will require making up for these funding delays with growth in future years.

Meanwhile, I take seriously Congress's goal for the Department to get a clean audit opinion by 2028. Americans should expect us to account for our dollars and our inventory. That is why this budget will continue to invest in the controls we put in place to ensure that we spend taxpayer resources as intended by Congress. And it is why I directed senior leaders to tie performance results to their organizations' audit objectives.

Notwithstanding our efforts at responsible fiscal management, the lack of timely enactment of full-year appropriations has seriously hindered the Department's operations and planning. I am grateful for congressional action to pass fiscal year 2024 appropriations, but when we are forced to operate under continuing resolutions, at the previous year's appropriations levels, the Department cannot start new initiatives or increase the rate of production for many high-priority programs. Stop-gap funding measures delay badly needed investments in our military infrastructure, inflict unnecessary disruptions on our servicemembers and their families, undermine our recruitment efforts, and give an unnecessary boost to our strategic competitors.

The single greatest way that Congress can support the Department of Defense and our troops is to pass predictable, adequate, sustained, and timely appropriations.

Since my first day as Secretary of Defense, I have been guided by three priorities: defending our Nation, taking care of our people, and succeeding through teamwork. As detailed below, President Biden's fiscal year 2025 budget request will advance all three of these overarching priorities, providing the most lethal fighting force on Earth with the means to defend the American people in turbulent times.

As Congress develops authorization and appropriations legislation in the months ahead, I am grateful for your support of our budget request and the mission and the people of the Department of Defense.

DEFENDING THE NATION

To tackle the evolving challenges and threats from the PRC, Russia, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and global terrorist groups, as well as transnational challenges such as climate change and pandemics, we must upgrade not just our weapons systems but also our ability to quickly field new capabilities. Today's rapidly shifting security environment demands that the Department ruthlessly prioritize to strengthen our warfighting capabilities, build a skilled and innovative defense workforce equipped for tomorrow's challenges, and work together more powerfully with our indispensable allies and partners.

Outpacing the PRC

As the NDS notes, an increasingly aggressive PRC is trying to shape the global system to suit its authoritarian preferences. This is a generational challenge, and the Department will continue to meet it. We also seek a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region in which all countries are free from coercion. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will help us realize that goal.

In fiscal year 2025 and beyond, we will strengthen U.S. integrated deterrence by advancing new operational concepts, investing in cutting-edge capabilities across all domains, and deepening our cooperation with our outstanding allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. Across the region, we are experimenting with new technologies to expand our warfighting advantages and refine the way that we operate.

We have made historic improvements to our force posture in the Indo-Pacific. Last year was the most transformative year in a generation for U.S. force posture in

Asia. In 2023, we made major infrastructure improvements in airfields, logistics, and domain awareness across the region.

Meanwhile, we are modernizing U.S. posture in Japan and have deployed additional forces in Japan, Australia, Guam, and, on a rotational basis, in the Philippines.

Through a \$9.9 billion request for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, the Department continues to prioritize investments in our activities and infrastructure to reinforce security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and bolster our advantages and those of our allies and partners west of the International Date Line. With our allies and partners, we will continue to increase the complexity and the scale of our exercises, which will boost deterrence and enhance interoperability. We also continue to staunchly support Taiwan's self-defense, consistent with our longstanding policy anchored in the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.

Answering the Acute Russian Threat

Putin's unprovoked and unjust 2022 invasion of Ukraine has taken a harrowing toll on the Ukrainian people and threatened security in Europe and beyond. Putin's war is a frontal assault on the hard-won, post-World War II rules-based international order that has produced decades of prosperity without great-power war. If Putin prevails in Ukraine, it would embolden would-be aggressors everywhere. The world of chaos and conquest that Putin seeks—one in which autocrats think they can rewrite borders by force—would leave the United States far less secure. The price of U.S. leadership remains far lower than the price of U.S. abdication. There is no good reason to think that an emboldened Putin would stop with Ukraine, which could mean unthinkably high costs for the United States. This is not just about Ukraine's survival; it is also about America's security.

The United States has therefore rallied a broad coalition of allies and partners to support Ukraine's brave fight against Putin's war of choice. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will position the Department to continue to oppose the Kremlin's aggression, while bolstering U.S. force posture in Europe and reinforcing our allies and partners.

As Putin's forces continue their attacks against Ukraine's front lines, cities, and civilians, support from Congress is more crucial than ever—especially the supplemental funding that Ukraine's brave defenders so urgently need. A supplemental would strengthen American security and save Ukrainian lives; it would enable us to meet Ukraine's urgent self-defense requirements, even as we maintain our own readiness and advance our military modernization; and it would meet our commitments to our partners in Israel and in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, because the additional arms and ammunition provided to Ukraine would be produced by our own defense industrial base, the supplemental would invest billions of dollars in the U.S. economy, creating quality jobs for Americans and increasing the resilience of our vital supply chains.

Persistent Security Threats

Other malign actors, including the DPRK, Iran, and global terrorist organizations, continue to threaten the security of the United States and our allies and partners. Russia has deepened its ties to Iran, the DPRK, and the PRC—all of which seek new ways to undermine U.S. interests across the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa. The fiscal year 2025 budget request ensures that the United States is ready to deter and respond to these persistent threats.

In the Middle East, the Department remains committed to Israel's right to self-defense; to ensuring that Israel never has to endure another assault like October 7th; to the swift return of all hostages in Gaza, including American citizens; and to preventing the further spread of conflict. At the same time, we continue to press Israel to protect Palestinian civilians and to increase the flow of urgently needed humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

The Department is also focused on Iran, whose nuclear ambitions, dangerous proxies, support for terrorism, and threats to freedom of navigation undermine regional security and threaten U.S. forces, allies, and partners. Through investments including integrated air-and missile-defense systems, maritime domain awareness, and counter-crewed aerial systems, the fiscal year 2025 budget request will help us strengthen our partnerships in the region and preserve our ability to deploy combat-credible forces when needed.

On the Korean Peninsula, we will continue to shore up peace and security, despite the DPRK's ongoing provocations. With our allies in the Republic of Korea and Japan, we are reinforcing our extended-deterrence commitment and strengthening bilateral and trilateral cooperation. That includes information sharing, joint exer-

cises, new missile-warning data-sharing systems, and increased U.S. rotations. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will ensure that U.S. forces in and around the Korean Peninsula remain ready to respond to aggression by the DPRK.

Our ability to monitor and disrupt terrorist threats to our country and our citizens has grown dramatically in the two decades since the September 11, 2001, attacks by al-Qaeda. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will continue to sharpen our over-the-horizon counter terrorism capabilities. The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS—now in its tenth year, with 87 members—is a lasting example of the value of working with allies and partners toward our common counter terrorism goals

Investing to Win Across All Domains

We continue to strengthen our capabilities across all domains of potential conflict. To strengthen our sea power, this request includes \$48.1 billion for naval and shipbuilding capabilities to enhance and modernize our fleet. The Navy's commitment to stable acquisitions remains the foundation of a healthy shipbuilding base. The Department plans to invest more than \$9 billion over the next 5 years to improve public repair yards through the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan.

We are also making a historic investment in our submarine industrial base to develop supply chains, attract and retain skilled workers, and ensure the on-time delivery of Columbia and Virginia Class submarines. The fiscal year 2025 budget request includes \$4 billion for the submarine industrial base, which follows the nearly \$1.2 billion requested in fiscal year 2024 and a supplemental request of \$3.3 billion. These investments account for existing production capacity at our shipyards and represent an investment strategy that will allow us to support both our domestic production goals and our commitments under the AUKUS initiative. These investments will enable the Navy to maintain undersea dominance, keep a strong presence in key regions, respond effectively to emerging PRC threats, and continue the transition to Distributed Maritime Operations.

The fiscal year 2025 budget also requests \$61.2 billion in key areas to assure U.S. air dominance. This includes continued funding for the modernization and sustainment of the F-35 and F-22 fleets, while developing the next-generation fighters and autonomous collaborative combat aircraft critical to maintaining superiority in the skies. Our request also prioritizes long-range fires, including hypersonic weapons; a modern air command-and-control framework; rapid global mobility; and preeminent electromagnetic-warfare capabilities. To further increase strategic deterrence, the fiscal year 2025 budget request will invest in the development, production, testing, and deployment of the B-21 strategic bomber and the Long-Range Standoff Weapon, which will enhance the Air Force's penetrating strike capability.

On land, the fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$13 billion to bolster Army and Marine Corps combat capabilities. It will continue to strengthen and modernize the Army's Organic Industrial Base, including improvements to its arsenals, maintenance depots, and ammunition facilities. It also invests in electromagnetic-warfare capabilities and command-and-control systems, as well as air-and missile-defense systems and land-based long-range fires. Additionally, the budget request will invest in technology to counter small uncrewed aerial systems, including sensors, a common operating picture, data libraries, and both kinetic and non-kinetic mitigation capabilities. And once again, we ask Congress to provide necessary flexibility for a portion of this funding to enable the Department to rapidly respond to emergent operational needs and evolving force protection requirements.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request includes a \$29.8 billion investment in munitions, including procurement for critical weapons such as Maritime Strike Tomahawk and Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles at or near maximum production-capacity levels. The Department is committed to boosting the variety and quantity of our air-, sea-, and ground-launched munition inventories and to maintaining a consistent and predictable demand signal for our industry partners. Congressional support of the Department's previous requests for multi-year procurement authority would help grow the advanced munitions industrial base.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request will support the Department's pursuit of base-resilience and base-hardening initiatives to protect our forces and installations from air and missile threats—and to recover quickly if struck. This request will continue to strengthen our missile-defense capabilities, including multiple new radars and launch systems for the Guam Defense System.

We are also seeking resources to improve infrastructure for our joint forces across the Indo-Pacific. We will increase the lethality and the survivability of our Army and Marine deployments in the Indo-Pacific by providing them with the capabilities they need to operate in distributed and contested environments. For our Air Force, this budget request will improve the resilience of our forward basing by funding hardening and dispersion activities.

In the space domain, we will continue to invest in the systems and the capabilities to build advantages over any competitor. The Department will commit \$33.7 billion to strengthen our space architecture, including strategic and tactical missile warning and tracking; communications; positioning, navigation, and timing; space sensing; and the supporting ground architecture. The budget request will also fund upgrades to our launch infrastructure to support more government and commercial launches.

Beyond our cooperation with the American commercial space sector, this budget request will also allow the Department to enhance our engagement with our allies and partners in the space domain. Consistent with the Space Strategic Review, these investments continue to focus on deterring hostile uses of space and ensuring that the United States can prevail should deterrence fail in this critical domain.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request proposes an investment of \$14.5 billion in cyber security and other investments in cyberspace. This includes, among other things, developing and fielding advanced cyber security tools and techniques to protect our networks and critical infrastructure; expanding data-centric and artificial intelligence programs; upgrading our cyber-operations training platform; and accelerating our use of cloud-based capabilities.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic—which killed more than 1.1 million Americans—underscored the national-security risks from biological threats. It is important, therefore, that in August 2023, the Department released the Biodefense Posture Review. This foundational document outlines key reforms to posture the Department to prevail in the face of future threats, including from adversaries who seek to disrupt U.S. military operations. Building on these reforms, the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request will further enhance our ability to keep America safe from biological threats.

Innovating and Modernizing

A safe, secure, and effective U.S. nuclear deterrent is the ultimate check on strategic attacks against our country and our allies. The Department is committed to maintaining and modernizing all three legs of the U.S. nuclear triad even as we remain ready to pursue arms-control measures that enhance U.S. and allied security. The fiscal year 2025 budget request includes an investment of \$49.1 billion to fund our nuclear enterprise and invest in U.S. nuclear command, control, and communications. This budget request will enable the Department to maintain our reliable and effective legacy systems while building and fielding their replacements.

The replacement for the ground-based leg of the nuclear triad, the Sentinel weapon system, remains one of the largest, most complex programs within the Department. The Department notified Congress in January that Sentinel had experienced a critical cost overrun, and we are now reviewing the program, as required under the Nunn-McCurdy Act. This robust review will be completed within 120 days after the submission of the President's budget. The Department remains determined to prevent gaps in capability as we modernize our intercontinental ballistic missile fleet.

The Department also continues to invest in cutting-edge defense capabilities, from uncrewed systems and smarter munitions to advanced energetics and manufacturing. We are integrating human-machine teaming, developing autonomous systems, and fielding reliable and resilient networks and data. At the same time, we are taking steps to optimize the practices and systems that are working best, while phasing out our technical debt—those quick fixes that we know will be costly or obsolete in the future. All this will make our operations faster, more lethal, and more survivable for our forces, allies, and partners. As I have repeatedly said, when we sharpen our tech edge, we expand our military edge.

In this sustained period of record or near-record low unemployment, the Department is finding new ways to develop and recruit the talent that will help us maintain America's position as the global leader in research and development. We are cultivating skilled scientists and engineers through the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation scholarship-for-service program and other initiatives. This budget request will also continue to pilot the Defense Civilian Training Corps and civilian cyber-workforce-incentive programs to strengthen skills in other critical fields such as acquisition, digital technologies, Zero Trust, and cyber security.

We are also investing in research partnerships focused on critical technologies with our allies and partners. Our unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships is key for technological development, co-investment in combined capabilities, and production capacity.

The Department continues to vigorously develop and test advanced weapons prototypes. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will foster the development of several hypersonic weapons programs, prioritizing surface-launched boost-glide capabilities

and air-launched cruise missiles. Also in fiscal year 2025, the Army will field its third Medium-Range Capability battery and its second Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon battery. Our budget request will also invest in further improvements to our subsonic cruise missiles to keep them effective against rapidly evolving threats and targets.

To sustain U.S. technological superiority for the future force, the public and private sectors must work even more closely together. The fiscal year 2025 budget will advance the work of the Defense Innovation Unit, which is working with venture-capital firms and tech innovators who are often doing business with the Department for the first time. By building bridges with private industry, we can acquire commercial technologies that will deliver game-changing capabilities at speed and scale. In 2022, I established the Office of Strategic Capital to provide the Department with new, loan-based tools to catalyze private investment in domestic production and manufacturing of the crucial technology supply base, at limited cost to the Department and the taxpayer. The recent passage of the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bill will empower this new office to help attract and scale private capital to invest in the critical technology components that underpin our most important weapons systems.

We also continue to invest in programs to test and scale emerging technologies, such as the Strategic Capabilities Office, the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve, and the Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies program.

Additionally, the Department will continue to work with Congress to tackle emerging concerns through the new Replicator initiative to accelerate capabilities from prototype to scale. The Department is currently focused on producing thousands of attritable autonomous systems over the next 18 to 24 months, creating a repeatable process that will enable the rapid delivery of future capabilities.

To improve the speed, quality, and accuracy with which commanders make decisions, we are actively pursuing the Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control capability, which seeks to integrate and deploy information across all domains and the electromagnetic spectrum. As Deputy Secretary Kathleen Hicks recently announced, the Department has delivered its initial iteration of this capability, an important step in scaling it across the joint force. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will help the United States maintain our edge in command and control across all domains, as the pace and amount of information in warfare increases.

Improving Our Resilience

As the NDS warns, the climate crisis is reshaping the Department's strategic environment and threatening U.S., allied, and partner interests. Climate change is placing new demands on the joint force and challenging our readiness. Extreme weather events have inflicted billions of dollars of damage on DOD installations and assets. And in places such as the Arctic, climate change is creating new potential points of friction.

By working with allies and partners to enhance climate resilience, we strengthen our defense relationships and bolster our ability to respond to instability and humanitarian emergencies. Meanwhile, by reducing the operational energy demand of our platforms, we can act more nimbly and freely in contested logistics environments and sustain distributed operations.

This budget request will invest in enhancements to our operational capabilities, mission resilience, and readiness. This includes programs that reduce or avoid the risk of energy and water supply disruptions to military facilities—whether caused by extreme weather, cyber operations, or kinetic attack. The budget request also includes funding to improve the energy efficiency of combat operations and platforms, to enhance the joint force's agility, and to reduce logistics risk in contested environments like the Indo-Pacific region. Throughout, our focus is on maximizing our operational advantages—and, when necessary, preparing to fight and win under any conditions.

TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE

Doing right by our people is a readiness imperative. This budget request therefore will enable the Department to invest in significant additional quality-of-life improvements, military pay raises, and benefits for our outstanding servicemembers and their families. Furthermore, it helps to implement historic military-justice reforms, counter the scourge of sexual assault, build positive command climates, and deepen our efforts to prevent suicide in our ranks.

Strengthening Support to Service Members and Families

Our servicemembers and their families deserve competitive compensation packages that make the Department an employer of choice. After troops received a basic-pay increase of 5.2 percent in 2024—the largest in more than 20 years—the fiscal year 2025 budget request will support a 4.5 percent pay raise in the coming year. At the President's directive, we will continue to examine compensation through the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation.

The places where we work and live affect our people's ability to carry out their missions and the overall recruitment and retention of the force. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will build on recent investments in construction, maintenance, clean-up, and conservation, including \$2 billion for family housing construction and operations and more than \$1 billion in military construction for unaccompanied housing. This continued investment reflects the commitment in our "Resilient and Healthy Defense Communities" strategy to ensure that our people live, work, and train in healthy, functional, and resilient spaces.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request will provide additional economic support to our servicemembers and families across a range of programs. The Department is making childcare more accessible and affordable, and we are expanding the availability of childcare-fee assistance through the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood PLUS initiative. Additionally, in 2023, the Department established the opportunity for servicemembers and their families to contribute to dependent-care flexible spending accounts, which make the costs of childcare and other forms of care for family members easier to bear. I have also taken direct action to reduce commissary prices and to increase opportunities for our military spouses to excel in their own careers.

With thanks to Congress, the Department has implemented expanded parental-leave benefits for our servicemembers. New parents now receive 12 weeks of paid, non-chargeable leave, whether they become parents by birth, adoption, or long-term foster care. And when a servicemember suffers the tragedy of the death of a spouse or child, DOD has implemented a bereavement leave benefit that Congress provided, which allows servicemembers who have not yet accrued significant annual-leave balances to take up to 14 days of non-chargeable leave in these times of grief.

Protecting Our Teammates and Ensuring Accountability

As I said on my first full day in office, sexual assault in the military is a scourge, and ending it is a leadership issue. Every member of the force deserves a workplace free of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and personal fear, which erode cohesion and trust within our units. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will ensure that the Department will have the capabilities, the programs, and the integrated prevention workforce needed to implement the recommendations I approved from the 2021 Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military.

The Department also recently reached a milestone in strengthening accountability and increasing servicemembers' trust in the fairness and integrity of the military justice system. In December 2023, the Offices of Special Trial Counsel within the Military Departments reached full operational capability, shifting prosecutorial discretion for 13 serious criminal offenses away from commanders to specially trained and independent judge advocates who report directly to the Secretaries of the Military Departments. This landmark change to the U.S. military justice system significantly strengthens the independent prosecution of sexual assault and other serious criminal offenses, such as domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect. It is the most important reform to our military justice system since the creation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in 1950, and I am grateful to Congress for passing this important law.

The Department also remains laser-focused on preventing suicide in our ranks, and we are committed to implementing enabling actions informed by the work of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee. In September 2023, I announced a comprehensive suicide-prevention campaign plan implementing more than 80 actions, including steps to improve suicide-prevention training, reduce the stigma associated with seeking help, expand access to support services, and promote the safe storage of guns and potentially dangerous medications.

Addressing the Recruiting Challenge and Growing Our Talent

The Department of Defense must recruit and retain the best of America, building pathways of opportunity for all qualified patriots who seek to serve. Many factors can affect recruiting, including a competitive economy, shifting attitudes toward institutions, limited familiarity with the military, and the aftermath of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. To push past the headwinds in meeting the recruiting mission, we must clearly convey the full range of opportunities and benefits offered by mili-

tary service. Recent legislation and ongoing activities by the Services are opening pathways for recruiters to reach more young people while upholding our standards. Amid today's challenging recruiting environment, retention remains high. The Department has moved effectively to incentivize members to remain in the military, to strive for promotion and increased responsibility, and to enhance their skills and abilities. This budget request envisions additional ways to tap into the full range of talent across America.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request will also support a properly sized, highly capable civilian workforce aligned to the Department's mission and workload. The Department will continue to work to make the best possible use of our deeply dedicated people, including our troops, our civilian workers, and our contractors.

The Department continues to provide exceptional opportunities for service and professional development. This means attracting more personnel with technological skills, foreign-language abilities, or other talents. We are investing in training and education, as well as creating scholarships for science, technology, engineering, and math. The Department is committed to attracting, retaining, and developing the best talent in America, especially rising stars with expertise on emerging technologies and cutting-edge capabilities such as AI, data analytics, digital modernization, and cyber operations.

SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Our long-term security and success demand teamwork—across the Department and beyond. That means working closely and effectively with our interagency colleagues, Congress, industry, and our peerless network of allies and partners worldwide. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will enable the Department to deepen our cooperation with the allies and partners who magnify our power and advance our shared security interests.

The NDS is rooted in the immutable military reality that strengthening our work with allies and partners deepens our common security and lets us share the burden of forging a safer and more prosperous world. For example, the Defense Security Cooperation Service that I established in May 2023 will improve the way the Department trains, organizes, and equips itself for security cooperation, which in turn will let us more swiftly and effectively deliver capabilities to our allies and partners. This budget request will support the initial phases of the establishment of this service, which will put our embassy-based Security Cooperation personnel on par with those in the Defense Attaché Service.

The AUKUS Partnership

I am grateful to Congress for its support of the historic AUKUS partnership, including passing legislation to allow for more seamless defense innovation and trade with two of our closest allies, Australia and the United Kingdom. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will support the AUKUS initiative to forge a more secure balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region. Our three proud democracies are jointly tackling the threats of the 21st century, building on our proud work together in the 20th century.

Last year, the President announced our plans for the first major initiative of AUKUS: providing Australia with a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine. The phased approach to that initiative will allow us to provide this capability on the fastest possible timeline, while strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime. The first phase of that initiative is on track: the first Australian submariners have graduated from our nuclear-power school; two of our submarines have conducted port visits in western Australia; and Australian workers are building their skills alongside Americans in our ports in Hawaii and Guam. In December 2023, I hosted my U.K. and Australian counterparts at the Defense Innovation Unit in Silicon Valley, where we committed to seeking even greater innovation and interoperability among our defense industries. This AUKUS initiative will deepen trilateral cooperation in several areas, including artificial intelligence and autonomy, quantum technologies, cyber capabilities, hypersonics, and more.

We are also expanding our bilateral defense and security cooperation with Australia, particularly on force posture and capabilities development. In 2023, our two governments entered into an arrangement to collaborate on a flexible guided weapons production and maintenance capability to be located in Australia.

Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific

Our network of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific is deep, wide, strong, and committed to a shared vision of peace, prosperity, stability, and deterrence. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will ensure that the United States can continue to strengthen these key alliances and partnerships.

To deter the threat that the DPRK's nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programs pose to the American Homeland, we have increased rotations of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula and returned to large-scale, combined, live-fire exercises with the Republic of Korea.

We are working closely with our Japanese allies to forward-deploy more versatile and resilient U.S. capabilities, to enhance Japan's counterstrike capabilities, and to modernize our alliance's command and control.

We are modernizing the U.S.-Philippines alliance by enhancing maritime cooperation, strengthening Philippine capabilities, and improving interoperability and information sharing. Under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, we have expanded our rotational presence to four new strategic locations in the Philippines. These steps underscore our unwavering commitment to our Mutual Defense Treaty with our allies in the Philippines.

Our annual Cobra Gold exercise with Thailand helps strengthen relationships among participating regional partners. Last year's exercise saw the largest U.S. contingent in a decade, as well as the participation of dozens of other countries, in a welcome return to pre-pandemic levels.

With this budget request, we are beginning a new chapter in U.S.-India relations, under our Major Defense Partnership. Our militaries are accelerating joint exercises, information-sharing, and other operational activities to boost maritime security in the Indian Ocean. By bolstering the Indian military's capabilities, we can work together to uphold a more stable balance of power across the wider Indo-Pacific. We are committed to ensuring that the growing U.S.-India partnership supports the efforts of our broader network of allies and partners, especially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among Australia, India, Japan, and the United States.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request will also enable the Department to remain engaged across the Pacific Islands region, in alignment with our Indo-Pacific strategy. That includes building on the Defense Cooperation Agreement that we secured last year with Papua New Guinea, as well as increased security cooperation and closer bonds with the Freely Associated States—Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

Strong multilateral cooperation, including with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), underpins all these efforts to foster a free and open Indo-Pacific. As I have said, the Indo-Pacific remains our center of strategic gravity.

European Security and Support to Ukraine

The United States continues to work closely with our allies and partners to support Ukraine's fight for freedom. The engine of our efforts is the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, the coalition of some 50 countries that I regularly convene to meet Ukraine's immediate battlefield needs and support its long-term security and sovereignty. Members of the Contact Group have organized new, multinational "capability coalitions," focused on supporting such areas as Ukraine's air force, integrated air and missile defense, artillery, maritime security, armor, information technology, de-mining, and drones.

Putin's war of choice poses the largest threat to European security since the height of the cold war, and NATO is more united than ever. The greatest alliance in history has gained two more highly capable defense partners with the recent accession of Finland and Sweden, and the United States has moved urgently with our allies to further fortify NATO and bolster its defenses on its eastern flank.

Allies are also increasing investments in their own militaries at levels not seen since the end of the cold war. More allies than ever are meeting their pledges to invest at least 2 percent of their GDP in defense—including, as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has noted, a real increase of 11 percent in defense spending in 2023 across our European and Canadian allies. This is historic progress, and we will continue to encourage further investments and urge every member of NATO to meet its obligations under the Defense Investment Pledge.

Our commitment to Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty remains ironclad. We will not be dragged into Russia's war of choice, but we will stand with Ukraine as it fights to defend itself, and we will continue to strengthen NATO's collective defense and deterrence. We cannot have a secure America without a strong NATO.

The Kremlin's war poses a direct threat to security in Europe and beyond. The world will only become more dangerous if Putin and his fellow autocrats conclude that they can wipe democracies off the map and force free people to live in fear. So we will continue to support

Ukraine's brave defenders—both because it is the right thing to do and because it is central to America's continued security.

Investing in America's Defense Industrial Base

The United States needs an adaptive, resilient, and robust defense industrial base to meet its 21st-century defense challenges. Today, our defense industrial base still relies heavily on foreign production and vulnerable supply chains. Providing military capabilities at the speed and scale necessary to maintain our competitive advantage—without relying on competitors for capital, technology, or raw materials—will require cooperation and investment from both the private and public sectors to build a modern defense industrial base.

In January, the Department published the National Defense Industrial Strategy, which will guide DOD actions—in partnership with industry and our allies—to meet the production demands posed by evolving threats. This budget request will shore up critical domestic and allied supply chains for sectors such as microelectronics, casting and forging, and batteries and energy storage. It will also help secure upstream supplies of rare earth elements essential to U.S. economic and national security, including by supporting programs to boost innovative manufacturing methods, the use of alternate materials, and strategic stockpiling.

The budget request also outlines investments to revitalize our submarine industrial base. That will create good American jobs, grow our manufacturing capacity, and strengthen our submarine supply chains.

When we invest in America's defense industrial base, we do not just strengthen our national security; we also boost our economy. The defense sector can catalyze innovation, create jobs, and make technological advances. Our relationships with industry can strengthen America's defense even as they sustain America's economic growth.

Such progress relies on a fully funded defense budget. Dependence on short-term funding measures damages our ability to invest in our defense industrial base. Under continuing resolutions, critical national-security programs are delayed or put on hold, and the fiscal uncertainty destabilizes the U.S. economy. The only clear path for the United States to maintain our global strength and continue to outpace our rivals is for our valued partners in Congress to provide full-year appropriations. Building on Congress's meaningful investments over the past 3 years, the Department is committed to working with Congress to ensure that our industrial base can continue to meet the needs of our warfighters—and ensure continued security for the United States.

CONCLUSION

As the President has noted, we stand at “an inflection point in world history.” Amid a global battle between democracy and autocracy, our friends, our rivals, and our foes are all looking to America. Our security in these turbulent times relies on American strength of purpose. We remain determined to meet this moment.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request will ensure that the Department will be able to continue building the most lethal, resilient, and responsive military on Earth. We hope that our valued partners in Congress will help us make the critical, targeted investments to strengthen America's security in this time of historic challenge. To that end, the single best thing that Congress can do to strengthen our national defense is to pass a full-year appropriation. Our competitors do not have to operate under continuing resolutions. When the Department does, it erodes both our country's security and our ability to compete—today and in the future.

We make this request mindful of the need to be faithful stewards of taxpayer dollars. The American public, including of course our extraordinary troops and veterans, should never expect anything less.

Finally, I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians; their families, caregivers, and survivors; and our civilian employees. They are our greatest strategic asset—and they never waver in their drive to make our union more perfect, our country more secure, and our world more just.

Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. General Brown, please.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR., USAF,
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

General BROWN. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to join Sec-

retary Austin and Honorable Mike McCord to appear before you today.

On behalf of the Joint Force, the Department of Defense civilians, and our families, I want to thank Congress for your steadfast support and the opportunity to testify on the fiscal year 2025 defense budget request, which reflects our shared commitment to our new security. The global security environment is increasingly complex.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy identifies five key challenges, the People's Republic of China, our pacing challenge, continues its risky behavior around the globe, a really aggressive Russia with its unprovoked war against Ukraine, a destabilizing North Korea and Iran, which threaten regional security, and violent extremist organizations which leverage instability to advance their cause.

These challenges are interconnected, which demands a strategic approach addressing the immediate threats, while also preparing for future contingencies. Days after becoming the Chairman, I laid out three expectations in my message to the Joint Force. Honing our warfighting skills has primacy in all we do. Modernizing and aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches.

Trust is the foundation of our profession. Our military exists to fight and win our nation's wars. We train every day to ensure we are so good at what we do that we deter any adversary from engaging the U.S. in conflict. This budget requests \$147 billion to sustain readiness and ensure the Department can counter near-term threats.

We are also focused on better integrating our allies and partners in our planning and operations by investing in critical programs and capability, expanding security cooperation, exercises, training, interoperability.

Our investments in readiness ensure the Joint Force can respond when the Nation calls. While we remain focused on our readiness for the day, it is critical to modernize and leave with new concepts to prepare for tomorrow. The Department continues to invest in capability and capacity to outpace our competitors, while transforming from costly legacy platforms that are no longer relevant to the threat.

This budget strategically invests \$167.5 billion in procurement, underscoring our commitment to equip the Joint Force with unparalleled combat capabilities across every domain. This budget also invests \$143.2 billion in research, development, test, and evaluation of future capabilities that will retain our strategic edge.

Finally, this budget invests significantly into nuclear modernization, digital innovation, multi-year procurement of critical munitions, and to strengthen the defense industrial base. With rapidly evolving threats and technologies, accelerating our modernization is crucial. Last, trust is the foundation of our profession.

The Joint Force must build upon and uphold trust in each other, trust with our families, trust of our elected leaders, and trust of our Nation. Enhancing the quality of service and quality life for our personnel is not just a moral obligation, but a strategic imperative.

This budget includes investments in quality service efforts such as advanced training, educational benefits, and career develop-

ment, while also investing in quality of life projects like housing, medical clinics, and childcare facilities, as well as funding spouse employment initiatives, enhance mental health resources, and robust programs to combat sexual assault.

We must create an environment where all can reach their full potential. Trust that our Joint Force stands ready. Ready to defend our national interests. Ready to deter aggression, and ready, if necessary, to fight and win our Nation's wars.

I thank you for your support and collaboration in our shared commitment to face the security challenges of today and prepare for tomorrow. We are living in consequential times and there is no time to waste. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Charles Q. Brown, Jr. follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR., USAF

OVERVIEW

I am honored to represent our dedicated Joint Force, Department of Defense civilians, and their families who are focused on ensuring and supporting our national security. I thank Congress for your support and collective commitment to addressing our most pressing national security challenges. The Joint Force acknowledges and appreciates the diligent efforts of our congressional members in securing the vital resources necessary to train, equip, and maintain our readiness, while also modernizing to prepare for the future.

The President's \$849.8 billion defense budget for fiscal year 2025 reflects our shared commitment to facing today's security challenges head-on, while also laying the groundwork to confront the uncertainties of tomorrow. This budget includes targeted program reductions to meet funding levels approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. Under these caps, this budget prioritizes Joint Force readiness and taking care of our people while reducing programs that will deliver future combat capability in the 2030's.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the evolving security challenges that the Department must address to safeguard our national interests. Implementing the NDS requires the Joint Force address these challenges while simultaneously accelerating modernization to maintain our strategic advantages. This budget resources our strategy and enables the Joint Force to invest in capabilities to remain the most capable military force in the world for decades to come. The NDS articulates four key priorities essential to our national security:

- Defending the Homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- Deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners
- Deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary
- Building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem

The NDS makes it clear that the PRC remains our pacing challenge and "our most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades." The PRC is the only State with the intent as well as the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to reshape its region and the global order. The Joint Force will focus efforts on addressing our pacing challenge while simultaneously preparing for and responding to the acute Russian threat and the challenges posed by North Korea, Iran, and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs).

This budget is threat-informed and built to ensure that our strategic planning, resource distribution, and capability development are responsive to current challenges as well as future threats. Through aligning this budget with the strategic and operational landscape, the Joint Force is postured to remain versatile, resilient, and capable to protect the American people, our prosperity, and our way of life.

Each branch and component of our Armed Forces plays a pivotal role in supporting and upholding these priorities. The connections from this budget request to the NDS, National Military Strategy (NMS), and the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) are clear and deliberate. The JWC, informed by the current threat environment, has linkages to our resource allocation and requirement planning processes.

The current strategic environment requires that our force continue to advance and adapt to the changing character of war. We must always be prepared to fight and

win our Nation's next war. Our current strategic advantage gives us confidence against any adversary. We must continue to strengthen our national security and our warfighting advantage because our competitors and adversaries have not stopped advancing their capabilities.

I am confident in our Joint Force. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, and civilian teammates form the most capable fighting force in the world—bar none. In my 2 October 2023, Message to the Joint Force, I articulated my expectations for the Joint Force:

- Honing our warfighting skill has primacy in all we do
- Modernizing and aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches
- Trust is the foundation of our profession

The Joint Force can only remain the world's most capable force if it is supported by the necessary resources to organize, train, equip, exercise, and employ the Total Force. We can only accomplish our mission and maintain our advantage with stable, predictable, and timely budgets. By passing an on-time budget, Congress enables the Department to execute our strategy with a full-year appropriation. We are challenged to implement our strategy and stay ahead of our pacing challenge when we are not resourced with an on-time full-year appropriation and funding is delayed due to another Continuing Resolution.

Our servicemembers and their families sacrifice for our Nation and we owe them the tools they need to be successful in a dynamic, evolving strategic environment.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The global security environment is extremely complex. The international order and its principles of sovereignty, democracy, and rule of law have underpinned global security for almost 80 years. Today, this system is under threat. The NDS identifies five key challenges that threaten U.S. national interests and our way of life: the PRC, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and VEOs. All five of these challenges are currently active at the same time and in some cases working together.

I have served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for more than 6 months and during this time, each of our NDS challenges have confronted our defense and security goals. The PRC continues to undertake coercive and risky military behavior in the South China Sea, across the Indo-Pacific, and around the globe. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine has entered its third year seeking to overthrow a sovereign neighbor that posed no threat. Iran sponsors and supports militia groups and terrorist activity threatening regional stability and U.S. Forces. North Korea continues to test ballistic missiles and technology while also transferring ballistic missiles to Russia in direct violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. VEO activities around the globe spread violence, sow terror, and cause unnecessary suffering. These actors work to exploit perceived gaps in U.S. military might, seeking to expand their influence and challenge the global order.

Today's current global strategic environment requires the Joint Force to both address the pacing challenge of the PRC and focus efforts on the rest of the globe. We can and will do both.

People's Republic of China: The PRC's increasingly aggressive military actions in the South China Sea; actions to assist Russia, North Korea, and Iran; and increasing economic influence around the globe threaten to destabilize the global security environment. The PRC continues to expand military capabilities across multiple domains. We are entering a decisive decade where the PRC is challenging the future of the international order and the United States' place in the world.

Though the Joint Force focuses on being ready for conflict, our goal is to deter and stay in competition. On 21 December 2023, I held a video teleconference with my PRC counterpart to discuss the importance of responsibly managing competition and avoiding miscalculations. Communication lines have reopened with the PRC across various levels across the U.S. Government, engaging in substantive dialog which can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and inadvertent escalations.

Russia: Russia's war in Ukraine not only threatens European stability but also aims to undermine the global order to benefit its interests. The international community's support for Ukraine has been pivotal, emphasizing the global commitment to sovereignty and deterring future aggression around the world. Russia's focus on expanding and modernizing its nuclear arsenal further complicates the global security dynamic.

North Korea: North Korea's advancing nuclear program threatens U.S. interests and regional stability. Its ongoing and increasingly aggressive ballistic missile research and testing represent a threat to our Homeland and to our Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, recent information has indicated that North

Korea provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and ballistic missiles, which is a notable and concerning escalation in North Korean support for Russia.

Iran: Iran-backed militia groups have used the HAMAS terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 to increase attacks on U.S. forces in Syria, Iraq, the Red Sea, and across the region. Iran's support for and involvement in these attacks contributes to larger regional instability. Additionally, Iranian aid has enabled the Houthis to initiate a campaign of missile attacks, since November 2023, against commercial ships in the Red Sea. Iran is also taking actions to improve its missile forces and continues to retain programs that would enable nuclear weapon production. Finally, Iran provides support to Russia's aggression and continues to operate across the gray zone with coercive and malign activities.

Violent Extremist Organizations: Against the backdrop of these State actors, VEOs continue to sow terror and instability, with recent escalations further threatening regional peace. On 7 October 2023, HAMAS conducted a heinous and brutal attack on the people of Israel. The U.S. remains committed to supporting Israel's right to defend itself while actions to protect and provide humanitarian aid to the civilians in Gaza must increase. The threat landscape is further complicated by transnational extremist organizations such as ISIS, al Qaeda, and others across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific. Despite experiencing significant setbacks, these groups persist in their violent campaigns, leveraging instability to expand their presence, manipulate populations, and disseminate radical ideologies.

The interconnectedness of these challenges necessitates a strategic approach that addresses the immediate threats while also preparing for future contingencies. The U.S. and its Allies must navigate this complex environment with a combination of military readiness, diplomatic engagement, and a commitment to the principles that have historically underpinned global order.

WARFIGHTING

Our military exists to fight and win our Nation's wars. That is why I'm adamant, honing our warfighting skill has primacy in all we do. We train and prepare every day to ensure we are so good at what we do, that we deter any adversary from engaging the U.S. in conflict. The fiscal year 2025 budget will enable our force to train across the full spectrum of operations at varied levels of scope, scale, and complexity. The Joint Force works to implement the NDS through campaigning by linking together training, exercises, and activities to reach our defined objectives. This budget enables the necessary investments to carry out our Joint Force's crucial work and to do so with tactical and technical proficiency.

First and foremost, our servicemembers are expected to master the warfighting skills of their individual service. Our servicemembers must focus on being an adversary's worst nightmare in a fight. As the tactical expert in each domain of warfare, our servicemembers are then required to integrate individual mission areas into a cohesive fighting force. With the changing character of war, future conflicts will be fought across all warfighting domains—land, sea, air, space, and information. Therefore, eliminating gaps and seams in Joint Force readiness will be a priority. This requires proper resourcing for training aides, employment ranges, and equipment to be able to practice like we fight across events from daily training evolutions to fully integrated high fidelity international exercises. This budget requests \$147 billion to sustain readiness and ensure the Department can counter near-term threats and prevail in long-term strategic competition.

In addition, any future armed conflict will be fought alongside Allies and partners, necessitating our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians be able to integrate across the joint and combined force. My expectation is that America's servicemembers are able to execute tactically while also understanding the larger operational context and geostrategic environment in which they operate.

Finally, our servicemembers understand that the United States military is only one component of our whole of government efforts to support and protect our interests in the global order. The U.S. must act with one end goal in mind and holistically bring together all our elements of national power.

Allies and Partners: The United States has an incredible network of Allies and partners with whom we integrate to achieve our security objectives. We can better leverage their contributions and capabilities by building them into our plans from the beginning. We cannot expect success when we focus on building U.S.-only capability and then adding on Allies and partners at the end. We must start at the beginning with the end in mind and account for our Allies and partners earlier in our planning, requirement, and acquisition processes. The fiscal year 2025 budget will enable the Joint Force to plan, train, and exercise alongside our Allies and partners worldwide. It will also enable further research, development, and testing for joint

capabilities and the integration of partner capabilities to collectively address global security challenges. Our Allies and partners are a powerful force multiplier and are crucial for our continued security.

Working together as a combined force enhances our capabilities immensely, demonstrated by the collective effort of Allies and partners around the world in delivering more than \$88 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2022. This security assistance has not only supported Ukraine, but it has also reaffirmed our resolve to work with our Allies and partners around the world as closely as ever. We have strengthened NATO, enhanced and recommitted our support to Israel and Taiwan against regional threats, and advanced efforts in the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. (AUKUS). This budget includes \$2.9 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative and \$9.9 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. This will fund capabilities to expand security cooperation with Allies and partners across Europe and the Indo-Pacific, ballistic missile defense activities in support of Guam, improved infrastructure, exercises, training, and experimentation activities. The \$4.0 billion for the submarine industrial base will strengthen the health and capacity of the submarine force and further advances AUKUS. In our globally interconnected world, relationships matter. None matter more than our close-knit ties with our Allies and partners.

During my more than 6 months in this job, I have had more than 145 engagements with my counterparts from around the world. My engagements have revalidated a well-known fact. U.S. leadership is wanted, needed, and watched. U.S. efforts are a catalyst for change—what we do drives action.

MODERNIZATION AND NEW CONCEPTS

Our Nation needs us to both be ready to fight today's battles and prepare for tomorrow's wars. We must prepare by modernizing and aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches. The JWC provides a framework for how the Joint Force will modernize and how we will fight in a future conflict. The JWC guides the Department's future force development, design, and warfighting approach to ensure we have the right people, equipment, training, roles, and doctrine to deter and if necessary, win in a future conflict. We must modernize our force, through innovation and by building a bridge to the defense industry to deliver capability in a timely manner.

As we work to shorten the timeline between prototype and program of record, there is growing importance for collaboration between the Services and our industry partners to deliver at scale, develop training programs, and provide required sustainment so our warfighters can operationalize the delivered capabilities. With rapidly evolving threats and technologies, accelerating our modernization is crucial. Our adversaries are advancing quickly, and it is imperative that we equip our Joint Force with the most advanced tools and capabilities available.

Readiness and modernization depend upon consistent on-time, full year appropriations. We thank Congress for passing fiscal year 2024 appropriations and we will work with Congress to deliver on-time appropriations for fiscal year 2025. Continuing Resolutions of any length have long lasting impacts on the Joint Force. They significantly impact and degrade our ability to defend the United States. They slow progress, prevent new starts of programs, and delay our force modernization efforts. They damage our relationships with the defense industrial base, eroding trust and driving up costs as industry hedges against funding inconsistency. We have operated under Continuing Resolutions for 14 of the last 15 years, totaling 5 years' worth of lost time. Time we cannot get back.

Force Modernization: We continue the execution of several programs essential to Joint Force modernization, focusing on advanced platforms, long-range fires, and uncrewed systems. The Department continues to invest in capabilities and effects to outpace our competitors while divesting costly legacy platforms that no longer best meet our needs. While these choices may be challenging, they are crucial for directing resources toward the optimal mix of programs to fill the portfolio of requirements essential for our security.

In the fiscal year 2025 budget, \$167.5 billion is strategically allocated toward procurement, solidifying our commitment to equip the Joint Force with unparalleled combat capabilities across every domain. Our air power will be elevated through a fleet of advanced fighter aircraft, the B-21 bomber, and tanker aircraft. Our sea power is strengthened with the construction of six battle force ships as well as the continued production of *Ford*-class aircraft carriers and *Columbia* ballistic missile submarines. Our combat force in the land domain will be modernized and reinforced with the most advanced equipment available including the Armored Multi-Purpose

Vehicle, Amphibious Combat Vehicle, and the XM30 Combat Vehicle. This budget also includes significant development in uncrewed and autonomous systems to expand reach, access, and payload for operations across all domains. Together, these systems along with advanced weapons will challenge, target, and neutralize adversary capabilities while also affirming our technological edge in an era of strategic competition.

Additionally, this budget significantly advances our long-range fires capabilities with \$9.8 billion for the development and procurement of multi-domain hypersonic weapons and the improvement of long-range survivable subsonic weapon systems. These strategic investments ensure our Joint Force maintains a decisive edge in delivering precise strikes over vast distances to outpace emerging threats and support future warfighting concepts.

Across all domains, we continue to invest in the capabilities and technologies that will position the Joint Force to meet the pacing challenge of the PRC and the acute threat of a newly aggressive Russia. Furthermore, the Joint Force recognizes the importance of the space and cyber domains and is focused on those areas promising the largest return on investment in the near-term, such as space domain awareness, space command and control, space resiliency, cyber security, and the Cyber Mission Force. The \$143.2 billion fiscal year 2025 budget request for research, development, test, and evaluation will enable the Department to develop the technology, innovative capabilities, and modernized approaches for the Joint Force to gain and exploit positions of advantage.

Nuclear Modernization: In alignment with our overarching strategy for Joint Force modernization, the fiscal year 2025 budget underscores our commitment to the comprehensive recapitalization of our Nation's strategic deterrent. This deterrent not only protects the United States but also many Allies who depend on extended deterrence and assurance. We are in the midst of a generational change, undertaking the modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad simultaneously with the development of the sea-based *Columbia*-class submarine, the airborne B-21 bomber aircraft, and the land-based Sentinel Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). These systems will form the backbone of our Joint Force's ability to maintain a safe, secure, effective, and credible nuclear deterrent. Concurrently, we are enhancing and modernizing our Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) systems to ensure they remain secure and reliable amidst evolving threats.

This concerted effort in nuclear modernization is foundational, enabling the broader strategic capabilities that underpin our national defense. It fortifies our extended deterrence commitments, amplifying the strength and cohesion of our global alliances and partnerships. A modernized, safe, secure, and effective nuclear triad provides an outsized return on investment to assure our Allies, deter aggression, and preserve our national security.

Our investment in nuclear capabilities reflects a judicious balance between advancing cutting-edge technologies and phasing out legacy capabilities. Nuclear modernization is a critical component of our strategy, ensuring the Joint Force remains equipped to navigate the complexities of modern warfare and emerging global threats.

Digital Innovation: The Joint Force is also advancing our digital modernization, acknowledging decision advantage will be a key offset in future conflicts. The Joint Force remains committed to realizing a fully capable Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) environment and leveraging initiatives being demonstrated today in our Global Information Dominance Experiments (GIDE). A modernized and technologically advanced Joint Force will communicate seamlessly across platforms in all domains. This will ensure we quickly identify viable paths capable of delivering command and decision dominance. CJADC2 will enhance warfighting readiness through improved access to and the interoperability of joint data at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This budget requests over \$1.3 billion to develop and improve our CJADC2 capabilities.

With investments in digital innovation, from command and control to modeling and simulation, digital modernization can improve all Department work, advance intelligence collection, streamline processes, and enable better data-informed decisionmaking. The fiscal year 2025 budget prioritizes artificial intelligence (AI), investing \$1.8 billion in research, development, test, and evaluation funds and in operations and maintenance funds, highlighting the strategic importance of AI to our Joint Force for both the near-and long-term.

Additionally, this budget allocates \$14.5 billion for cyberspace activities, supporting the Joint Force's defensive and offensive cyberspace operations capabilities and cyber strategy. This funding will enable the Joint Force to move at the pace of technology. Investments and relationships help the Joint Force accelerate soft-

ware and technology production to scale ideas and move from concept to combat capability.

Munitions: This budget sends a strong signal to the defense industrial base through \$29.8 billion for munitions and the use of multi-year procurement authorities for critical munitions. Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's operations in Gaza highlight the strategic nature of how munitions stockpiles directly impact battlefield operations. Producing advanced munitions can take years and depends on complex production lines with a skilled workforce that cannot be started overnight. To ensure the Joint Force is prepared for challenges around the globe, we must build out robust production capacity to stay ahead of need to address any emerging crisis. This budget continues to strengthen the defense industrial base and will support several investments to improve its capacity to meet current and future demands.

This budget prioritizes addressing our pacing challenge, the PRC, with procurement of the most relevant munitions—long-range cruise missiles, anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, torpedoes, and air-to-air missiles. The Joint Force takes a holistic approach to ensure we have the optimal balance of capabilities and capacity including hypersonic as well as subsonic, survivable, and large payload weapons. We continually manage and assess our stockpiles and procurement to ensure we have the munitions that our warfighters need.

Expanded multi-year procurement authorities for critical munitions will continue to enable us to deepen our inventories and decrease operational risk. Multi-year procurement authorities are essential to proactively address challenges with complex supply chains, long lead-time components, obsolescence, workforce shortages, and infrastructure shortfalls that must be overcome. These authorities directly support the capabilities we need to execute our strategy while managing and mitigating risks during crisis and conflict.

Defense Industrial Base: A strong and robust defense industrial base including logistical systems and global supply chains will enable the production of technologies and capabilities critical for our national defense. To fully modernize the Joint Force, we must provide a consistent demand signal to the defense industrial base through clearly articulated priorities and resourcing. Doing so activates the defense industrial base to expand capabilities and capacity helping to enable contract performance and on-time deliveries.

This budget allocates investments toward revitalizing and expanding the defense industrial base, ensuring it is prepared to meet production demands required for current and future operations. Over \$8 billion is requested to fund several key defense industrial base sectors, including \$375 million for microelectronics, \$369 million for castings and forgings, \$193 million for strategic and critical materials, \$243 million for kinetic capabilities, \$3 million for energy storage and batteries, \$125 million for bio-manufacturing, \$4.0 billion for the submarine industrial base, and a \$112 million investment into a skilled industrial workforce.

A strong and robust defense industrial base contributes to deterrence and provides a foundation for surging in the event of crises or conflicts.

TRUST

Trust is the foundation of our profession. The Joint Force must build upon and uphold the trust in each other, the trust with our families, the trust of our elected leaders, and the trust of our Nation. I am proud to lead a Joint Force that continually demonstrates dedication to the oaths we took to serve our Nation and to the professional standards expected by our Nation and its leaders. We strive every day to reinforce the trust placed in us, by the American people, to safeguard our country's values and interests.

Our Joint Force leaders have a responsibility to foster a cohesive environment where every servicemember has the opportunity to reach their full potential. I am committed to removing barriers to success, such as any type of discrimination, harassment, or assault, especially sexual harassment and sexual assault. The profession of arms is based on trust. We must maintain that trust by serving with integrity and professionalism.

Force Development: Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, civilians, and their families are the Joint Force's asymmetric advantage against our adversaries. Technology and capabilities are important, but the mission cannot be accomplished without a professional, organized, and trained Joint Force. The proposed budget includes strategic investments in critical areas such as advanced training programs, health and wellness initiatives, and career development opportunities to ensure our forces are not only prepared but also thriving. This includes improved pay to reflect the dedication and risks undertaken by our servicemembers, enhanced healthcare services, and continued educational benefits for them and their families.

We also remain committed to supporting spouse employment initiatives, career guidance, and licensure reimbursement. These investments are a clear signal of our unwavering commitment to maintaining the readiness and resilience of our forces.

Quality of Service and Quality of Life: Our servicemembers and their families sacrifice a great deal for our Nation. It is our obligation, as leaders, to take care of them and ensure their success. Our Quality of Service efforts support and enable our servicemembers by providing them the means and capability to hone their warfighting skills and to be ready when the Nation calls. Our Quality of Life investments support our servicemembers when they are outside of work and takes care of their families.

I am committed to improving Quality of Service and Quality of Life, through proper force development initiatives mentioned above, various housing initiatives, improved childcare programs, enhanced mental health resources, and robust programs to combat sexual harassment and sexual assault. The fiscal year 2025 budget dedicates \$1.2 billion to sexual assault prevention and response efforts, including building a full-time workforce of over 2,500 dedicated prevention personnel. We remain committed to suicide prevention and this budget allocates \$547 million to reinforce and expand suicide prevention strategies, ensuring every servicemember feels supported in seeking help. Additionally, this budget includes \$2.3 billion for construction of barracks, dormitories, medical clinics, and childcare facilities as well as another \$2.0 billion for family housing construction and operations to ensure we have quality facilities for our servicemembers and their families. It is our duty to provide our servicemembers and families with comprehensive support and resources for their well-being and success.

Recruiting and Retention: We must provide the right capabilities, training, and education to recruit and retain a talented workforce. To be as effective as possible on the battlefield, we must leverage the strengths of everyone on our Joint Team. While the Services continue to encounter a challenging, but improving recruiting environment, retention remains high, indicating that our people are finding fulfillment and meaning as they proudly serve their Nation. We can make an impact on recruiting by engaging with the public. Only 1 percent of our society has served in the military and much of our society is not as connected to the Armed Forces as they once were. Our Joint Force and our veterans have an obligation to engage in their communities, providing an important connection between our military and the society that we serve. Whether in uniform or in some other capacity, we all have the responsibility to inspire the next generation to serve to the benefit of our Nation and our security.

CONCLUSION

Our Joint Force is the most capable and lethal fighting force in the world, and they will defend, deter, and if necessary, fight and win our Nation's wars. They are ready to respond to the myriad of challenges that currently exist across the globe. Our military strength is a crucial element of our national security, and it is most effective when used in concert with the full spectrum of our national power.

The PRC continues its expansion of its military, pursues increasingly aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region, and threatens the international order. Russia remains an acute threat as it seeks to impose its imperial order and expand its sphere of influence. Continued unrest in the Middle East also represents a challenge to our Joint Force, as we withstand and respond to attacks against our forces.

The fiscal year 2025 budget ensures that the Joint Force can effectively address these challenges and all our NDS priorities. I thank Congress for its continued support and partnership in our shared mission to defend our Nation, protect our citizens, and preserve our way of life. This budget request is not just a financial document; it is a clear statement of NDS implementation and our collective resolve to face the challenges of today and prepare for those of tomorrow. It is a commitment to our servicemembers and their families, ensuring they have the tools, training, and support necessary to succeed. Given the convergence of the five NDS challenges, our Joint Force depends on long-term, stable, predictable, and timely funding. We are living in a consequential time. There is no time to waste.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Brown. General Austin, the most pressing issue is the supplemental in my view because of the consequences, not just in Ukraine, but throughout the world.

In fact, CIA Director Burns recently stated, no one is watching U.S. support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leaders. One of the surest ways to rekindle Chinese perceptions of American

fecklessness and stroke Chinese aggressiveness would be to abandon support for Ukraine.

Do you think that is an accurate assessment?

Secretary AUSTIN. I do, Chairman. I think we would ask that Congress pass the supplemental as soon as possible, because Ukraine matters, and the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine will have global implications for our National Security as well, so.

We take a look at what Ukraine has done with the support that we provided them, Chairman, has been quite remarkable. You know, not only have they stopped a much superior force in terms of quality of equipment and numbers. They have taken back some 50 percent of the ground that the Russians initially occupied.

So, they are not asking for someone to fight the fight for them. They are asking for the means to sustain their efforts, and without security assistance, they won't be able to resupply the much needed air defense interceptors and air defense systems that they need to protect their skies and protect their people.

So, we would see things continue—begin to atrophy in a very meaningful way in a short period of time. I think it is really important that we pass this—that Congress pass this legislation as quickly as possible. I would remind everyone that, you know, we don't give—the military doesn't give Ukraine money.

It provides security assistance in the form of weapons and ammunitions, and we replace those weapons and ammunitions by, you know, buying new weapons and ammunitions for our inventory, and that flows through our industrial base. So, some \$50 billion of this request would flow through our industrial base, and it would create good jobs for Americans in some 30 states.

This is about—as much about our National Security and our industrial base capacity as anything else. But Ukraine matter is not only for Europe, it matters for the entire world.

Chairman REED. Thank you. Shifting gears to another area of contention, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is something that is obvious to the whole world.

The United States is trying to assist, and for many people, this is a moral principle, but it is also, I think, an operational principle, because unless you can separate the Palestinian people from Hamas, you will never defeat Hamas, in my view.

That this is something that operationally we encountered in Iraq, and you served there, Mr. Secretary, and let me emphasize, Mr. Secretary, rather than your former rank, Mr. Secretary, and you understand, I think these dynamics, as well as General Brown.

I assume you concur with that comment.

Secretary AUSTIN. Absolutely, Chairman. If we want to—if Israel wants to create lasting effects, then it must address the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, and not in a marginal way, in a meaningful way.

We continue to encourage the Israeli leadership, and I talk to my counterpart on a weekly basis. I just talked to him yesterday. And encouraged him to increase the volume of humanitarian assistance that is going into Ukraine. We have seen him do that most recently. But we need to sustain that.

The United States continues to do everything that we can to assist. You have seen airdrops on our part, and you see us working

to provide a maritime corridor to provide additional assistance as well.

Chairman REED. That maritime corridor, in your opinion, is a legitimate mission for the United States military. Both you and General Brown consider that to be a legitimate mission?

Secretary AUSTIN. I do, Chairman. It is—you know, we are using a capability that we have, joint logistics over the shore, and certainly our troops are trained to be able to put this into place.

We expect that the initial operation capability will probably be there—be in place by the third week in—of this month, and so, it is something that we have the ability to do, and we should do.

Chairman REED. The number one priority is force protection.

Secretary AUSTIN. It is, and it always will be, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much. Secretary Austin, did a genocide occur around the Gaza region, and around the Gaza, Israeli border on October 7th of last year?

Secretary AUSTIN. What we witnessed on October 7th, Senator, was a horrific terrorist attack by Hamas.

Senator WICKER. But was it a genocide?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, it—

Senator WICKER. Well, let me be more specific. When noncombatant Israelis were killed, when their families were burned alive, was that a genocide?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, I—again, Israel suffered a terrific blow when—

Senator WICKER. Okay, so you are not willing to call it a genocide. Was it a war crime?

Secretary AUSTIN. It certainly is a war crime.

Senator WICKER. When noncombatant Americans were taken prisoner by Hamas, was that a war crime?

Secretary AUSTIN. All of that, you know, the rape, the murder, the taking of hostages or prisoners, all of that was a war crime.

Senator WICKER. Was a war crime, and that on October 7th, that was—the war crime was entirely committed on the part of Hamas that day, was it not?

Secretary AUSTIN. It was.

Senator WICKER. Since that time, General, is it true that Hamas has, in violation of international law, placed civilians in places that they knew would be vulnerable to attack and use the civilians as a human shield?

Secretary AUSTIN. We have consistently seen Hamas use civilians as—

Senator WICKER. During the times since October 7th and in Gaza, right?

Secretary AUSTIN. That is right.

Senator WICKER. That is a continuation of war crimes, is it not?

Secretary AUSTIN. It is.

Senator WICKER. Secretary Austin, if Hamas laid down their arms today, would the conflict stop in and around Gaza? It would stop, would it not?

Secretary AUSTIN. We certainly would hope so. But, you know, that is left to be seen, and I don't want to speculate, but that is the goal.

Senator WICKER. Well, who started the conflict on October?

Secretary AUSTIN. Hamas initiated this conflict, Senator.

Senator WICKER. If Israel laid down its arms today, would Hamas stop their aggression against Israel?

Secretary AUSTIN. I seriously doubt that.

Senator WICKER. They wouldn't, would they? All right, I think we—I think we have made that clear. Let me ask this, Secretary Austin, with regard to INDOPACOM. Admiral Aquilino has convinced, I think, convinced us that a standing joint task force of—a separate standing joint task force for operations is needed. Are you in support of Admiral Paparo going forward as soon as possible with the standing joint task force?

Secretary AUSTIN. Let me just say that, you know, it is clear from our strategy and our budget request, which is linked to our strategy, that the PRC remains our pacing challenge. We have done a lot to, in terms of force posture and investments in the region, to ensure that—

Senator WICKER. I am aware of that, but my question is specifically about the joint task force. So, we are going to go forward with it with all due speed.

Secretary AUSTIN. Command and control is really important to me because it is important to all of us. So, what I have asked my team to do is look at this and do our assessment to make sure that we get—you know, we get it right and we understand the operational and cost issues associated with this. They are doing that, and they will come back to me shortly on that.

Senator WICKER. How soon will they come back to you?

Secretary AUSTIN. They will—in a couple of weeks.

Senator WICKER. How soon do you think we can then move forward with actually implementing this plan?

Secretary AUSTIN. Really depends on what their assessment is. But as soon as we have a readout, I will come back and brief you on it.

Senator WICKER. Then finally, do you agree with my opening statement that the Defense Department and the Administration could have asked for more? That under the law, they were not constrained to ask for the number, much as the defense part of the Administration did not feel constrained by the caps.

Secretary AUSTIN. Again, we have to comply with the law and—

Senator WICKER. Why did the domestic Departments of the Biden administration not comply with those caps?

Secretary AUSTIN. I can't answer that, Senator, but—

Senator WICKER. Will you acknowledge that the Administration asked for far more money, above the caps, than was provided in that statute, and they did not ask for more money with regard to defense spending. Will you acknowledge that?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, again, with \$850 billion budget—again, what we try to do, what we have done is link our budget request to our strategy—

Senator WICKER. It is okay if you answer the question.

Secretary AUSTIN. I support the President's budget, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Would you acknowledge that the President's budget request with regard to domestic spending was far in excess of the fiscal responsibility cap?

Secretary AUSTIN. I can't speak to the domestic budget. I can only speak for the defense budget.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Secretary Austin, General Brown, and Under Secretary McCord for your service to the country. One of the things that I think we would all agree, as we are talking about budgets, is that if Congress would pass the budget bills on time, with certainty, it would make the job of budgeting a lot easier. Is that—do you agree with that, Secretary Austin? I think you made that point in your opening statement.

Secretary AUSTIN. I absolutely agree with that, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and Chairman Reed talked about this, and I think you made it pretty clear, but Senators Gillibrand, Kelly, and I just returned from a trip to the Indo-Pacific, and what we heard from our partners was concern that our failure to follow through on our commitment to Ukraine would embolden the PRC.

Again, I think you made that pretty clear in your earlier statement, but can you speak again to what the impact would be for global security if we fail to live up to our commitment to Ukraine?

Secretary AUSTIN. It would be a signal that the United States is an unreliable partner, and that would encourage and embolden autocrats around the globe to do the types of things that Putin has done.

Senator SHAHEEN. It would have an impact not only on Xi, but on Iran as well, would it not, given that they are the major contributors of drones to Russia, and they are benefiting from this war in Ukraine?

Secretary AUSTIN. That is correct, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. So, if we care about what is happening in Iran, this is a good way to address what is happening there as well, correct?

Secretary AUSTIN. I believe so, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Last week and thank you for taking time to talk with me last week, but one of the things we saw last week was a CBS news investigation, which was the first public report that pointed to evidence of Russia's responsibility in the anomalous health incidents, also known as Havana syndrome.

Our office has been in touch with victims almost since the first reporting of those incidents and what we have heard from a number of those victims is that they believed that there was an adversary who was involved in those incidents.

So, can you tell me, in light of the reports, do you believe that the intelligence community should take another look at its assessment? You have oversight over two intelligence agencies, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency.

Have you encouraged them to take another look at the reports and provided any resources toward that action?

Secretary AUSTIN. Let me just say that I take the health and well-being of the force extremely seriously, and, I have spoken to leaders in the intelligence community and addressed this issue with them.

They have assured me that they will continue to address and investigate any new evidence that presents itself, and they will continue to assess. The intelligence agencies that are part of the Department of Defense will continue to support that overall effort. But yes, to answer your question.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you consider the revelations from that CBS report that included several other news outlets and a fair amount of real investigation, do you consider that new information that would warrant that kind of an investigation, further investigation?

Secretary AUSTIN. They do, and they are looking into those things, each element that of that report.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and do you have any sense of when you might be able to report back to the committee on what they have found? Do you have any kind of a timeline for that?

Secretary AUSTIN. I don't, but I certainly will get with the leadership of the intelligence community and get a feel for the progress that they are making.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I would appreciate hearing what they expect and what they are finding out. I think this is both for you, Secretary, and for General Brown. One of the things that we continue to hear about is Russia's maligned activities in the information space.

In fact, just this week, we heard from two Members of the House, the Chair of the Intelligence Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee in the House that they see Russian disinformation being parroted by Members of—Republican Members of the House.

Is this a concern that you all share? How do the Russian tactics in the information domain address or impact what is happening in Ukraine?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, the Russians have always endeavored to use—to be effective in the information space, and we have seen that from the very beginning here with the Russia, Ukraine conflict, and that work continues to today.

They will also seek to influence attitudes and operations in countries that are supporting Ukraine, not only in the United States but in other Western countries, and that work continues. But I expect that we will see that in the future and there will be a greater effort on the part of Russia to take advantage of what they consider to be an opportunity here.

I think anything that we can do to burst Putin's bubble is—in terms of providing support to Ukraine, would be very, very helpful. The big thing that we could do is pass the supplemental.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. Six months ago, the congressional Commission on Strategic Posture of the United States released their final report on America's strategic posture.

This bipartisan, bicameral commission found that our Nation is on the cusp of having not one but two nuclear power adversaries, each with ambitions to change the international status quo by force if necessary, a situation which the United States did not anticipate and for which it is not prepared.

These conclusions are not surprising. Our planned nuclear force posture was decided in 2010, when the United States considered Russia to be a partner, and back before China's nuclear breakout, the scale and speed of which were called breathtaking by the Commander of USSTRATCOM before this committee just 2 months ago.

In order to ensure that we have a safe, reliable, effective, and credible nuclear deterrent as we look to the 2030's and beyond, we need to start laying the groundwork for significant changes now.

I strongly encourage, Mr. Secretary, the Department to take seriously the recommendations made in the Strategic Posture Commission report, and I am also working with colleagues here to address many of these recommendations through upcoming legislation.

So, Secretary Austin and Chairman Brown, do you agree with the commissioner's statement that "the nuclear force modernization programs of record are absolutely essential, although not sufficient, to meet the new threats posed by Russia and China, and that the elements of the program of record should be completed on time, expedited wherever possible, and expanded as needed"?

Secretary AUSTIN. Thank you, Senator, and thanks for your sustained support for our efforts to modernize our nuclear triad.

We agree with the Strategic Posture Commission that U.S. deterrence remain sound, and we have been taking a fresh look at the assumptions that are underlying our modernization program. We also agree with the Commission's assessment that the program of record is necessary but may not be sufficient.

To the point that you made, we need to be looking forward and making sure that we have the agility to adjust our modernization program as we go forward to make sure that we keep—not only keep pace but maintain a competitive edge.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. General Brown.

General BROWN. Well, thank you, Senator Fischer. I had the real pleasure to have the Commission come to my office to sit down and brief me here about 6 weeks ago, and I do agree with their assessment that our nuclear migration is necessary but not sufficient.

One of the areas we did talk about when it comes to deterrence was not only our nuclear capability, but also our conventional capability. So, it is all things we are doing to modernize our force.

They will be important to support our nuclear portfolio, but also our unconventional portfolios as well.

Senator FISCHER. Did you discuss with Madelyn Creedon and Jon Kyl any specific recommendations that are put forward by the report that you would support?

General BROWN. We did. I don't have them off the top of my head, but we did kind of—we came to a pretty good agreement on it. We see—I saw the report very much in a way that I think—and I really do appreciate the work that they did to highlight the key areas we need to focus on for the Joint Force.

Senator FISCHER. Yes, they have a number of really great recommendations, and we are working on those. Hopefully, we will get

by and by this committee, and look forward to working with you as well on that.

Also, I recognize that the White House tied the Department's hands through the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and as soon as the deal was made, we knew that the President's Budget Request for fiscal year 2025, it just wasn't going to cut it. It is not sufficient, and to be clear, a 1 percent increase in defense spending is not sufficient.

So let me say it is difficult for Congress to budget, to pass appropriations bills to meet those threats that this country faces when your Department, Mr. Secretary, and this Administration do not even acknowledge those threats in the President's budget request that he sends us. Our adversaries, they don't constrain themselves like this.

In fact, China has announced it would increase its defense budget by 7.2 percent, and this is despite significant challenges that the Chinese are now facing in their economy. So, Secretary Austin and Chairman Brown, do you assess that the threats from China, Russia, and our other adversaries are more likely to increase in complexity and severity in the future years? I assume you do.

So, I would ask, when will you step forward and appropriately offer your concerns on what we need in order to meet those problems, those existential threats that this country faces?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, thanks, Senator. Again, our budget request is linked to our strategy, and we look at our adversaries over periods of time and not just in the moment. We know that our adversaries, to your point, will continue to evolve, and the challenge is will—it will increase.

Again, we—give the constraints that we were faced with, we had to make some tough choices, and we made those tough but responsible choices to invest in near term readiness and to take care of our troops and our families.

So, I think, again, based upon where we are, our budget request addresses our needs that are outlined in our strategy.

Senator FISCHER. I thank the chairman of this committee and the Committee Members for 2 years of going beyond what the budget was that you presented from President Biden to this committee. It is a responsibility of Congress. I agree with Senator Shaheen. I am also on Appropriations Committee.

We as Senator Shaheen, Senator Reed, and I advocate for what we need, but you also have to be an advocate there. You also have to bring forward a sincere, a thoughtful, a reasonable budget from this Administration that addresses the threats that this country faces.

We hear it from you, from others within the Department on those threats in classified briefings. This country needs to realize it as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. Senator Gillibrand, please.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin, I recently returned from a bipartisan congressional delegation to Asia, where we met with key allies and partners and with U.S. forces in the region.

I can say that each of the countries where we met with leaders, they were very grateful for the posture in the Indo-Pacific and very eager to grow it, to expand it, and to deepen it. So, I wanted you to know, the feedback was extremely positive of the commitments that you have already made and the great work that our servicemembers are already doing in the region.

So, thank you for that. With the National Security Supplemental stalled in the House, can you speak to how the lack of funding impacts our strategic posture in the Pacific, and what are we losing in the region by failing to get the Senate passed bill to the President?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, as you know, Senator, this supplemental not only provides us the ability to provide security assistance to Ukraine, but also our partners in the Indo-Pacific, specifically Taiwan.

There are provisions in this supplemental request to continue to help Taiwan attain the capabilities to be able to defend itself. So, I think it is for that reason, it is really important to make sure that we continue to press forward and get the supplemental across the goal line.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Our military representatives from the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command met with PRC military representatives for the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement Working Group in Honolulu, Hawaii, on April 3d and 4th.

This was the first meeting of its kind since the Virtual Working Group meetings in 2021. What is the goal of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement, and what progress is being made with the PRC to prevent miscalculations and possible escalation within the INDOPACOM?

Secretary AUSTIN. I think you have heard me say a number of times, Senator, that it is really important in this competitive relationship, and it is a relationship based upon competition, that we have guardrails and that we can prevent incidents from spiraling out of control and causing a conflict at any one point in time.

So, that dialog between military professionals, I think, is really important. We have seen very aggressive behavior in the region on by the PRC, and we continue to raise these issues to the PRC. This forum allows military professionals to meet and really talk in detail about those issues and talk about things that, you know, we can put into place to prevent accidents from happening.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Secretary Austin, over the last two NDAA cycles, I have created the Cyber Service Academy Scholarship program to provide students with a free education in exchange for post-graduation service in DOD and the intelligence community. As you look at the Department's cyber and digital needs, how does this scholarship help DOD meet its mission?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, I think it is going to help in a significant way. I mean this is some—working with some 420 institutions and providing 100 scholarships this year alone. That increases the pool of qualified youngsters that can come on board and be—and contribute to our efforts in the cyber domain.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You may not have this data, but do you know whether we are on target to fill the 1,000 slots that are provided for this program this year? This year was the first year stu-

dents could apply, and I think the application period concluded in March. Do you have any information about whether we are on target?

Secretary AUSTIN. I don't have that specific information, but I will get it for you right away.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, and do you have any information about how many additional schools have applied to be part of the program?

Secretary AUSTIN. I don't have that either. But again, the number that we have, the 420, is really impressive, and it will continue to grow.

[The information referred to follows:]

Secretary AUSTIN. Currently there are approximately 450 designated institutions that are eligible to participate in the DOD CSA. Each designated institution is invited to participate in the DOD CSA. Any institution that achieves its designation between now and January 15, 2025 will be eligible to participate in the 2025 scholarship cycle. For the 2024 cycle, 14 new institutions nominated students for the DOD Cyber Scholarship Program, and 95 National Centers for Academic Excellence in Cyber (NCAE-C) submitted proposals to support scholars.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. The military services have started to look at privatizing barracks in order to address barracks that are outdated and in need of repair. Given the problems that the military privatized housing initiative has encountered, how will the Department ensure that those problems are not recreated in the barracks?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, we number one have to invest in making sure that we create the right kind of unaccompanied housing for our troops. Then number two, we got—we have to make sure that we invest in the resources required to supervise the maintenance of these facilities.

We are doing both of those. In this budget, we are asking you for \$1.1 billion for unaccompanied housing, \$2.2 billion for family housing, and \$171 million for housing oversight.

So, I think, you know, there is—we have to—there is a lot of work that we need to do going forward. I think, we are investing in the right things, and we will continue to keep—maintain an emphasis on this.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Austin, thank you for acknowledging, in response to Senator Wicker, that Hamas committed war crimes on October 7th and has been committing them every day since about using human shields. I want to address what the protesters raised earlier, is Israel committing genocide in Gaza?

Secretary AUSTIN. Senator Cotton, I—we don't have any evidence of genocide being created.

Senator COTTON. So, that is a no. Israel is not committing genocide in Gaza.

Secretary AUSTIN. We don't have evidence of that to my knowledge, yes.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. Better than Director Burns and Director Haynes did last year—last month at the Intelligence Committee when they dodged that question. You stand accused by those

protestors of greenlighting genocide. Would you like to respond to that accusation?

Secretary AUSTIN. What I would say is, Senator Cotton, from the very beginning is that we committed to help assist Israel in defending its territory and its people by providing security assistance.

I would remind everybody that, you know, what happened on October 7th was absolutely horrible, and, you know, numbers of Israeli citizens killed, and then a couple of hundred Israeli citizens taken hostage.

Senator COTTON. American citizens as well.

Secretary AUSTIN. American citizens as well.

Senator COTTON. So, you deny the accusation that you greenlit genocide?

Secretary AUSTIN. I absolutely do not.

Senator COTTON. For the record, I don't think Israel is committing genocide. I don't believe you greenlit genocide, either. You talked a lot with Senator Reed about Israel's responsibility to provide aid in Gaza. Why does Israel have a responsibility to provide aid to Gaza?

Israel was the victim of an unprovoked, vicious attack on October 7th. Why should they provide aid to the aggressor nation or aggressor—Gaza is not a nation—to the aggressors on October 7th. We didn't provide aid to Germany and Japan during World War II.

Secretary AUSTIN. We did provide aid to and assistance to many of the countries that we have operated in recently.

Senator COTTON. But not in World War II. If you had would been in George Marshall's or Dwight Eisenhower's position in World War II, would you have wanted to provide aid to Germany?

Secretary AUSTIN. I really do believe, Senator, that if they want to create a lasting effect in terms of stability, then I think that something needs to be done to account—to help the Palestinian people.

Senator COTTON. Again, I get that, but they are in the middle of the war. We believed that too after World War II. That is why we had the Marshall Plan and that is why we rebuilt Japan. But that was after the war was won, not in the middle of it.

In the meantime, like it is not Israel's responsibility to provide aid, certainly not our responsibility, but we are spending our tax dollars to build this giant pier as an aid into Gaza. Who is going to accept that aid? Who is going to be at the end of the pier on the shore taking aid from American forces?

Secretary AUSTIN. That is still being worked out. But there will be NGO's that that will help to distribute that aid.

Senator COTTON. Hamas is in charge of Gaza. When aid goes to Gaza, Hamas doesn't divert it or commandeer it or steal it, it accepts it, and anybody operating in Gaza is under the thumb of Hamas. I just think it is very ill-considered, and I don't think it is going to end very well. Let me move on to Ukraine.

The Biden administration has discouraged Ukraine from launching refinery strikes against Russia. Why is the Biden administration discouraging Ukraine from undertaking some of the most effective attacks on Russia's war making capabilities?

Secretary AUSTIN. Certainly, those attacks could have a knock on effect for—in terms of the global energy situation and—but quite

frankly, I think Ukraine is better served in going after tactical and operational targets that can directly influence the current fight.

Senator COTTON. It sounds to me like the Biden administration doesn't want gas prices go up in an election year based on all the other actions it has taken to drive up gas prices further. But anyway, I want to turn to one final point about the recruiting crisis our services face.

The Army is the most acute. It is challenging all services, though. I have spoken to numerous recruiters, front line recruiters, heads of recruiting battalions. Two of the most common things I hear is Genesis and a lack of medical providers to process new recruits. Do you have a memo on your desk from the services to place a pause on Genesis?

Secretary AUSTIN. No, not—

Senator COTTON. Have you received that, because my sources tell me you have received a request from the services to pause the Genesis.

Secretary AUSTIN. You know, I talked to the services about—the service secretaries about Genesis, and also have talked to the service chiefs about Genesis as well. I don't have knowledge of any—of that memo, but what I will tell you is that, you know, we are doing everything we can to improve the number of health care providers that are available and to streamline the operations with Genesis.

Now, Genesis is a, you know, it is an issue that our recruiting force had to work through, but it is not the sole cause of—

Senator COTTON. No, I know it is not the sole cause. There is a lot of other causes. I just, it comes up constantly, and just for those listening from home, Genesis is not just the first book of the Bible, it is this giant medical records system that now catches everything that has ever happened to you.

So, you know, every drill sergeant accuses recruits of lying to their recruiters so they can get into the service. But now Genesis catches all that. So, if you broke your arm and you are 12 playing peewee football, Genesis knows it. If you were prescribed an SSRI because you were depressed when you are 13, because your parents were getting a bad divorce, Genesis knows it.

You got to go through a whole lot of rigmarole to get a waiver. Now, look, we can't have psychotics join the military, but if the kid was on an SSRI when he was 13, does that really matter? Does that really matter? If he broke his arm when he was 13—he can't have a degenerate bone condition, but he broke his arm.

I know you will say, because I have heard it before, that there is waiver approvals here. It takes a long time, and like, if you are like a super gung ho Captain America kid who wants to serve above everything else, you will wait that time.

But if it is going to take 120 or 150 days to join, when you get a job at Amazon for \$20 or \$25 an hour, you are going to lose those people. I think you really need to look at the way Genesis works and the approval authority.

Even if you have approval authority, you know, whether it is an E8 out on the front lines—or a lieutenant colonel at the headquarters, you are counting on them to take what they might see as some serious personal risk that doesn't have a lot of reward.

That is why I think this has to be written into policy. My time is over, but I do think this is a serious question for all the services, and that I would encourage you to look at it and take action sooner rather than later.

Secretary AUSTIN. I don't disagree with you, Senator. I have been a recruiter, and I know how important this is to recruiters.

What we need to continue to do is upgrade what requires a waiver and make sure that we are doing everything we can to provide enough medical professionals to be able to shorten the time that it takes to get that waiver.

I think there are a number of things that that we can do and should do, and we are doing some of those things. We will continue to press on this to shorten the time that it takes for recruiters to get these packets through.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary McCord, Secretary Austin, and General Brown, thank you very much for your service. Senator Austin, I want to thank you for your leadership regarding Red Hill in Hawaii, and it was the right decision to close this massive World War II fuel storage facility.

Admiral Wade and the Joint Task Force have worked diligently alongside the State and Federal partners to safely remove all of the fuel from the facility in recent months, but of course, more work remains.

What is your view regarding the Department's long term responsibility for the environmental restoration and remediation efforts following the closure of Red Hill, to ensure that no contamination of the aquifer that the people of Oahu rely on for drinking water occurs now and in the future attributable to military installations or actions?

Secretary AUSTIN. Thanks, Senator. Protecting public health and the environment in the communities where we have our troops stationed is a Department priority, and, you know, we made a promise to the citizens of Hawaii to conduct any and all necessary environmental remediation around the Red Hill facility.

We are going to live up to that promise. As you know, as you just pointed out, last month, JTF Red Hill completed the fueling. So, the work has transitioned to the Department of the Navy now for the Red Hill closure, efforts. We are going to stay focused on that.

I will continue to make sure that I get briefed on this routinely, and make sure that we are doing the right things to meet our timelines. But most importantly, make sure that we do the right things in terms of environmental restoration.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you for your continuing commitment, because there will be long term, I would say, requirements as to monitoring, et cetera. So that brings me to another question that I have for you.

I am concerned about the Department's ability to hold senior officials accountable following major incidents such as the fuel leak at Red Hill and the fire onboard the USS *Bonhomme Richard*.

I am including a provision in this year's NDAA that would create a new investigation category to provide consistency when there is

a catastrophic incident resulting in a significant loss of life or billions of dollars in taxpayer money, to ensure those responsible are held accountable for their actions.

Would you be amenable to changes in this area, especially for catastrophic incidents such as the ones that I cited, so that really the investigation and the responsibility issues are before the Department as opposed to the services that are involved?

Secretary AUSTIN. Thank you, Senator. I have seen your correspondence on this issue, and I have asked my people to take a look at this, and certainly we will do so, analyze it and come back and have a discussion with you on where we are. But I really appreciate your continued focus on this.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much. I have talked about how important infrastructure is to readiness, and I know that during the last year's posture hearing, you agreed that the military services need to invest in infrastructure to make sure our servicemembers have the facilities they need to execute their mission.

However, even in the INDOPACOM priority theater, there are billions in infrastructure projects in Hawaii alone and the rest of the region, either on a service or INDOPACOM's unfunded priority list.

Secretary Austin, how does the Department ensure the infrastructure maintenance and modernization needs are met if there are multiple critical projects in Hawaii and throughout the region that are not being funded in the President's budget?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, there—we have, as you know Senator, invested a lot into infrastructure and throughout the region, and our—the PDI, Admiral Aquilino's request for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative this year is some \$9.9 billion, and it includes infrastructure projects. That is on top of the \$20 billion that we have requested over the last couple of years in support of the PDI.

So, we continue to invest in this, and again, in terms of specific projects, you know, the services will have to continue to rank order what, you know, their priorities are based upon, you know, what their specific budget—what is available in their budget. But this is very important to us, and it is something that we will continue to work on.

Senator HIRONO. Well, you testified today that tough choices need to be made in near term readiness, which is also making sure that our infrastructure is maintained. I just want to note one more thing.

I am concerned about the cost overruns for the Critical Drydock 3, which is the biggest infrastructure project within the DOD replacement at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam. Despite the lessons learned from Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the cost of Pearl Harbor's drydock recently increased by over \$800 million.

No sooner did I go and give a speech about how important this drydock is, that I am confronted by this, what I consider to be a massive cost overrun. How can we—I mean, I just want to note that I would like to hear from you.

I am out of time right now, but we need to be a lot more accurate in planning for infrastructure projects from the beginning to enable us to better estimate how much these costs are going to be because

to go from 1 week to say that, you know, this is great where we learn lessons from Portsmouth, and then 2 weeks later, it is \$800 million more.

So, Secretary Austin, I really would like to be assured that we are going to keep track of what is going on with this drydock infrastructure project in Hawaii, because I have a feeling that I may be confronted with even more costly increases. It is a statement that I am making, and I expect to be apprized as we go forward.

Secretary AUSTIN. Absolutely, and you mentioned that this drydock is important. It is absolutely important. One of the things that happened here was that we didn't fully appreciate the impact of COVID on the supply chains and some other things. So, those effects have lasted longer than we anticipated, and that is part of what is going on here.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin, Secretary McCord, General Brown, thank you for your service to the Nation at such a time in history.

Close coordination between Congress and the Administration is critical to making sure that our troops are resourced and postured in a way that deters conflict and enables them to dominate our enemies if deterrence fails.

Mr. Secretary, the—Secretary Austin, the assessment of the DOD, NTIA led study on the electromagnetic spectrum, which was completed last fall, was that the adoption of dynamic spectrum sharing is the only way that the DOD can share the portions of the critical bands it uses to defend our country and our forces.

Developing that capability is one of my highest priorities. I am aware of coordination between this committee and the DOD CIO, which is centered around a demonstration project to investigate dynamic spectrum sharing being executed sometime at the end of 2025.

I applaud the effort, but I am also aware of a simultaneous transmit and receive capability, or STAR, that is ready for test and evaluation right now. Can you give me your commitment that you will investigate the STAR capability and accelerate testing and evaluation if you discover that it is promising? I can assure you that I would work with you and the committees of jurisdiction to address any hurdles that need to be overcome to fund such an acceleration.

Secretary AUSTIN. Senator, you have my commitment that, you know, we will investigate and make sure that, if there is capability there, then we will work to take advantage of it.

But I just want to re-emphasize the point that you made, and that is that it is really important that we have access to the spectrum so that we can provide—continue to provide security for this country and that we can—we have the capability to enable all of our platforms here.

I understand that there will continue to be a demand from the commercial sector to access more of the spectrum, but we have to do everything that we need to do to make sure that we have the provisions to protect this country.

I appreciate your support, and I am also committed to working with the Secretary of Commerce and with anybody else that can create a capability to allow—to enable that dynamic sharing. So, thanks for your efforts on that.

Senator ROUNDS. Well, thank you, sir, and once again, I think this new capability may very well be a key to addressing this issue in an expedited basis, and I appreciate your agreement to work with us on that. Thank you, sir. General Brown, the B-21 Raider and the next gen air dominance platform will be critical in a fight against a near peer adversary. Can you briefly share why these platforms are so essential to the Joint Force when it comes to fighting a capable enemy in a contested environment?

General BROWN. Well, we have an advancing threat, and if you think about the areas we have been operating in the course of the past several decades, we do not have advanced threat. It was mostly a violent extremist or other countries without advanced threats.

What I see going forward is that with that advancing threat, we have to modernize and bring in capabilities that will not only match that threat but exceed that threat and stay ahead of the threat. That is why these particular platforms are so important.

Senator ROUNDS. I think it says without question that both of these two programs need to move forward, fully funded. Right now, I think we have identified that we are going to purchase a minimum of 100 B-21s. I suspect that you would agree with me that that number may very well have to go up if we appropriately take care of the needs that our men in uniform, men and women in uniform require.

General BROWN. I know in my last job, we—as the Air Force chief, we did talk about the aspect that we may need to go above 100. I will defer to the Air Force, but I will just say that I am focused as a chairman to make sure that we have the joint capabilities for the force and making sure that we are working very closely together with all the services to bring that capability forward.

Senator ROUNDS. How important is it that NGAD be fielded as a full program of record?

General BROWN. That is also important. You know, as you are aware, you know, the Air Force is also looking at a collaborative combat aircraft as well to increase capacity at a cost and create more dilemmas for our adversaries.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. I see my time has expired, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Rounds. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you to our witnesses for your service. I want to return to the heartbreaking tragedy in Israel and Gaza. Israel, of course, must defend itself against those who would annihilate it. No one asked the question about whether the United States had a right to defend itself after 9/11.

Israel has that right, and that would include Hamas. It would include Hezbollah. It would include Iran. It would include militias connected to Iran. It would include the Houthis. But in the days after the October 7th attack, I offered this advice to the Israeli Ambassador, the United States Ambassador Herzog, learn from our own mistakes and confine your vigorous defense to a defense

against Hamas, and don't let it look like it is a war against Gazans or Palestinians who are not the same as Hamas, who often are under the thumb of Hamas.

I gave advice to the Ambassador then that the world would be watching to see what happened, and there is various bits of evidence that you look at to determine whether this is a defense against Hamas or whether it is a war against Gazans or Palestinians. First, the extent of civilian casualties. The civilian casualties in this war have been heartbreaking.

Yet, because Hamas chooses to embed with civilian populations, it is extremely difficult to defend against Hamas without that heartbreak. Second, how you talk about the war? Are you talking about it as a war against Hamas, or are you more broadly talking about it as a war against all Gazans and Palestinians?

In the weeks after the October 7th attack, yes, there was trauma. You don't necessarily say the most precise thing when you are traumatized, but there were too many statements from Israeli leadership, the President, the defense minister suggesting we are going to shut off all water, all food, all everything into Gaza, collectively punishing Gazans who are not necessarily part of Hamas. That is unfortunate.

Third, the allowance of humanitarian aid, 500 trucks a day were supplying the needs of these 2 million people into Gaza. Aid was throttled off immediately. Water was turned off. Just 2 days ago, the amount of aid into Gaza hit 300 trucks, and yesterday it got near 500 trucks 6 months into this.

If you are not allowing what you were allowing before, food and medicine to get to a civilian population, you are making the situation worse, not better. There is no reason the United States should have to build a pier in the Eastern Mediterranean. There is no reason we should have to airdropped supplies, often endangering people who have to go out into the water and get them.

I applaud the President for convincing finally President—Prime Minister Netanyahu to open the crossing from Erez after it took months to get them to open the crossing from Kerem Shalom. But the pace of humanitarian aid is insufficient. The widow of our former chair, Senator McCain, Cindy McCain, said 2 days ago that we are on the verge of a catastrophic famine in Gaza, and we may not be able to recover.

If you wanted to maintain a vigorous war against Hamas, but not against Palestinians, you would protect Palestinians from violence on the West Bank. It was shocking to me to hear reports from our own U.S. military officials that settlers' violence against Palestinians on the West Bank is not only increasing, but in many instances, the violence is accompanied by escorts from IDF reservists and Israeli border officials who are protecting settlers committing violence against Palestinians.

My understanding is that the escort phenomenon has abated, but the violence against Palestinians on the West Bank has not. Finally, if you wanted to make plain that it was a war against Gaza, not against Palestinians, you would hold out some hope to Palestinians that they might have a future of autonomy, as they were promised in 1948.

The world made a promise to two people in 1948, that there would be a State of Israel and a State of Palestine living side by side peacefully. One promise the world has kept. One promise the world hasn't kept. There is a million reasons for that. There is a million reasons for that, but the fact is, 75 years later, one promise has been kept and one hasn't.

It is important for Palestinians to believe they might have a future with autonomy. It might look different than 1948, but they should believe it. Instead, Israeli leadership in their statements has essentially closed that off. It is so very important that we provide assistance to Israel to allow itself to defend against those who would annihilate it.

It is so very important that we take dramatically more steps to encourage Israel, to push Israel, to urge Israel and other nations to make plain that a war against Gazans or Palestinians is going to make this worse. Cindy McCain predicts that there will be a famine, a mass famine in Gaza.

Secretary Austin, if that were to occur, if women and children who are already dying but start to die in great numbers because of lack of access to food or medicine, will that improve or will that de-escalate the violence in the region, or will that accelerate violence in the region?

Secretary AUSTIN. It will accelerate violence, and it will have the effect of ensuring that there is a long term conflict because of, you know, the Palestinian people have been disadvantaged to such a great degree.

It doesn't have to happen, I think to your point. I think, you know, we should continue to do everything we can, and we are doing this to encourage the Israelis to provide humanitarian assistance, to open up more land routes, and to and to separate the Palestinian people from Hamas. Failure to do so, I think, would just create more terrorist—

Senator KAINE. I am going to close and say, we already see dangerous escalation. The U.S. has had to wage 460 strikes against the Houthis who are firing into the Red sea. They weren't really doing that in any significant quantity until the war in Gaza started.

The U.S. has put our own personnel on high alert in the Middle East, because there is the expectation that Iran will retaliate against Israel for an Iraqi attack on—for an Israeli attack on Iranian positions in Syria. We have got to find a path to de-escalation here. The world is depending on us to do so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. I appreciate the discussion of the supplemental, and I would encourage you to continue to talk about it, not as a Ukraine aid package, but as a package that actually builds out our own industrial base to protect our own country, because that is what it is.

As you mentioned, Mr. Secretary, it is actually closer to 60 percent of that entire bill goes directly into the defense industrial base. When you look at the AUKUS dollars, it actually unlocks about \$6 billion to build subs, the weapons system that Xi Jinping is scared to death of. So, I think, you know, labeling it as Ukraine

aid isn't helpful. It should be called the Fighting Authoritarian Aggression Supplemental or the Defense Industrial Base Enhancement Act.

So, I would encourage you to continue to talk about it in that regard, and the amount it focuses on Israel and Taiwan. So, I think that is important, particularly this week with the House. I want to get to the defense budget, which is what you are testifying here.

Would you both agree, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Secretary, that we are facing one of the most dangerous times in our history since World War II?

Secretary AUSTIN. This is one of the most complex times that I have seen, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. General.

General BROWN. The 39 years I have been wearing uniform, this has probably been the most complex I have seen.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, I know these are hard questions, but I am going to ask them. You know, the President has put forward defense inflation adjusted cuts to the Department of Defense every year. Now, the chairman mentioned well this was a House Republican. This is the Commander in Chief's leadership, and he is failing on it. Every year he puts forward Defense Department cuts during one of the most dangerous periods.

Right now, this budget, if it continues in the direction the Biden administration is pushing, will get us below 3 percent of GDP for our defense. We have only done that four times since World War II. Do you think being at 3 percent of GDP, or below 3 percent of GDP for the Department of Defense, meets the moment in terms of the dangers we are seeing right now? Mr. Secretary.

Secretary AUSTIN. I think, again, operating within the guidelines of the law—

Senator SULLIVAN. But I am not asking about the law. I am just saying, if we go to below—3 percent or below, do you think that meets the—we have been there four times. It was mostly in the late 90's when we have the so-called peace dividend. Is 3 percent of GDP for our Department of Defense what we need during these very dangerous times?

Secretary AUSTIN. No, we are—again, we have linked our request to our strategy, and again, I think we had to make some tough choices, as I said earlier—

Senator SULLIVAN. General—I am sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Secretary. General, in your personal opinion, do you think that below 3 percent of GDP spending is what we need to meet these dangerous times, which we all agree are dangerous times?

General BROWN. Well, Senator, what I really believe on this is that we have to get a budget on time. For the past 15 years, we have been—

Senator SULLIVAN. I agree with that. Talk to Senator Schumer—

Senator SULLIVAN. We have had 5 years in continued resolutions. When the budget is on time, it actually impacts our buying power.

Senator SULLIVAN. I agree with that. But can you answer my question? Three percent of GDP—it is pretty easy to answer. The answer is no, right.

General BROWN. Senator, as a warfighter, I don't—

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit this chart for the record. It just shows where we have been—four times since World War II, we have been at 3 percent of GDP or below. The answer is no. I think we all know that. This Committee knows that. It is important—I respect both of you very much. Have a lot of experience. But it is important to come before this Committee and tell us what you believe.

None of you believe going below 3 percent of GDP is good for the Department of Defense. I know that. I know it is hard. The President clearly thinks it is good for Department of Defense. He cuts the budget every year. It has got to make your job really tough.

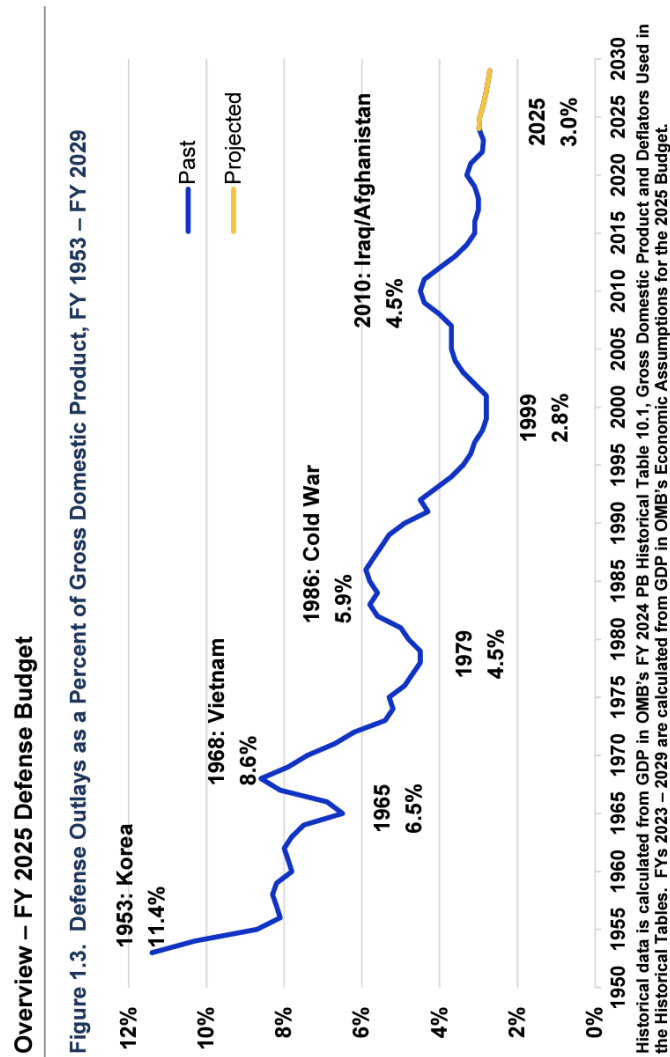
Let me go to an area that you understand very well, both of you, and that is deterrence with regard to Iran. Tom Friedman, The New York Times columnist, recently observed that fighting through Tehran's proxies, Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, Shia militias in Iraq, Iran is reaping all the benefits and paying virtually no costs of the work of its proxies.

I asked General Kurilla if he agreed with that. He said yes, I think they are not paying the cost. That is your CENTCOM Commander with regard to Iran. Vice Admiral Brad Cooper mentioned on 60 minutes that the Houthis are actually supplied—being supplied by the Iranians, advised by the Iranians, trained by the Iranians, and very importantly, they are receiving targeting information on American warships in the Red sea.

So, the Iranians are providing the Houthis targeting intel to shoot and sink the USS *Carney* and USS *Eisenhower*. Both of you are, I think, very clear eyed on the threat that Iran poses. You have seen them killing our troops over the years. General, you have had an up close—I am sorry, Mr. Secretary, you have seen that very up close with the EFPs in Iraq. Why are we not sinking Iranian warships, intel ships that are providing targeting intel to kill marines and sailors from Alaska or North Dakota?

I mean, I find this outrageous. Why are we not doing that? Why are we not telling the Iranians, overtly or covertly, next time you send intel to target an American warship through the Houthis, we will sink your ships. Why aren't we doing that? That is so basic to me. Mr. Secretary, you have been very strong against Iran your whole career.

[The information referred to follows:]



Secretary AUSTIN. I maintain the point that Iran needs to be held accountable for what it is doing—continues to do.

Senator SULLIVAN. Providing intel to kill American sailors in the Red sea. Why don't we sink their ships?

Secretary AUSTIN. Attacking Iran is a different issue and I think—

Senator SULLIVAN. They are attacking us.

Secretary AUSTIN. Their proxies are attacking—

Senator SULLIVAN. No, they are providing intel to kill Americans. General, your advice on this, in your personal opinion?

General BROWN. As the Secretary said, we will continue to hold Iran accountable for much of this activity. I can talk to you more

in a classified session about some of the options that we are working through should one of our attacks—our ships get attacked.

Senator SULLIVAN. This is not an unreasonable position that I am proposing. Here is the problem, and I have talked to the CNO of the Navy. There was this barrage against the USS *Carney*—28 missiles and drones recently from the Houthis.

If one of those slipped through and sunk that ship, the President would have pressure to go to war with Iran. My view is we should just tell them right now, enough. Operation Praying Mantis, I know you are both familiar with that.

That was very successful operation. We sank Iranian warships when they were mining the Persian Gulf. So, I would like to talk to you more about this in the classified setting, but I don't think it is even a difficult decision. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the quotes attributed to Mark Twain, which has never been verified, but if he didn't say it, he should have, which is that history doesn't always repeat itself, but it usually rhymes.

In the late 1930's, there was a very deliberate and sophisticated Nazi propaganda effort in the United States up to and including Members of Congress to affect American opinion and political opinion toward the Nazi regime and the defense of Europe, and it worked until Pearl Harbor.

Today, Chairman McCaul and Chairman Turner in the House have both acknowledged a very sophisticated and concentrated Russian misinformation and propaganda attempt here in the United States to affect our public policy toward Ukraine.

Indeed, both of them acknowledged that this has, up to and including Members of Congress. Do you see, Mr. Secretary, a danger to this country from this kind of concerted, conscious, misinformation campaign on the part of the Russians?

Secretary AUSTIN. Absolutely, Senator, and that danger increases on a daily basis. To your point, it is sophisticated to the degree that people don't know that—you know, where the, the information is coming from and how Russia is doing these kinds of things. But, again, there is a danger.

Senator KING. Well, it is one of the vulnerabilities that we have is also our greatest strength, which is the openness of our society, the First Amendment, free speech. The vulnerability is that our democracy is based upon information, and if the information stream is compromised by a foreign actor, that endangers our country.

One of my concerns is that it is very difficult to defend against such attacks. We don't want to be censoring the internet. We don't want to be censoring free and—free flow of information. Our whole defense strategy in every other area is deterrence. In other words, that is—deterrence is the key to our defense strategy. It has been for 75 years. Except in cyber and misinformation.

I would hope that you would take back to CYBERCOM and the NSA the necessity of a deterrent. That is the adversary, in this case Russia, if you are going to meddle in our politics, in our system, in our information pool, in a deliberate and conscious way, you will pay a price for that. Not necessarily kinetic, but it could be cyber, it could be sanctions, it could be others. But one of my

problems is that there doesn't seem to be a deterrent in this field, which indeed is the new frontier of warfare.

Mr. Secretary, I hope you will take that thought back. If deterrence works in nuclear policy, in conventional kinetic policy, it also can work in this new frontier of misinformation to undermine the National Security of this country.

Secretary AUSTIN. I will take that back and we will take it for action. We will drill on possibilities to create that deterrent effect that you are talking about.

Senator KING. I am afraid if we don't do that, it is just going to continue. There is no reason why it shouldn't. It is cheap for them, and it is very damaging to this country. With regard to Gaza, Senator Kaine laid out the situation very effectively. It has become apparent—I met with Prime Minister Netanyahu in January.

The President has talked to him repeatedly. You use the word encourage. It has become apparent to me that the current government of Israel needs more than encouragement. I was surprised that at the very week that the World Kitchen attack occurred and the continuing humanitarian crisis, that the Administration approved the transfer of additional munitions to Israel, particularly offensive munitions. 2,000 pound bombs are not defensive, they are offensive, and they are not very precision.

Why did the Administration make that decision? It seems to me the President's hand would be strengthened significantly if he had said, we are going to pause this planned conveyance of these offensive weapons until we see some serious attention to the humanitarian crisis and also to the problem of civilian casualties.

Secretary AUSTIN. So, I had the opportunity to speak with my counterpart on his attack, and I was very upfront in terms of, you know, how horrific this was and the fact that they needed to be investigated and people held accountable.

We are seeing some of that activity. In terms of—as the President engaged the Prime minister, I won't speak to that, you know, the contents of that conversation, but it clearly had an effect. We have seen changes in behavior, and we have seen more humanitarian assistance being pushed into Gaza.

There needs to be more still. But, again, I think, you know, the President's conversation did have a positive effect. Now, hopefully that trend will continue but that's left to be seen.

Senator KING. Well, again, I think all of us feel Israel absolutely has a—not only a right, but a responsibility to defend itself. But it is the conduct by which they are doing so that is actually hurting Israel. That is what bothers me.

I consider myself a friend of Israel, and by not separating the Palestinian civilians from Hamas, they are playing into Hamas's hands. When you kill a civilian child, their parents are not going to be very sympathetic to the people that let that bomb loose.

My concern is that particularly when those bombs are coming from this country, we have a responsibility as well in terms of that—the way that war is being conducted, because we are engaged also in terms of the supply of the weapons.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Let me recognize Senator Cramer, please.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here and for your service to our country. General Brown, I am going to start with you. I am going to follow up on a number of things that my colleagues have brought up, but I want to ask you very specifically, is it your best military advice to the Commander in Chief, and the Secretary of Defense to cut—continue to cut the defense budget to the point where we are now below 3 percent of our GDP? Is that your best military advice?

General BROWN. You know, I give more advice on our operational capability, but—

Senator CRAMER. You guys are very good at not answering questions.

General BROWN. But I will also tell you, one of the things we will do is actually continue to advocate for the resources required for the Joint Force. This is an area that I will continue to work on not only with the—my boss, the Secretary, but also with this committee.

Senator CRAMER. Mr. Secretary, Senator Cotton asked you about, you know, striking energy assets in Russia, particularly refineries. Isn't—and you sort of said maybe there is a better place. I don't want to say that is what you said, but better places for them to strike. Isn't energy—hasn't energy become a weapon in the war in Russia and Ukraine, and frankly, in Iran?

In fact, regarding Iran, I think somebody said that the position of the Administration is to make Iran pay for what they have done, and we will talk about, you know, some of those options, General, in the other session. But aren't sanction waivers for Iran—I mean, that doesn't seem like a great way to make them pay.

They have now been able to use oil to build their reserves, their financial reserves, some \$4 billion, which is what they had at the end of the Trump Administration to \$75 billion today. So, isn't energy, aren't energy assets actually almost like hitting say, you know, a military side?

General BROWN. They can and will have, eventually have an impact on a country's ability to produce military capability. There is no question. The question is, if you are in a fight and you are fighting for your life, is that most important to you or is something—can something else be addressed that is, that can affect the battlefield, the current battlefield, more effectively?

Senator CRAMER. Okay. If I buy that, couldn't we be doing at least more on our part to provide some of those much cleaner energy resources rather than letting Iran, for example, continue to sell to China, another adversary, and buildup their reserves?

Leaving that for a minute, I want to get to something even more specific and something that I was planning to bring up before all this came up, and that is and won't surprise either one of you, that I continue to be concerned, and your Combatant Commanders are sounding the alarm about the Air Force continually not only eliminating legacy and current ISR assets, but now future ISR assets, with the hope that somehow lower earth orbiting satellites are going to solve the day.

I know you will say, because we always hear, well, the Combatant Commanders never have enough ISR. They will always say

they don't have enough. But their concern is escalating along with the deterioration of our airborne ISR assets.

I know about the priorities, and we need to do more, but could General Brown maybe, now that you have this broader responsibility than just the Air Force, maybe you could speak to that a little bit for me and help me feel better about it, and again, we can talk about it in more detail later.

General BROWN. Senator, I appreciate the question, and I will just tell you, based on experience, having been a Deputy Commander to Combat Command, Air Command Commander, as well as a Service Chief, and now as a Chairman, I do think about all the capabilities that we have and ISR is one of those.

This, I will just say, is one of the more contentious issues that we have across the Joint Force. The things we are going to have to continue to do is this, not only look at the ISR that we do have to keep that moving, but at the same time, look at opportunities, particularly—and you mentioned space based capabilities.

That is going to give us access into areas we can't get with some of the ISR that we have today. It is a combination of things of how we work together with the Joint Force, and this is an area that I am focused on with the Joint Chiefs and the Combat Commands to ensure that we are making best use of the resources that we do have, the capabilities in ISR, but I would also say all the other capabilities that we provide for the Joint Force and how we balance that out to make sure we are putting it in the right place at the right time, to provide those gateways.

I am having pretty deep conversations with the combat commanders and with the Joint Chiefs on these very topics about how do we ensure that we are identifying areas, like ISR, that we need to continue to resource, and how we best do that across the service and across the Joint Force.

Senator CRAMER. Earlier—I can't remember who was asking the questions, but you brought up CCA as a force multiplier. My term, not yours, but I think that is the term commonly used. I think it was in responses to NGAD.

But I just want to wrap up with this maybe admonition or—please, please, please, as you—whether we are talking about CCA or we are talking about something new in space, we have got to find a way to move at the speed of China.

We have talked a little bit about that with regard to R&D, with regard to procurement. We have got to knock down some of these barriers, and please ask us for help if we need to do some things from a policy standpoint so that our innovators are in the fight with you, rather than just the three or four primes that have the same bureaucratic traditions that, frankly, the military has. We have got to become faster. With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Cramer. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin, under your leadership, the United States has made preventing civilian harm a top priority. You have repeatedly said that it is both a moral and a strategic imperative.

I have pressed the DOD to take this issue more seriously for years. In 2022, DOD issued its Civilian Harm Mitigation and Re-

sponse Action Plan, which directs the Department to systematically take steps to prevent, mitigate, and respond to civilian harm. Policy makes clear that we expect our military partners to prioritize civilian harm prevention as well.

Since October, Israeli strikes have killed over 30,000 Palestinians, the majority of them are women and children. Rafah has become the latest refuge of Palestinian civilians, is now home to more than 1.4 million people.

Given the number of civilians there, the Biden administration has repeatedly urged Israel not to attack Rafah, saying that doing so would be “a disaster. Secretary Austin, do you think an attack on Rafah that kills another 30,000 civilians would enhance either U.S. or Israeli security?

Secretary AUSTIN. Thank you, Senator. There is no question that there have been far too many civilian casualties in this conflict, far too many.

What we continue to emphasize to the Israelis is that, you know, civilians in that battle space need to be not only evacuated but properly taken care of once they are evacuated out of that battle space, before anything is contemplated.

This is a point that I have stress with my counterpart on a number of occasions just recently as yesterday—and again, it cannot be, going forward, what we have seen in the past in terms of the type of activities that we have seen in Gaza City and in Khan Yunis.

Far too many civilians have been killed as a result of combat operations, and they need to get civilians out of that battle space around Rafah.

Senator WARREN. All right. So, the United States has an important responsibility here, because we are the ones giving the Israeli Defense Forces the bombs that they are using to destroy homes and hospitals and refugee camps.

At the President’s direction, through his February National Security memorandum, the Department of Defense and the State Department are currently assessing whether Israel is in compliance with international humanitarian law. There are serious concerns that Israel is not complying with the international humanitarian law.

According to recent investigations by Plus 972 and The Guardian, Israeli intelligence officials allege that the IDF often deliberately prefers to wait until its targets are at home, among their children and neighbors, to launch a strike.

Secretary Austin, I understand that civilians are often at risk in a time of war, but would the United States systematically choose to execute on military strikes that are more likely to kill civilians, including children?

Secretary AUSTIN. Absolutely not. Just the opposite. You know, we routinely go out of our way to make sure that we do everything we can to minimize civilian casualties. Even with that, even with extraordinary efforts, there will be collateral damage and casualties from time to time. But it is something that we really work hard to prevent.

Senator WARREN. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. U.S. policy explicitly states that we expect our allies to meet the same standards

that we do to prevent and mitigate civilian harm. Israel is failing to do that in its bombing campaign.

Under your leadership, DOD has made significant progress in putting policies in place to protect civilians. But we also need to push our closest allies to meet the same standard and to cutoff U.S. support if they refuse to do so. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Warren. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you each of you for being here. Thank you for your service. First, I want to talk about Homestead. I am from Florida. The—we watch what China's doing in Latin America.

We watch what Russia is doing. We watch what Iran is doing. We know we have a Chinese spy station in Cuba. I have talked to Chairman Brown, Secretary Kendall, General Richardson about the importance of Homestead Air Force Base, and it is from a standpoint of power projection, and the need to have a flying mission.

I think all of them have agreed the importance of Homestead. So, Secretary Austin, do you believe that homestead is important for power projection to Latin American, and should we have a flying mission there? Will we get a flying mission there?

Secretary AUSTIN. Homestead Air Reserve Base is strategically located, and it provides valuable contributions to our efforts in the SOUTHCOM AOR, and—we continue to be grateful for your support for Homestead. I know that there has been questions about whether or not we are going to close Homestead. I can tell you that that is not under consideration right now.

Senator SCOTT. Right. number two, China. China has elected to be our enemy. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. We finally got through the NDAA an elimination of the Federal Government's ability to buy Chinese drones, but I don't personally understand how the Department of defense would ever buy anything made in China.

Specifically, to you, Secretary Austin, do you believe that we ought to be buying Chinese lighter systems to use on our vehicles or Chinese computers, which are connected to our top secret networks?

Secretary AUSTIN. I do not, and we will work hard and are working hard to make sure that our supply chains are not vulnerable to manipulation by adversaries. So, it is important to us to make sure that we don't have, you know, elements from our adversaries included in our weapons systems and repair parts and you name it. So, this is something that we pay very, very close attention to.

Senator SCOTT. Right. So, I will take that if we propose things where we are going to prevent DOD, our Federal Government to buying Chinese products, you will be supportive. Next, let's talk about Israel.

I just got back from Israel. Met with the Prime Minister, met with the war cabinet. I went to the Nova Film Festival. I talked to families that lost their loved ones there. I went to a kibbutz that I had been to in 2019, where 63 people were murdered by Hamas. Hamas, about half a mile from there.

There is a video of a young lady that was about to be and was murdered by Hamas. I went to a house where a mother was burned alive. I went where babies were killed. It is disgusting.

What I found in my conversation there is that the—in contrast to what some of my colleagues have said, the IDF is absolutely committed to the safety of Palestinians. They have zero interest in killing civilians.

Actually, they put a lot of effort into making sure that that doesn't happen. My takeaway, this was—they don't understand why the Biden administration doesn't try to hold Qatar accountable. Why they don't—because everybody believes that Qatar can get the hostages out today. I met with American hostage families.

I met with them—you know, some have families alive and some that have bodies still in, in Gaza. They don't—they there's not a lot of understanding of what the Biden administration has actually done to get our American hostages home.

Then the last thing is that a lot of people I have talked to don't understand why they would—the Biden administration would attack Israel for the civilian deaths, which were horrible on the humanitarian effort that was done. We are including where the Kitchen program was done, where even American was killed.

At the same time, the Biden administration has done nothing to hold anybody accountable for the 13 service warriors death at the Kabul airport or the death of innocent Afghan family, killed in a U.S. drone strike during the withdrawal.

So, three questions, do you believe that we ought to demand accountability by Qatar? Should the Biden administration do more to get our hostages home? Three, why do we demand—why does the Biden administration demand accountability—which actually Israel did do an investigation, but to my understanding, we have never done an investigation to hold anybody accountable for the drone strike that killed an Afghan family or do anything about the 13 servicemembers that died at the Kabul airport.

Secretary AUSTIN. Regarding the recovery of hostages in Israel, this has been a priority for the United States since the very beginning. The President and all the senior leadership have been focused on this and doing everything possible to try to get these hostages released, and that work continues.

I know you have seen Director Burns go back and forth to the Middle East, working with his counterparts on this issue. We remain hopeful that we will see movement at some point in the future. But this is very, very important. Again, Hamas is responsible ultimately for, you know, what has—for the beginning—for the start of this war.

This brutal attack on Israel and the killing of Israeli citizens and Americans, it was just—it is unthinkable, quite frankly. But having said that, there have been far too many civilian casualties, and you know, I think there is a way to be successful operationally and tactically, and also protect civilians.

The two are not mutually exclusive, Senator, and I think we just need to see a better job in terms of being more precise and protecting the civilian population.

Senator SCOTT. How about Qatar?

Secretary AUSTIN. I am sorry?

Senator SCOTT. How about Qatar holding them—demand accountability. I mean, they have got Hamas leaders sitting in—liv-

ing in luxury. The Biden administration, as far as I can tell, has done nothing to hold them accountable. We have a military base.

Secretary AUSTIN. We do have a military base there, and it is very important to us, and Qatar has done a lot to help get hostages released, and they continue that work.

So, you know—and I—you know, I have talked to the leadership in Qatar. I know the leadership there, and I can tell you, they are intensely focused on making sure that we can get hostages released as soon as possible.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin, General Brown, as you know very well, the Air Force plans to field several different types of collaborative, combat aircraft with varying capabilities, including surveillance, jamming, and deception.

These CCAs, combined with both fifth and sixth generation fighters, will certainly play a significant role in disrupting as well as defeating our adversaries counter air operations in any future conflict.

However, maintaining air superiority is also going to require that all components, including the National Guard, train with CCAs in real world training environments. These training opportunities found in locations like we have in Michigan, the National All Domain Warfighting Center, I think will be likely to play a very key role in realizing that potential.

So, my question for both of you, Secretary Austin and then General Brown, with this in mind, how can active duty, reserve and guard components, best prepare for CCA integration and training, given the near term acquisition of these uncrewed autonomous systems that we are going to see in the near future. Secretary Austin, if you would answer first, please.

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, as you would imagine, Senator, I remain focused on making sure that we have the right mix of capabilities to execute our strategy. I will just speak to the point that the CCA capability is really, really important, and it will ensure that we maintain a competitive edge in the future. This is something that our Air Force has been working on for quite some time.

We are asking to invest in this, continue to invest in this in this budget. But your specific question about the training of reserve pilots, you know, perhaps I will let the chairman speak to that, because he is a pretty good F-16 pilot and understands that—the training requirements, very, very well.

But I would just emphasize that this is a tremendous capability. We are investing in the right things, and the Total Force at some point needs to have that capability.

Senator PETERS. Thank you. General Brown.

General BROWN. Senator Peters, thanks for the question, and as—I think about the Joint Force—as a joint warfighter, I often think and address the total force and its active guard, reserve, and our civilians.

In my role as—my previous role as an Air Force Chief, as we started the path on collaborative combat aircraft, we looked at it from a total force perspective and will apply that capability to

make sure it is in all three components across United States Air Force.

I would also add, as we go down the path of uncrewed systems, not only in the air but maritime and other areas, how we leverage that capability with our—aspects of Air Force will be most important to ensure we are able to, you know, have the full capability, you know, not only from our active force, but also from our guard and reserve as well.

Senator PETERS. Right. Well, General Brown, as a former fighter pilot, you know better than anyone that aerial refueling is a foundation of global mobility and power projection for the U.S. Air Force.

I am thrilled that Michigan will continue to support this mission as we welcome a squadron of 12 KC-46 refueling tankers to Selfridge Air National Guard Base. The capabilities of the KC-46 will support our current and future fighter and bomber missions for decades to come.

I think their value to the Joint Force was again highlighted in last year's multinational mobility exercise, Mobility Guardian 2023. But my question for you, General Brown, is what strategic role do you see the KC-46 is playing in the Indo-Pacific, and how will they really contribute to our broader National Security goals?

General BROWN. Well, as you highlight the—our tankers are strategic assets, and it actually allows us to be able to move combat power around the world like no other country and—to include the Indo-Pacific.

What it does is it increases our combat reach and our combat effectiveness with these tankers, and having flown the KC-46, it is an outstanding airplane. It arises where—you know, bring it in on, we are learning some things about the airplane.

But, as you highlight, Mobility Guardian last year was a great opportunity for us to show not only what we could do with the KC-46, but with the rest of our mobility force in support of a potential conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. For the knowledge of everyone, the first of two votes has begun. Let me recognize Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, gentlemen. How are you all? Secretary Austin, glad to have you back. You look like you are in good playing shape. So, I know you have had a tough couple of months, but we are glad you are back.

Secretary McCord don't go to sleep onus over there, and I am going to ask you a question. It is my understanding, the work that we have done, my staff, we have spent \$300 billion since 2014 in Ukraine. Does that sound about right to you? I know that is before your time.

Mr. MCCORD. That does sound high to me. We did about \$300 million a year for Ukraine for a number of years, and then just in the last 2 years, we have done about \$40. So, if you are talking whole of Government, it might be—I would have to check. But for DOD, that does sound high.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Well, my staff looked into it. It is about \$300 billion, their best guesstimate. Right now, we are we are printing or borrowing \$80,000 per second. \$4.6 million a minute.

We can't sustain that much longer. We got to find the best ways to spend our money. The DOD Inspector General has said that there is 50 criminal investigations going on right now from money sent to Ukraine.

By the way, one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Are you familiar with that, Secretary Austin?

Secretary AUSTIN. What I am familiar with is that we have given our Inspector General the access that he needs to be able to exercise oversight. We have just increased his authorization in terms of number of people to have forward there.

That is really important. But in terms of moneys, specific moneys that are being provided to Ukraine, we don't—as you know, Senator, we don't provide money. We provide, security assistance in a way of equipment, munitions, and that sort of stuff.

We replenish—when we replenish the things that we have taken out of our own stock to provide to Ukraine, that work comes through our industrial base. You know, our companies in Alabama are helping to create the weapon systems to replace those systems that we provided to Ukraine.

Senator TUBERVILLE. But I want to—

Secretary AUSTIN. In terms of specific cases that the IG may be referring to, I don't have knowledge of that.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. I also want to remind you, we are building munitions in our country and in Alabama we do build quite a few, boats, submarines, missiles, and those things. But we do spend a lot of money out of the country on munitions, because our industrial base is not what—near what it used to be. General, can Ukraine win?

Secretary AUSTIN. Yes, yes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What does that look like?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, what we have said all along is we want to see Ukraine remain a sovereign, independent, and democratic State that has the ability to defend its sovereign territory and deter aggression. That has been our aim from the very beginning, and it remains our aim. But yes, they can be successful.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I heard Secretary Blinken say last week in Brussels that Ukraine will soon be a NATO. Do you agree with that?

Secretary AUSTIN. That is the goal of the NATO members is to at some point bring Ukraine into NATO, and that is certainly something that Ukraine wants to see.

Senator TUBERVILLE. If you are Russia, would you want that? I am just asking. I mean, we are playing games with Russia right now. I just want to understand why we would do that.

Secretary AUSTIN. Certainly, if I was Russia, I would not want that, Senator. I would also not want Finland and Sweden to be a part of NATO, and they are, and the reason that they are is because Putin invaded his neighbor, without provocation, without justification. So, that is why we want—well, that is where we are where we are. Instead of making things better for himself, he en-

larged—he had the effect of enlarging NATO, which obviously creates worse conditions for him.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do we have 12 CIA bases in Ukraine? Can you answer that in this setting?

Secretary AUSTIN. CIA bases? Before——

Senator TUBERVILLE. I got this out of The New York Times, which I don't read very often, but——

Secretary AUSTIN. I will defer that question to the Director of the CIA, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. All right. Thank you. General Brown, just a quick question. I had the opportunity to travel bases all over the world since I have had this job 3 months—or 3 years. Our morale is not very good.

Our recruiting is really dropping. What are you doing to help solve that problem? We need a strong military. A lot of them tell me, they say basic, Coach, listen, we are taking all these classes.

It has nothing to do with killing our adversary. It is about getting along with each other. I can understand part of that. But we also need a killing machine. What is your answer to that?

General BROWN. Well, as I said in my opening statement, honing our warfighting skills has primacy in all we do. Part of building a joint warfighting team is being able to build a team. I know you are fully aware of that based on your background.

So, it is the work that we do with each one of those servicemembers to bring them and give them all the opportunity and full potential to make this most lethal combat, credible force in the world.

Senator TUBERVILLE. How do we stop people from getting out of the military?

General BROWN. Senator, I will tell you, I can give you the numbers, but our retention right now across all the services is really good. Our recruiting is——

Senator TUBERVILLE. I would love to see that.

General BROWN. Our recruiting is also trending up here. In the course of the past several weeks, I have sat down with recruiters from all the various services. I went to a military entrance processing station here to talk to them about their process as well.

Genesis was highlighted earlier. It is a system, and there is some things we can do better, and I gave them some feedback while I was here.

So, recruiting is on the upswing, and the thing I would—last thing I will close on is, we need to talk about the value of service and talk about what it is to wear the uniform, and the great opportunity, whether you spent 4 years or four decades, is really important.

What serving in our military or serving at all within our Nation and the impact it can have. I think that those are things that we can continue to do together.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I totally agree with you. Our military is about people. It is not really about machines and all those things. It is about people. So, thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman—Chairman Reed, and thank you, Ranking Member Wicker is not here, but we thank him in his absence.

I want to thank Secretary Austin, Secretary McCord, and, of course, General Brown for being here, for testifying, and for all your service and hard work. I want to start to talk a little bit about Israel and defending against Iran, because the October 7th terrorist attack on Israel must never be allowed to take place again.

The U.S. security assistance to Israel must therefore continue unimpeded. But Israel's security has only become more complicated in recent weeks and months, as it not only works to defeat Hamas and free the hostages, but also faces frequent threats and attacks by Iran and its proxies like Hezbollah and of course so many others.

So, Secretary Austin, beyond the House finally passing the Senate passed supplemental security package, which I am fighting for, what more can be done to help Israel defend itself, including from what are reportedly imminent threats from Iran?

Secretary AUSTIN. We are doing a lot, Senator. First of all, thanks for your support for the supplemental, and like you, I hope, sincerely hope that we can get this across the goal line in the near future here.

The Chairman and I talk to our counterparts frequently and assess what additional things that we could be doing to help Israel, try to understand, you know, what their priorities are, and our direction of travel is.

Again, we do in those conversations, talk about the necessity to protect civilians, as you would expect, and to provide humanitarian assistance. But we are doing everything we can to make sure that we get them what they need, as quickly as possible. Again, I would expect that things would, as the nature of this fight begins to change to become a more precision fight, their requirements will—should change a bit.

So, we will stay abreast of their needs, and we will continue to provide security assistance as quickly as we can. But we remain committed to helping Israel defend itself, but we expect that they, you know, would execute operations responsibly.

Again, these are constant conversations that we have.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I want to move on to, Secretary McCord, and talk about remote bases and incentive pay/ and, of course, General Brown, you know, about Creech Air Force Base a little bit outside of Las Vegas, remote.

But Secretary McCord, I want to ask you about this issue facing Nevada servicemembers stationed at Creech Air Force Base and at Naval Air Station Fallon, and of course, everyone who is stationed at other rural or remote installations who have to commute many, many miles to get to the base from where they live.

Creech and Fallon have very limited housing nearby, so the vast majority live either in Las Vegas or in the Reno region, respectively, each or both about an hour away. It is an even longer commute for Creech airmen who have to drop off their kids for childcare, utilize other services at Nellis Air Force Base, which is on the opposite end of town.

So, Secretary McCord, given the long travel distances and, of course, the challenges that servicemembers have to face when they travel these distances between their home and their duty station, is the Department considering providing a stipend to alleviate the cost?

If not, how can Congress ensure that it does? We have a lot of challenges, and our remote bases is just one.

Mr. McCORD. Senator, I will need to consult with my colleagues in Personnel and Readiness as well, who will often make the final recommendation to the Secretary and where we might go on benefits that we are authorized to do.

Of course, we need to work with the committee if it is not something we have the authority to do. First things we tend to look at, of course, are housing costs in the area where you are stationed.

You know, in some cases there is a CONUS COLA. Your issue is a little more unique to a couple phases, and I don't know that we have a particular proposal on the table working, but I will check with my colleagues and get back to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. McCORD. In general, outside of congressionally approved programs such as the Mass Transit Benefit Program (MTBP) [5 U.S.C. § 7905], commuting costs are considered a personal expense of the servicemember.

In addition, a stipend, as suggested, would be considered taxable income for servicemembers under the Internal Revenue Code. The Department does not provide reimbursement for single-occupant motor vehicles used for daily commuting from servicemembers' domiciles to their assigned duty stations.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. We will look forward to that. I want to continue with you, Secretary Austin, on some of these challenges that our servicemen and women have with affordable housing and childcare, because in order to build a resilient military force, we have to meet the critical needs of servicemembers' families.

Two of the greatest areas they face in these challenges are affordable housing, like I said, affordable childcare. So, what additional authorities or funding does the Department of Defense need to improve this access to affordable housing and really importantly, affordable childcare?

When we talk about Creech, those drones go 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They need childcare. So how do we ensure that our servicemembers can fully focus on their duties?

Secretary AUSTIN. Regarding housing, as you may have heard me say earlier, Senator, we—in terms of family housing, we are investing—we are asking to invest some to \$2 billion in this budget.

Then, \$1.1 billion in unaccompanied housing, and it is important to note that \$171 million is being carved out for oversight of our housing efforts. So, this is very important. We are also increasing the basic allowance for housing. We have increased the BAH some 20 percent since 2023.

I think that is material. That is meaningful to our troops, and I go out and talk to them about it and they really appreciate that. So, thanks for your support in that regard. Your comments on childcare, I could—I absolutely agree with.

Just had our senior enlisted leaders together and we meet on occasion to talk about what is important to the force, and this is one

area that they continue to raise that, you know, we need to work together to improve, and we have made some improvements. We have provided additional assistance in terms of helping them with childcare fees.

We are investing in childcare facilities, you know, some—I think some \$4 billion or so that we are asking for new childcare facilities in the 2025 budget. Also, we are investing in the quality of the workforce.

We have seen that the more we can do to recruit the right—a better quality of workforce, is going to continue to help us. So, we have invested in that as paying dividends. We need to do more.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you very much.

Chairman REED. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here. Mr. Secretary, in your written testimony, you state that, and I quote, “the Department continues to prioritize investments in our activities and infrastructure to reinforce security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

So, I am all about prioritization, but it is hard to square that when the Department has done so and properly prioritized deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, when we are told that there is at least \$11 billion in unfunded requirements for the INDOPACOM.

Over the weekend, this committee received a letter from Secretary McCord in fulfillment of your, Mr. Secretary, responsibility to submit a report that prioritizes matters identified as unfunded priorities by the senior military officers of the services and combatant commands.

So, Mr. Secretary, is there a reason that you chose not to rank prioritize the list of unfunded priorities submitted to this Committee?

Secretary AUSTIN. Our most pressing priority currently, Senator, is to try to get the supplemental passed. If we can get that through, I think that will help us in a number of ways. So, I certainly appreciate the Senate’s help in terms of the bill that you passed, and I would hope that we would see some progress on this going forward.

Our commanders are required by law to submit unfunded priority list. We encourage and require commanders, and service chiefs, and secretaries, to invest in their base budget. What? You know what, what’s needed to, to make sure that we can maintain a credible fighting force.

This year, we chose to invest in readiness, and also in taking care of our people. That caused us to make sure—they have to make some choices about modernization for, you know, for the longer term. But those are choices that I think with a higher top line in the future, we can certainly recover from.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I want to cut in. Now, you mentioned that it is required by law. That is actually section 222(a) of Title 10. I would just like to point out that it requires rank prioritization, and that was not ranked with priority.

The letter that this Committee received further states that he, meaning you, Mr. Secretary, has determined it is not necessary to

fund these programs in fiscal year 2025 to execute the defense strategy at an acceptable level of risk.

So, my question you with Secretary is what is an acceptable level of risk to you as described in this letter?

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, you know, and as you may have heard me say earlier, Senator, we go through great pains to link our budget request directly to our strategy, and so, we are confident that we can execute the strategy with the things that we have asked for, even though we have had to make some tough choices because of.

You know, a top line has been mandated. So, again, I think we have every ability to execute the strategy. Certainly, in the out years we are going to need an increase in top line. We certainly would appreciate Congress's support in that endeavor.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Secretary. General Brown, again, thank you for being here. Would you agree that ships, aircraft, munitions form the basis of military capacity, capability?

General BROWN. Well, Senator, thanks for the question. I think there is two parts that, yes, that capability is important, but it is just as important to have our servicemembers.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for—

General BROWN. Every one of those is defense.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for including them. I appreciate that. So here is what is concerning me about that first part, ships, aircraft, munitions, of course, in addition to our all-important servicemembers.

I am a little bit confused because the budget request simultaneously divests ships and aircraft while making smaller than expected buys of newer platforms. Another concern is that it leaves slack in the production lines of critical munitions. So, if I had to take our best aviator, and perhaps General, you are one of those.

We had to put them up against our adversaries' best aviators, I would take our guys, our men and women, 10 out of 10 times. But at some point, any conflict becomes a numbers game. It becomes about mass.

So, if China were to decide to invade Taiwan next year instead of 2027 or 2035, are you concerned, General, at all that we are leaving ourselves with a massive capacity gap?

General BROWN. Senator, one of the things I focus on as a chairman and as a warfighter is to be ready at all times, no matter what because you can't predict the future, but we have a responsibility to shape the future, and that is why we are here to testify on this budget. It is also the reason why, you know, for example, the multi-year procurement that was put out in the 2024 NDAA is so important.

To be able to continue that with consistent funding in the industrial base, so we don't have that slack in the system. So, getting the budgets on time help to decrease that slack, to increase the trust and bring down the cost, and to keep it in the hands of our warfighters much faster than we do today.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General. Just briefly, the committee heard—and you and I have talked about the F-15, the Strike Eagle. The committee heard from the Commander of INDOPACOM

that there is a role for Strike Eagles in the scenario in INDOPACOM.

Now the head of NORTHCOM told this committee just recently, in many ways that the F-15 Strike Eagle is unmatched air to ground, and in many ways it is unmatched air to air. It is a phenomenal—it has a phenomenal radar that can pick out low, slow moving, and also low radar cross-sections such as drones or other threats like cruise missiles. Do you agree with their assessments, General?

General BROWN. The F-15 Strike Eagle is a very capable platform, I would agree.

Senator BUDD. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I keep highlighting these issues, Mr. Chairman, because the Air Force plans to divest 26 of these Strike Eagles, at the same time buying less than expected F-15 EXs and F-35s.

Meanwhile, China is rapidly expanding their air force. So, I am seriously concerned about the growing fighter gap. Thank you for the additional time. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator Kelly, and we are in a vote, so if you would adhere to 5 minutes, it would be much appreciated.

Senator KELLY. I will. Senator Budd, fantastic question. I am going to have some follow-ons to your question with General Brown.

So, General, on the munitions, so the war in Ukraine has exposed real concerns about our industrial base. Even during this limited conflict, that is an air conflict, industry is struggling to produce the number of munitions that we need even to replenish our stores.

If we had a conflict with a peer adversary, we would expend munitions at—possibly at a higher rate than we are seeing with Ukraine—in a higher rate than they might be able to be replaced.

So, it is clear that more needs to be done to prepare our defense industrial base for a possible future conflict. General, last year, I asked your predecessor about the importance and impact of multi-year procurement on replenishing our munitions stockpiles.

So, General, how have the multi-year procurements that we passed out of this committee impacted our munitions stores to date?

General BROWN. Well, they will have an impact. The challenges that came—the NDAA in 2024 gave us the multi-year procurement. We didn't get a budget for 2024 until 170 days in. But I do see the opportunity going forward and the future of how multi-year procurement will assist us first to create a concept demonstrable to industry.

So, industry then can get facilities, get a workforce. Gives us some consistency, which builds trust, which brings down costs. Then there is a steady stream of munitions. These are the things we need to work on, in addition to get the budget on time. All those together are going to help us increase our stocks.

Last thing I would add to that, you know, the supplemental that has been talked about several times today, that doesn't only help our partners in Ukraine, it helps to build out a defense industrial

base that will help us in the future to make sure we have the capacity ammunition that we will require for any future contingency.

Senator KELLY. Okay. So, beyond what you just mentioned in the supplemental, is there anything else we could be doing to make sure we have the right types and quantity of munitions going forward?

General BROWN. Well, you know, I guess the other piece that I would talk to you about is having gone out to visit some of our industry partners just recently, one of things we talked about is the workforce.

That can be a long lead item, to make sure we have the engineers, the skilled workforce to bring in that capability. That is why consistent funding and all that, so you can actually—you know, once they have that workforce, they can maintain that workforce, to continue to move forward as well.

Senator KELLY. All right. Well, thank you. Separate subject, drones, the drone problem. Incursions on military installations have gone up and is a real threat to our National Security. I think some of it is, you know, hobbyists, but there are also foreign actors that are certainly involved here.

In December, we saw a large number of drone incidents at Langley. We still don't know who was behind those. We had an F-16 about a year and a half ago in the Barry Goldwater range strike a drone. Not a lot of damage to the F-16.

If it would have went down, the intake, General, as we both know, that could have been catastrophic for that airplane and possibly the crew member on board if he couldn't get out. We see consistent incursions around sensitive Government facilities.

So, General, you know, why are the current drone detection and defeat systems that we currently have, why are they failing? could you maybe go into why we need to continue to—why we continue to field these outdated measures?

General BROWN. Senator, one of the things we have to continue to work on is to continue to understand the technologies moving forward and then move at the same pace, as it was highlighted. We do have to move faster.

If you go back to what happened in December, one of the things I did as a chairman was establish a cross-functional team that wasn't just from the military, but also with the interagency, to work together on this particular problem set.

Because it is a combination of factors. It is not only the detection, but it is the defensive systems that you use and how those may impact aviation and other areas. So, it is an area that we collectively have to continue to work on, not only here in defense here, in the United States, but also in our forward locations where we have many of our servicemembers deployed.

Senator KELLY. Okay. Well, we are prepared to work with you on that to make sure we have the right technology moving forward that we could do more to solve this problem. So, thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Right on time..

Chairman REED. Thank you. Right on time, Senator Kelly. L.D., you crossed it. Senator Schmitt, we are trying to adhere to 5 minutes because of the votes.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. That is what happens when you are last, right, on this dais.

Chairman REED. Yes, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Austin, the United States has appropriated \$112 billion previously for Ukraine aid. \$60 billion in the supplemental that is being considered. Based on this budget, am I to assume then that as of September 30th, there will be no more Ukraine aid from the United States?

Secretary AUSTIN. This request takes us out through the end of month September.

Senator SCHMITT. Right. But there is no money, so there—I can only be left to assume one of three things. One is the war is over, two or B, the United States won't be allocating any more dollars, or C, that this is a dishonest request.

So, I guess the question is, are we going to—it is not in this, but we are going to get another supplemental because members of this committee had been told there could be another request for \$100 billion.

So, I guess I am just trying to understand the totality of the request of the American people for this war that does not seem to be represented in this request.

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, I assure you that the request is not dishonest, Senator. It is based upon, for this fiscal year, what we see Ukraine needs and our ability to provide security assistance and replenish our stocks. Again, this is not—this goes through our industrial—

Senator SCHMITT. I understand the argument, but I would also make the argument that the weapons that are being procured for Ukraine aren't necessarily the weapons that our industrial base would produce to defend the United States, or even in the Indo-Pacific. Those are more long range fires. That is really not what Ukraine needs.

With an industrial base that does not have the capacity to do all of these things, we are making decisions about what is produced and what is sold, and those may not be in the interest of the United States. I mean, do you understand the point?

Secretary AUSTIN. I do, Senator, and I think you are right. I think, you know, there are munitions that we will need for a peer competitor fight that we are not using in Ukraine right now. But having said that, Ukraine needs air defense capabilities, weapons systems and interceptors. It needs artillery munitions.

Of course, our industrial base produces all of that, and we have worked to expand our capacity in our industrial base to produce anti-tank weapons systems, you know—

Senator SCHMITT. I appreciate the point. I don't mean to cut you off. I just, as you have heard, I have limited time. I just want to get through a couple more questions. So, what does victory look like for Ukraine? How do you define victory?

Secretary AUSTIN. You may have heard me say this earlier, Senator, but we have said from the very beginning that what we want to see is a Ukraine that is a democratic country, that has—that is independent and has the ability to protect its sovereign territory, to defend its sovereign territory, and to deter aggression.

Senator SCHMITT. Does that mean Crimea is part of Ukraine?

Secretary AUSTIN. Crimea is a part of Ukraine.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, okay. Right. But in order for the war to be over, does Ukraine have to control Crimea?

Secretary AUSTIN. In terms of how things transition, going forward, you know, I would not, want to predict what President Zelensky will decide.

Senator SCHMITT. I think part of the problem, with all due respect, is that this Administration has not articulated what an exit strategy is. To me, this is a blank check for a war that, without any clearly defined goals, will be endless.

That is—so the skepticism among—I didn't vote for the supplemental because I don't think that we have—we don't have adequate controls on how the money is being spent. Victory hasn't been defined.

So, for America's interests, I understand America's interest, we are continuing to head down this road, and now we are getting a budget request that doesn't—isn't reflective of the Administration's, for however long it takes, statement.

So that is part of the objection. I guess one of the issues, too, is and I want to make sure I am clear, is it the Administration's position that Ukraine should be admitted into NATO?

Secretary AUSTIN. It is NATO position overall that—

Senator SCHMITT. No, the United States of America. What is the Administration's position on Ukraine's admission to NATO?

Secretary AUSTIN. I think you have heard the President say that—and of course, NATO has an open door policy. So, all of the countries have worked toward—

Senator SCHMITT. I am really not trying to put you in a weird spot. I just heard Secretary Blinken say, or maybe it was a mistranslation, so I am just looking for clarity. If it is the position of the United States of America that Ukraine should be admitted into NATO?

Secretary AUSTIN. Was that question as to whether or not they should be admitted right now or in the future?

Senator SCHMITT. Either, or.

Secretary AUSTIN. Well, right now they are in a war, Senator—

Senator SCHMITT. Right, so that would be a disastrous result because we would go to war. Right. But let's say the war ends tomorrow, or September 30th based on this budget—in September 30th. Is it the position of this Administration that Ukraine should be admitted into NATO?

Secretary AUSTIN. It is unlikely that the war will end on September 30th, but again, it is the goal of the alliance to bring Ukraine into the alliance at some point in the future.

Senator SCHMITT. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am out of time. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator. Senator Duckworth, please.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me just say that a free, independent, democratic Ukraine that can defend itself is in America's national interest.

In fact, should Russia overrun Ukraine, it will not stop with Ukraine and then Article V of NATO will be invoked, bringing

United States troops. So, this is about keeping United States troops out of a war in Europe. Good morning to our witnesses.

Secretary Austin, I want to applaud your engagement in the Indo-Pacific. Your nine official visits to the region underscores the United States deep commitment to our allies and partners.

It is so important that the Department of Defense continues to make the region a priority for investments, including in Guam, Hawaii, and addressing contested logistics in the region.

Next month, I am leading a CODAL with my colleague, Senator Sullivan, to the Shangri-La dialog, where we will engage with our partners on a range of National Security issues. Secretary Austin, I have long been an advocate for strengthening our mil to mil partnerships in Southeast Asia.

What investments do you plan to make in the fiscal year 2025 DOD budget to implement the U.S., ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and how can Congress help you in that effort?

Secretary AUSTIN. By the way, I will see you at the at the dialog. As you know, the Secretary of—the U.S. Secretary of Defense has supported that every year. Again, I think we have made great progress in strengthening our relationships with partners in the region.

In terms of ASEAN, we have continued to develop our relationships with ASEAN members. Every year we attend the defense ministerial meeting members plus. So, I think we have gained a lot of ground in reassuring partners in the region. We also recognize the primacy of ASEAN.

Again, I think, relationships are as strong as they have ever been based upon the continued efforts of not only the Department, but leaders like yourself who continue to go out to the Indo-Pacific.

I suspect you have more than my nine visits to the Indo-Pacific since you have been in office. So, thank you for everything that you are doing.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I have discussed the need to improve DOD's medical readiness in the Indo-Pacific with every service chief and Combatant Commander who comes before this committee.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the DOD has adequate military treatment facilities for servicemembers and their families during peacetime and in the event of a conflict. I would like to discuss an NDAA proposal for fiscal year 2025 that is a priority for me.

The golden hour for saving lives will be rarely achievable due to the great distances within the Indo-Pacific, should there be conflict in the region. So, I would like the DOD to establish a medical readiness program in the Indo-Pacific to address current gaps in DOD's medical capacity, allowing DOD to access accredited foreign medical facilities for patient care, while also creating a medical readiness strategy within the region.

DOD already does a version of this in the Republic of Korea, and we need to expand this concept across the region where appropriate. In fact, the DOD helped to set up, among others, Ajou Trauma Center, which is designed—and to be exactly like the San Diego Trauma Center. I met the doctor there, Dr. Lee Cook-jong was trained by U.S. surgeons.

In fact, that is where the Korean—North Korean dictator—defector was sent in 2018 and his life was saved because he was able to be operated on at that center. Secretary Austin, DOD has a limited number of military treatment facilities West of the International Date Line.

Do you think working with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific can help DOD improve its medical readiness, both in peacetime, but also in the event of a large scale conflict where we are not able to medevac servicemembers back to the United States?

Secretary AUSTIN. I do, Senator, and I agree with you, I think Korea is a great example from talking to our troops and family members. They really appreciate having the ability to do what you describe and take advantage of existing capabilities. So, there is no doubt, possibilities to do those types of things in other places, and I think we should explore that.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Secretary Austin, and Under Secretary McCord, and General Brown, can you work with my staff and me to refine this proposal with a goal of potentially establishing this medical readiness program in the fiscal year 2025 NDAA?

Secretary AUSTIN. We will, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth. Senator Blumenthal will be recognized. He will terminate the hearing. I must go vote.

We will reconvene at 12:30 p.m. in SVC 217, on or about 12:30 p.m., for the closed session. So, we will see you again in the closed session, SVC 217. I will recognize Senator Blumenthal as the last Member, and he will adjourn the open session. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief. I want to thank you all for your service, as I am sure my colleagues have, and apologize that I haven't been here for the full hearing. I was here earlier.

I want to ask about Navy shipbuilding, and particularly submarines, and the industrial base. As you know, the Navy's recently released 45 day shipbuilding review offered a pretty sobering look into the future of procurement efforts by the Navy.

According to this assessment, every major program faces multiple years of delays, including the Columbia and Virginia class submarines, which give the Navy an essential edge in undersea warfare over our competitors. Russia and China are trending in the opposite direction. They are building more. They are developing more, and more advanced submarine.

The decision to fund the production of just one Virginia class submarine seems highly alarming. In addition, it sends a signal to our key AUKUS partner that the United States may not fulfill its commitment to providing a key capability.

So, I am troubled that this decision seems to undermine procurement stability, the workforce development, and our credibility in this area with some of our key allies. So, I would, appreciate your comments, Mr. Secretary, on how we are going to correct any potential loss of capability, loss of progress in undersea warfare, and

the kind of respect from our allies that we need to continue in this area of undersea superiority.

Secretary AUSTIN. Thanks, Senator. Our undersea supremacy is indeed a strategic advantage that no country in the world can match, and we are going to work to keep it that way.

The current issue is one of capacity, and there is a backlog currently in terms of, industry's ability to produce, submarines on time. So, we could increase the backlog, or we could choose to invest in the industrial base to expand capacity so that they can speed production up, and that is what we are doing.

In fiscal year 2023 and 2024, we requested some \$1.9 billion to invest in the submarine industrial base. In this budget, we are asking you for a total of \$4 billion. In addition to that, the supplemental that we have spoken so much about today, includes a \$3.3 billion request to also invest in the industrial base, and that will help us strengthen supply lines and it will also help industry recruit and retain the workforce that it will need to produce these really sophisticated platforms.

You know, I just met with the CEOs of General Dynamics and Huntington Ingalls, and we talked about the challenges that they were facing and, you know, what we are going to do to—with the resources that we are providing them to expand their capability and capacity.

So, it was a good discussion, and they are investing some of their own, capital to do that as well. So, in terms of, Australia and, and the signal that it sends to Australia, you know, I have—I remain in contact with my counterpart, the Australian minister of defense, and we have talked about this issue, and they get it.

So, and by the way, Australia is investing in our submarine industrial base as well. So, we are doing the right things and investing in the industrial base, and hopefully—but that will get us on the right path in the mid to longer term.

But increasing the backlog is probably not the right thing to do at this point in time. Investing in capacity and capability is the right thing to do, I think.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I respect that answer because it recognizes the realities of what we face. Electric boat has hired 5,300 more people in the next year or so—5,300 skilled welders, pipefitters, electricians. Not just people hired off the street.

I know that on paper you could easily say, well, we are going to build two submarines a year, but it wouldn't happen. I think that the candor and realism are very much to be respected.

My urging would be that we make the investment of sufficient size to meet the reality of the challenge, because, as you have said so well, our undersea warfare supremacy is a key capability, and I would hope the Congress would support you in this effort.

Thank you. I am going to respect the 5-minute rule, even though there is no one to discipline me. Thank you for your testimony on behalf of the committee and adjourn the Committee. Thank you very much.

Secretary AUSTIN. Thanks, Senator.

[Whereupon, at 12:21 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

ALLIES AND PARTNERS—SECRETARY AUSTIN

1. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Austin, our asymmetric advantage in the Indo-Pacific is our strong network of allies and partners. This week we look forward to welcoming Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and strengthening the already close bond between our two countries. My understanding is the President is planning to assign a four-star military officer to oversee all of our forces in Japan alongside their Japanese counterpart. How would establishing a joint command headquarters in Japan improve deterrence in the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary AUSTIN. During my time as Secretary, we have expanded and strengthened our alliance with Japan, and we will continue to do so. As I said during my travel to Japan with Secretary of State Blinken, the July 2+2 ministerial meeting added momentum to our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region. During these meetings, we made four historic decisions. First, we decided to modernize the command-and-control structures for our alliance. Second, we discussed ways to increase our bilateral presence in the Southwest Island. Third, we reaffirmed the importance of cooperation and cyber security. Fourth, we discussed new areas for defense industrial cooperation. In addition, we had a separate 2+2 ministerial meeting to discuss extended deterrence. The United States-Japan alliance is stronger than ever today, and I look forward to building on this momentum for years to come.

We are continuing to work with our allies and partners to do what we need to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. I am committed to ensuring that we have the right command-and-control structures in the Indo-Pacific region. I have directed my leadership to review this issue thoroughly and expeditiously, and I expect to have input on the path forward soon.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

2. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Austin, the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office, or CDAO, is responsible for accelerating the Department's adoption of data, analytics, and artificial intelligence. We have heard from multiple witnesses this year that the rapid pace of advancement in information technology suggests these are likely to have a transformative effect on warfare, and investments in these capabilities should be prioritized by the Department of Defense. Do you think the Department and CDAO are moving at the right pace to keep up with our adversaries who are capitalizing on applying information technologies in warfare?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department of Defense (DOD) is moving at a rapid pace to deliver artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities that meet the needs of our warfighters and the Department as a whole. We are doing this with a firm commitment to the responsible use of AI. While CDAO leads this effort for the Department, this is a whole-of-DOD effort that extends across the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, other Components within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Defense Agencies, DOD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DOD, as well as across the executive branch in accordance with Executive Order 14110, to ensure that we are developing and deploying AI capabilities at speed and scale—while doing so responsibly. As with every capability we develop, we are taking the necessary steps to test, evaluate, and manage these technologies to ensure that they are safe, secure, and effective.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

END-USE MONITORING ON MUNITIONS IN ISRAEL

3. Senator KING. General Brown, the Biden administration recently authorized new aid packages to Israel that includes billions of dollars in munitions and aircraft. In continuing to support Israel's right to self-defense, the particular issuance of MK84 2,000-lb bombs raises concerns given their previous linking to mass-casualty events. This raises concerns regarding end-use monitoring, specifically for ensuring that the munitions and equipment provided for Israel is utilized for its intended purpose. How is Israel utilizing the munitions provided by the US, and is this usage in accordance with conditions of issuance?

General BROWN. Israel is bound by the standard terms and conditions of security assistance provided via the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. These conditions include written agreement that the munitions would only be sold for internal security, self-defense and preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Israel also must agree that the U.S. Government (USG) retains the right to verify reports to determine if defense articles have been used for unauthorized purposes and to permit scheduled inspections or physical inventories, unless other means of End Use Monitoring have been mutually agreed upon. Inventory and accountability records must also be made available to USG personnel. Second, our Targeting Infrastructure Policy (TIP) applies specifically to air-to-ground and indirect munitions. Israel must prove that they have the capabilities to precisely deliver the munitions, while also minimizing risk to civilian casualties.

4. Senator KING. General Brown, what systems are in place to account for usage, particularly regarding the above-mentioned 2,000-lb bombs?

General BROWN. Israel is bound by the standard terms and conditions of every Foreign Military Sale (FMS). This includes written agreement that the bombs would only be sold for internal security, self-defense and preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Israel also must agree that the U.S. Government (USG) retains the right to verify reports that defense articles have been used for unauthorized purposes, and to permit scheduled inspections or physical inventories, unless other means of End Use Monitoring have been mutually agreed upon. Inventory and accountability records must also be made available to USG personnel. USG security standards must apply throughout the lifecycle of the weapon system (e.g. transportation, delivery, testing, operational use, storage and destruction processes).

Second, our Targeting Infrastructure Policy (TIP) applies specifically to air-to-ground and indirect munitions. Israel must prove that they have the capabilities to precisely deliver the munitions while also minimizing risk to civilian casualties.

5. Senator KING. Secretary Austin, what oversight measures do you intend to implement to improve end-use monitoring to ensure that munitions are used for their intended purposes?

Secretary AUSTIN. I take end-use monitoring (EUM) of weapons provided to allies and partners extremely seriously. This is an issue that we consider with the provision of any weapon to any nation. We consider information through intelligence reporting as well as open-source reporting, where applicable.

The objective of the EUM program is to provide a factual basis to conclude reasonably that a foreign partner is meeting its end use requirements. DOD implements EUM for Foreign Military Sales while the State Department implements EUM for Direct Commercial Sales. DOD's EUM program, Golden Sentry, ensures compliance with technology control requirements to minimize security risks to the United States and our allies and partners.

Additionally, DOD conducts a thorough technology release process before approving transfers of defense articles and services to foreign partners. Prior to the transfer, foreign partners must agree to secure, maintain accountability for, and use the defense articles for intended purposes in accordance with applicable law.

DOD provides oversight of end-use monitoring efforts through leader engagements, post-delivery monitoring by U.S. personnel assigned to U.S. Embassies worldwide, compliance assessment visits, and discussions with our foreign partners in coordination with the State Department. Any reported allegations of end-use violations are reported, investigated, and addressed.

AUDIT

6. Senator KING. Secretary McCord, in December 2023 you provided an update on the Department's efforts to achieving a clean audit. What substantive goals do you have for fiscal year 2024 and what is the progress toward achieving those goals and a clean audit by October 1, 2024?

Secretary MCCORD. The Department of Defense (DOD) is committed to meeting the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 requirement to achieve an unmodified audit opinion on the DOD-wide financial statements by December 31, 2028. In fiscal year 2024 Department leaders have already taken several actions to achieve this goal, including:

- On February 22, 2024, the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) achieved an unmodified audit opinion on its fiscal year 2023 financial statements, making it the first DOD Service to achieve this important goal. We are using lessons learned from the USMC audit to accelerate progress toward achieving an unmodified opinion on the DOD-wide financial statement audit.
- In October 2023, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) issued a memorandum articulating expectations for the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Principal Staff Assistants (PSA) on contributions and responsibilities for achieving an unmodified financial statement audit opinion. In response, the Deputy

Secretary of Defense established an implementation plan with 38 performance measures for tracking and reporting PSA progress against the SecDef's expectations. Thirty-two of the 38 performance measures are on target for completion in fiscal year 2024. The remaining six performance measures are targeted for fiscal year 2025.

- In November 2023, the SecDef issued his Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Statement Audit Priorities memorandum, setting goals and metrics for four audit remediation priorities: Improving Fund Balance with Treasury, Strengthening Internal Control Environment, Creating a Universe of Transactions, and Optimizing Asset Valuation. The Deputy Secretary is briefed quarterly on progress against these audit priorities.
- In January 2024, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued supplemental guidance for Senior Executive Servicemembers to include relevant SecDef annual financial statement audit priorities in their performance plans.
- In February 2024, the Deputy Chief Financial Officer issued the "Deputy Chief Financial Officer Fiscal Years 2024–2025 Financial Statement Audit Priorities and Expectations for Other Defense Organizations" memorandum. This memorandum lays out audit remediation priorities with expectation for Other Defense Organizations to partner with sponsoring PSAs and relevant stakeholders to achieve progress.
- During quarter 2 of fiscal year 2024, each Military Department and DOD Component under standalone audit holding a disclaimer of opinion revised its audit roadmap, where necessary, to fully align with the December 31, 2028, requirement for the Department to achieve an unmodified financial statement audit opinion. These audit roadmaps include revised milestones, dependencies, root causes, and resource impacts. The roadmaps will be used to further prioritize enterprise remediation and assess and report component progress in achieving the DOD-wide unmodified opinion by December 31, 2028.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

READINESS

7. Senator ROSEN. General Brown, our military readiness depends on meeting immediate warfighting needs while preparing for future challenges. That requires evolving and changing how we train our servicemembers. What does the future look like in terms of readiness?

General BROWN. Department of Defense modernization efforts are directly tied to the future outlook of readiness. The Services have enacted efforts to modernize their formations to maintain our competitive advantages. These efforts mean that not only are we developing and purchasing the newest equipment, but we are also implementing new and innovative training methods (such as threat based and Live-Virtual-Constructive training) to empower our servicemembers and enable those echelons to coalesce into a combat-credible Joint Force.

Within the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC), we envision a future Joint Force that is an agile, highly lethal, and survivable organization, enjoying decisive advantages due to the integration of emerging technologies and concepts.

The evolution of our weaponry, doctrine, training, organization, and professional development will ensure the Joint Force achieves this vision. Success depends on timely, cost-effective programs that include a whole of nation approach and achieve the capability overmatch we envision.

8. Senator ROSEN. General Brown, how do we efficiently and effectively reform policies and the Department to enable those changes?

General BROWN. The Department of Defense executes strategic discipline to ensure we adequately modernize and prepare for the future while continuing to deter and support our allies and partners today, as outlined in the National Military Strategy (NMS).

The Joint Force continues to integrate training with campaigning, to include large-scale exercises with allies and partners, that provide opportunities to improve our interoperability, demonstrate capabilities to enhance deterrence, and hone warfighting skills.

9. Senator ROSEN. General Brown, how does each service need to change how they train and prepare servicemembers for future conflicts?

General BROWN. Honing and mastering our warfighting skill starts within each Service. Services must be trained and prepared to fight as a Joint Team that can operate and execute mission tasks seamlessly across all domains globally. Additionally, with the adversary's increasingly advanced collection capabilities, Service investments in virtual training and Joint Live, Virtual, Constructive (JLVC) Modernization projects are foundational to our ability to train in a way that leaves room for decisionmakers to strategically reveal and conceal critical capabilities for deterrence. Further investment in emerging domains such as space, and in Joint connectivity are necessary to fully leverage JLVC technologies for Joint use. Services' training must be increasingly realistic and rigorous to improve Joint readiness goals and will be further enhanced through programs such as the Joint National Training Capability (JNTC) to ensure consistency. Joint exercises are informed by globally integrated wargames and executed by the Services and Combatant Commands to ensure emerging capabilities are effectively integrated with those of our allies and partners. These training events remain critical to accelerating change and ensure we are ready to meet the future together.

CHILDCARE

10. Senator ROSEN. Secretary Austin, to build a resilient military force, it's crucial to meet the needs of servicemembers' families. One area where military families are facing challenges today is affordable child care. In-Home Childcare Fee Assistance Pilot, which helps provide childcare solutions for regions with exceptionally high demand, was expanded to Las Vegas but has been reported to my office to have so much red tape and difficult requirements which essentially renders it unavailable. What can be done to make this program more accessible to Nevada's military families?

Secretary AUSTIN. Taking care of our tremendous military families is one of my top priorities. The Department has focused in recent years on lowering the cost of childcare for our servicemembers and expanding childcare options for military families. One of our key initiatives to improve access to childcare is Child Care in Your Home. This is a 5-year pilot program that provides childcare fee assistance to servicemembers who utilize in-home childcare providers. Recognizing that there are no State or Federal licensing requirements for in-home providers, the Department implemented safeguards and protections for children as part of this pilot program. For example, the Department has instituted comprehensive background checks, periodic oversight in the form of home visits, and mandated initial and annual training. Each year, the Department applies lessons learned to improve the pilot and to improve customer experience. We have also listened to families utilizing the program and made additional enhancements. We hope to expand this pilot program as it is further developed.

WORKFORCE

11. Senator ROSEN. Secretary Austin, the Department of Defense has the privilege of training and educating the most highly capable military force in the world. Servicemembers receive some highly sought-after trade and technical skills while also receiving immediate and demanding experience on the job. Typically, these trade and technical skills don't transfer easily to the civilian workforce because of a lack of proper certification. What can the Department do better to ensure the skills and certifications our servicemembers receive in the military are immediately transferable to the civilian market?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department is fully committed to supporting our servicemembers as they transition from military to civilian life. We have worked with Federal, State, and public organizations to ensure that every military occupation is aligned with one or more credentialing opportunities that are directly relevant to civilian-sector employment.

In addition to ensuring that servicemembers "get credit" for the skills they have honed through their military occupations, we are also working to expand their skillsets to enhance their effectiveness in uniform and facilitate their transition to civilian life. Specifically, we provide a large and diverse set of credentialing opportunities to servicemembers, including professional certifications, apprenticeships, and occupational licenses. To date, more than 1,700 unique credentials have been mapped to enlisted military occupations. These opportunities continue to expand as military occupational specialties pivot to both optimize the force and protect the Nation. All five Services sponsor credentialing program opportunities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI ERNST

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WORK FROM HOME POLICY

12. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, GS-scale employees' official worksite that defines their location-based pay requires them to show up to the office at least twice a week, but this standard is waivable on an employee-by-employee basis. How many exceptions to the standard twice-in-a-pay-period attendance requirement has the DOD issued since the pandemic and has the agency revoked any of these exemptions?

Secretary AUSTIN. We are committed to providing flexibility to our workforce while also following applicable law and policy. Under a telework arrangement, an employee's locality pay is based on the location of the regular worksite. An employee with a telework arrangement must physically report to the regular worksite on a regular and recurring basis for a full workday at least twice each bi-weekly pay period. The Department recently issued Department of Defense Instruction 1035.01, "Telework and Remote Work," (January 8, 2024), which provides that this requirement may only be waived in certain temporary situations, such as an office closure or weather emergency. Temporary waivers, which are based on local circumstances, are not tracked at the enterprise level.

13. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, based upon IT login information, office swipe-ins, and other measurable and observable factors, how many civilian employees spend the majority of their working hours in a region with a lower locality pay rate than where their designated primary workstation is located, but continue to receive the higher locality pay associated with the primary workstation?

Secretary AUSTIN. House Report 118-125, page 289, accompanying H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, requests a review of the Department of Defense's (DOD) telework policy compliance. DOD is currently working on this report to Congress, which will include information on locality pay for employees in a telework status. DOD has approximately 280,000 of 785,000 telework-eligible Federal employees authorized to telework, and it will take time to conduct a thorough review of all telework agreements. Nevertheless, we are working diligently to provide the Congress this information later this year.

14. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, what is the typical daily onsite attendance in the agency's office buildings as a proportion of its total workforce?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department does not routinely collect daily onsite attendance in its office buildings. However, the Department is currently preparing a report to Congress as required by the joint explanatory statement accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2024 in which the Department will provide occupancy data on facilities with more than 3,500 occupants.

15. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, has the DOD measured the monetary and environmental cost of maintaining underutilized space in terms of energy usage and emissions? If so, what has it found?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department conducted preliminary analysis in Fiscal Year 2021 to understand the impacts of reducing DOD's leased footprint through increased telework. The study concluded that if leased office space was reduced by 25 percent, the Department could potentially save \$268 million across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) (5 years) as well as reduce emissions associated with the building space and worker commuting.

16. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, what, if any, actions are being taken or planned to reduce the underutilization of building and office space?

Secretary AUSTIN. In February 2024, the Deputy Secretary of Defense released the Resilient and Healthy Defense Communities Strategy. The strategy emphasizes the need to optimize the Department's footprint and to create a smaller, higher quality infrastructure portfolio to meet the needs of the joint force and their families. We will keep Congress apprised of our activities as the Department finalizes the strategy's implementation plan.

17. Senator ERNST. Secretary Austin, has DOD's overall office space increased, decreased, or remained relatively the same since April 1, 2020, and by how much?

Secretary AUSTIN. Between the beginning of fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2024, DOD's office space increased by 1.6 percent.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ALIGNING BUDGET TO STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary McCord, could the DOD have submitted a budget proposal above Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) caps like other executive branch Departments?

Secretary MCCORD. The Department's request reflects the reality that the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA), which was signed into law (Public Law 118-5) on June 3, 2023, capped fiscal year 2025 funding for most agencies.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and Secretary McCord, if the FRA caps were higher, say \$900 billion for Defense, would the Department have made different choices for things like ship procurement?

Secretary AUSTIN. To meet the budget caps approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act, we made tough but responsible decisions to prioritize near-term readiness at the expense of some modernization that will not be delivered until the 2030's. It is critical that we regain topline growth in the out years to ensure we meet our modernization goals.

Secretary MCCORD. If the fiscal year 2025 budget cap was at least \$50 billion higher for Defense, the Department would have revisited many of the tough choices required in modernization. However, given the current capacity and production issues within the United States shipbuilding industrial base, it is not certain that the Department would have significantly increased ship procurement in Fiscal Year 2025—particularly the procurement of an additional Virginia-class Submarine due to the existing production backlog. To specifically address these issues, the Department requested and received \$3.3 billion in the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental and requested an additional \$4.0 billion in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request to invest in the submarine industrial base, increase production rates, and position the industry to meet the needs of the United States and our allies and partners in the years to come.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, General Brown, and Secretary McCord, can you explain how the Congress' failure to pass the fiscal year 2024 national security supplemental impacted the choices you made in the fiscal year 2025 budget?

Secretary AUSTIN. As I have stated many times, this is a strategy-driven budget, tightly aligned to the National Defense Strategy. The National Security Supplemental request from the Administration was also aligned with that strategy. We appreciate that Congress passed the President's National Security Supplemental in April 2024.

General BROWN. The Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental funding continues to be critical to invigorate the defense industrial base and to modernize and replenish U.S. stockpiles. The delay in passing of supplemental funding also drove uncertainty and delayed the vital resupply of military assistance to our Allies and Partners in a critical time of need.

Secretary MCCORD. Given that the Department was well into the fiscal year 2025 budget review when the fiscal year 2024 National Security Supplemental request was submitted, the delay in passing the supplemental legislation did not have a significant impact on the choices made in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. Further, we cannot, and should not, fund the extraordinary needs for Ukraine and Israel out of the

Fiscal year 2025 budget. The Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental addressed critical and pressing needs, which cannot wait until fiscal year 2025 and are funded more appropriately through supplemental legislation.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, General Brown, and Secretary McCord, in your opinion, does the historical incidence of the United States spending 3 percent or less of its GDP on defense correspond to times when threats from other nation states are high or low?

Secretary AUSTIN. The budget continues to be strategy-driven. The budget request includes \$147.5 billion in readiness accounts. We shifted some modernization that will not be delivered until the 2030's. This will enable us to operate in a constrained budget environment while protecting and enhancing our ability to fight and win.

General BROWN. The Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget request, like those of the two previous fiscal years, continues to align to the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS). The budget prioritizes investments that address the pacing challenge presented by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the acute threat posed by Russia. Our national strategy documents are threat-informed; and therefore, our

budget request is too. For emergent threats, supplemental appropriations request continue to be the Department's most agile and responsive method to get resources into the hands of our servicemembers and our allies and partners during rapidly evolving contingencies.

Secretary MCCORD. National defense discretionary outlays as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were in the 3 percent range in the late 1990's and early 2000's and have been in the 3 percent range since 2015, with the exception of 2020 when the GDP grew by only 0.1 percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, General Brown, and Secretary McCord, in your opinion, does the historical incidence of the United States spending 4 percent or less of its GDP on defense correspond to times when threats from other nation states are high or low?

Secretary AUSTIN. For the third year in a row, we delivered a strategy-driven budget that invests in what we need to maintain our competitive edge. The most important thing Congress can do to support the Department is to deliver on-time appropriations. Predictable, adequate, sustained, and timely funding is critical to successfully implementing the National Defense Strategy and ensuring our mission to Defend the Nation.

General BROWN. The fiscal year 2025 President's Budget request, like those of the two previous fiscal years, continues to align to the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS). The budget prioritizes investments that address the pacing challenge presented by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the acute threat posed by Russia. Our national strategy documents are threat-informed; and therefore, our budget request is too. For emergent threats, supplemental appropriations requests continue to be the Department's most agile and responsive method to get resources into the hands of our servicemembers and our allies and partners during rapidly evolving contingencies.

Secretary MCCORD. National defense discretionary outlays as a percentage of GDP have been 4 percent or less since 1994 except for a spike from 2009 through 2012, reflecting the impact on the GDP of the 2008 housing bubble collapse and subsequent recession, coupled with increased spending during the Afghanistan war troop surge.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, General Brown, and Secretary McCord, would you prefer a budget that is tied to a percent of GDP every year rather than the current annual budget process?

Secretary AUSTIN. For the third year in a row, we delivered a strategy-driven budget that invests in what we need to maintain our competitive edge. The most important thing Congress can do to support the Department is to deliver on-time appropriations. Predictable, adequate, sustained, and timely funding is critical to successfully implementing the National Defense Strategy and ensuring our mission to Defend the Nation.

General BROWN. The Department has the authorities and resources it needs to deter our adversaries and prevail in conflict. Aligning budget to strategy continues to be an effective method for resourcing our national security.

Secretary MCCORD. Predictable, adequate, sustained, and timely funding is more critical to securing our Nation's defense than a budget tied to a percentage of GDP. Defense spending as a percentage of GDP is helpful in comparing relative investments over time and among countries. GDP is a measure of overall economic activity and it has little to do with defense requirements. While spending a specific percentage of GDP represents a commitment to defense, both GDP and defense spending needs change over time.

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT THREAT ENVIRONMENT

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, do you believe that the threats posed by China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are significantly greater than anything our country has faced since the cold war?

Secretary AUSTIN. We are living in one of the most complex security environments that I have seen in my lifetime. Nevertheless, we continue to assess that conflict with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is neither imminent nor inevitable. We will continue to strengthen our alliances and partnerships around the world to deter aggression from any actor who might wish to challenge us, including the PRC, Russia, Iran, or North Korea. The alignment we have seen among these actors is concerning, particularly following Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. The United States is committed to deterring these actors, defending our troops and our interests against provocations or use of force, and, above all, keeping the American

people and our allies and partners safe. For our part, we will continue to invest in our own capabilities and resilience, to ensure we remain the most combat capable force in history.

General BROWN. In the 39 years I have worn this uniform, this is the most dynamic and challenging I have seen the global environment. Our adversaries are advancing cooperation among themselves to strengthen their military capabilities and ability to challenge U.S. leadership and the rules-based international order. They are aligned in their goal to blunt our influence and fracture our alliances and partnerships. We have seen significant improvements in their coordination and notable areas of strengthened support. Yet, there are also hard limits to that support and their relationships remain highly transactional with deeply embedded point of friction and distrust. In contrast, this global environment has driven increased dialog with our allies and partners, as well as an increased focus on the threat.

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, do you believe that our defense spending is sufficient to address a potential PRC invasion of Taiwan in the next 3 to 5 years?

Secretary AUSTIN. As I have stated before, we continue to assess that conflict with the PRC is neither imminent nor inevitable. The President's Budget Request for fiscal year 2025 enables the Department to field combat-credible capability to deter PRC aggression in the near, mid-, and long-term, consistent with our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act. We continue to provide defensive capabilities to Taiwan as quickly as possible via Foreign Military Sales, while also executing newly granted authorities, including Presidential Drawdown and Foreign Military Financing. This year we are also asking Congress for a broader defense cooperation authority known as the Indo-Pacific Security Assistance Initiative (IPSAI), which will provide the Department with a faster, more flexible mechanism to provide critical support to Taiwan.

General BROWN. An invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China (PRC) is neither imminent nor inevitable. We're using every tool at our disposal, consistent with longstanding U.S. policy, to ensure that deterrence across the Strait remains real and strong, as it has for more than four decades. Defense spending levels ensure we maintain the capacity to resist any force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security of the people of Taiwan, and the fiscal year 2025 President's Budget request expands the scale and scope of our activities in the Indo-Pacific. With your support, the U.S. and our large network of Allies and Partners stand ready to defend ourselves and our interests in the region and worldwide. Continued peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region are vital to U.S. national security.

In line with the Taiwan Relations Act, we continue to support Taiwan's efforts to improve their capability and capacity to deter cross-strait aggression and delay or disrupt an invasion. In recent years, with United States security assistance, Taiwan has made significant strides in improving their self-defense capacity, demonstrating commitment to defense reforms at the highest levels of their political and military leadership.

In addition to Taiwan's already substantial Foreign Military Sales (FMS) portfolio, we have utilized new Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Presidential Drawdown Authorities (PDA) to further address their critical capability gaps. With the passage of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental funding and additional appropriations for FMF in fiscal year 2024, we can begin to address capability gaps that improve Taiwan's warfighting capacity and enhance deterrence.

Additional funding authorities, similar to the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), enable accelerated procurements and contribute to energizing the Defense Industrial Base to meet Taiwan's defense capability requirements.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, are all Combatant Commanders' request for naval ships resourced fully?

General BROWN. The demand for maritime forces continues to exceed the capacity of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The Joint Staff carefully reviews every Combatant Commander's request for forces and provides the Secretary an informed outlook of the short and long-term risk associated with each demand. Consistent, adequate, and on-time funding and prioritizing the Navy's 30-year ship-building plan are essential to ensure we keep pace with our adversaries.

RECRUITING EFFORTS

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, service recruiters are authorized under law to have access to student information on par with potential

employers and colleges. Given our significant recruiting challenges, would you support an effort to raise the level of access to something greater than parity with potential employers and colleges?

Secretary AUSTIN. Yes. Recruiter visits to high schools provide students with the opportunity to hear accurate information about military service options. We are working every day to recruit America's best talent, and the data is trending in the right direction. Many schools are supportive of our recruiting efforts, though unfortunately others present unnecessary challenges. Our Military Services are doing all the right things, including advertising, getting back into the right markets, and returning to schools. They are also making the right investments and improving processes. This is a challenging market, but I am optimistic that we are starting to see progress. We appreciate Congress's support and partnership in achieving our recruitment goals. Congress can further assist DOD's recruiting efforts by supporting the Department's fiscal year 2025 legislative proposal that would increase recruiter access to high schools and communicate the opportunities and benefits of military service.

General BROWN. We need to execute a whole of government approach to encourage citizens to serve both in and out of uniform. Some ways to connect with the recruitment pool are through the Value systems, opportunities the military provides, pride, and service. Young people only aspire to be what they see or know about. We need to better connect with the next generation. Some of the influencers which affect recruitment are Marketing & Advertising, robust partnership with DOE, Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS). Current recruiting data shows positive indicators of sustained improvement, and retention remains above high across the Services.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, what would optimal or ideal access to high schools look like for military recruiters?

Secretary AUSTIN. Optimal access would include frequent access to students to facilitate meaningful interactions and discussions about the benefits of military service, as well as access to student contact information in a complete and timely manner. Additionally, recruiters should have an opportunity to attend high school career fairs and sporting events free of cost and be allowed a minimum of two recruiter visits per month. While this level of access is optimal, we recognize the challenge of balancing what recruiters need and want with what school officials are able and willing to provide.

29. Secretary Austin, are there any efforts to expand the footprint of ROTC units at colleges and universities that have demonstrated a low propensity for military service?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Secretaries of the Military Departments consistently conduct thorough assessments of their 1,800+ ROTC programs at more than 1,300 colleges and universities nationwide. These reviews are instrumental in ensuring that the programs are strategically positioned to fulfill the officer accession needs of the respective Military Services. Moreover, they provide the necessary information for the Military Departments to optimize program locations. Throughout this process, careful consideration is given to various factors, including budgetary constraints and other pertinent variables, ensuring a balanced and effective approach.

SHIPBUILDING

30. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and Secretary McCord, can you explain how the defense spending caps forced the Department to make hard choices related to underinvesting in shipbuilding?

Secretary AUSTIN. The U.S. Navy remains the most combat credible maritime force in the world, which is demonstrated on full display in our recent actions across the Middle East. The fiscal year 2025 budget includes \$48.1 billion to modernize our naval forces, including new construction of six battle force ships this year. We had to make tough, responsible choices to comply with the Fiscal Responsibility Act's budget caps, and we focused on investing in what American industry can produce. Over the last 3 years, the Department has made critical investments in the shipbuilding industrial base to ensure that American industry can meet our national security needs far into the future. Congress has helped these efforts by providing submarine industrial base funds in the National Security Supplemental. These investments will support supplier and workforce development and infrastructure improvement to support increased production and reduce maintenance backlogs. The Navy is making critical improvements to ship maintenance and construction to ensure we maintain the fleet as effectively as possible. It also is developing new uncrewed plat-

forms to complement our existing fleet. I look forward to working with Congress to ensure that we continue to build the capabilities that we need to Defend the Nation.

Secretary McCORD. To meet the budget caps approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act, we made tough but responsible decisions to prioritize near-term readiness at the expense of some modernization that will not be delivered until the 2030s. It is critical that we regain topline growth in the out years to ensure we meet our modernization goals. Executing the National Defense Strategy requires that we realize outyear investments through outyear growth.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and Secretary McCord, would a larger budget have allowed you to procure two *Virginia*-class submarines while simultaneously making additional investments in the submarine industrial base?

Secretary AUSTIN. For the third year in a row, we have developed a strategy-driven budget. That includes our investments in submarine production. No other country can match our undersea warfare capabilities. We are committed to making the necessary investments in our submarine industrial base to ensure that it can meet demand. That is why the President's National Security Supplemental request included \$3.3 billion primarily for the submarine industrial base, and the fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$4 billion. This funding is necessary to build to an annual production rate to meet our own requirements and place us on a path to fulfill our AUKUS commitments. This funding will also enable us to invest further in supply chain development, infrastructure, and workforce development. These investments rely on on-time, full-year appropriations, so Congress's continued support is critical.

Secretary McCORD. The Department's decision to procure one *Virginia*-class submarine, instead of two, is not tied to the fiscal year 2025 budget caps. The procurement of one submarine will allow for the industrial base to reduce the backlog and allow for the submarine industrial base investments to increase production to two *Virginia*-class submarines by 2028.

Removal of the second *Virginia*-class submarine in fiscal year 2025 was a difficult choice, but the Department is optimistic that this will provide an opportunity to reduce the backlog within the production line and for submarine industrial base investments to take greater effect.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, the delays identified by the Secretary of the Navy's 45-day shipbuilding review paint a damning picture. Do you believe the regular congressional authorization and appropriation cycle and DOD PPBE process can deliver ships on time and on budget?

Secretary AUSTIN. The best way that Congress can support the Department is to pass on-time appropriations. We need predictable, adequate, sustained, and timely funding. Our budget is designed to carry out the National Defense Strategy. We cannot implement the strategy unless and until Congress funds our budget request.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and Secretary McCord, what is your personal involvement in the DOD's efforts to address significant cost and massive time overruns in the Navy's major ship procurement programs?

Secretary AUSTIN. It is crucial that we ensure timely and efficient delivery of the Navy's major ship platforms to maintain our advantages at sea. Major programs are experiencing an increase in demand across the enterprise but are also facing supply chain shortages and labor force challenges.

Secretary McCORD. My personal involvement in addressing shipbuilding challenges is to advocate for on-time appropriation bills each and every fiscal year so that contracts can be awarded on-time. Continuing resolutions limit the Navy's ability to properly increase production and funding to match the budget request instead of maintaining funding levels of the previous year that are not synchronized with the latest budget request.

I meet regularly with Navy leadership and my staff, as well as with industry leaders, to discuss these issues and ways to improve our shipbuilding efforts to overcome these challenges. The Department is taking proactive measures to build stable and reliable acquisition profiles that promote development and retention of highly skilled workforces and investment in world-class manufacturing and shipbuilding facilities. We are also working to expand supplier base capabilities and capacity and shipyard infrastructure. Stable demand signals, efficient build profiles, and affordable acquisition strategies are critical to the industrial base. Multi-Year Procurements also can provide further stability to shipbuilders.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, the Constellation-class frigate program is based off an existing FREMM design used by NATO allies. The purpose of using an existing, mature design was to prevent delays and reduce cost. NAVSEA took

an initial design that had 85 percent commonality with versions in use by European navies and made so many changes that the final version approved for production has only 15 percent commonality with the FREMM design. Were you aware that the Navy was making such significant changes at the risk of incurring delays in the procurement timeline?

Secretary AUSTIN. The U.S. Navy is procuring a warship that adheres to Navy Standards and incorporates the latest Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) combat system programs of record. Since awarding the contract, the Navy has taken tremendous care not to add or change the established requirements so as not to impact cost or schedule. Ongoing design efforts are driven in large part by challenges in both the engineering workforce and industry-wide hiring and retention, combined with issues the shipbuilder has encountered in adapting the design to meet the requirements reflected in the system specification used in the competition. To mitigate ongoing delays, the Navy and the shipbuilder are jointly pursuing program-wide process improvements and mitigations across multiple program risk areas.

FAILED INTEGRATED DETERRENCE WITH IRAN

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists continue to attack U.S. Navy warships, U.S. commercial ships, coalition navy warships, and coalition commercial ships in the Red Sea despite multiple kinetic strikes on drone and anti-ship missile infrastructure. Clearly, deterrence is not working. If a Houthi missile strikes a U.S. Navy ship and kills or injures U.S. sailors, we will obviously respond. Do we have a list of targets to strike should that event occur that we have not already struck?

Secretary AUSTIN. We have taken significant steps to deter aggression and respond to threats in the Red Sea and surrounding region. This includes multiple force posture adjustments to deter and defend against potential threats. We will do what it takes to protect our forces against the Houthis' air and maritime attacks. Since January 11, we conducted six joint strikes, frequently alongside the United Kingdom against several targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. We did so consistent with the U.N. Charter, with support from a coalition that includes the Netherlands, Canada, Bahrain, Denmark, Australia, and New Zealand. We have also conducted dozens of strikes targeting Houthi weapon systems that we determined presented an imminent threat to United States and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region. We also launched Operation Prosperity Guardian—under the umbrella of the Combined Maritime Forces alongside more than 20 partner countries—to increase patrols in the Red Sea and deter additional Houthi attacks. Our coalition has successfully escorted commercial vessels and engaged Houthi munitions in the air in defense of navigation freedoms. We have made clear that this is not a moment for any group to escalate the situation. I will never hesitate to take action or provide the President with options to respond to an attack on our forces or interests.

General BROWN. Yes, Combatant Commands, particularly during times of conflict, continually update potential target prioritization lists to provide the President with response options. This process considers how striking the targets would achieve national security objectives, the availability of appropriate offensive systems and forces to strike the targets, and how to assess effects once the strikes are complete.

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, commercial shipping continues to avoid the Red Sea and therefore the Suez Canal because our efforts to stabilize the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait are not working. What does Operation Prosperity Guardian, perhaps in coordination with the EUNAVFOR Operation Aspides, need to do to assure commercial shipping that it is safe to transit?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Houthis pose a serious threat to U.S. forces and our allies and partners in the region, to global commercial shipping, and to freedom of navigation. We have taken significant steps to deter aggression and respond to threats in the Red Sea and surrounding region. Our defensive effort—Operation Prosperity Guardian—deconflicts and coordinates operations with Operation ASPIDES to patrol the Red Sea and surrounding waters, deter illegal activity, and promote safe navigation while protecting the free flow of international commerce on the high seas. Our coalition has successfully escorted commercial vessels and engaged Houthi munitions in the air in defense of navigation freedoms. We have been clear from the start that our goal is safe and free navigation for all legitimate maritime traffic in accordance with international law.

General BROWN. Operation Prosperity Guardian, in coordination with EUNAVFOR Operation Aspides, are critical in demonstrating our shared commitment to freedom of navigation, international commerce, and defending the lives of

mariners from illegal and unjustifiable attacks. Defensive military operations under Operation Prosperity Guardian and the EUNAVFOR Operation Aspides aim to deter and respond to commercial shipping from Houthi attack, as well as defending themselves against such attacks.

The whole-of-government effort, aided by international cooperation, seeks to reduce Houthi capabilities to re-arm by interdicting smuggling from Iran in order to impede Houthi ability to continue to threaten shipping.

Additionally, international diplomatic pressure continues to further isolate Iran and the Houthis, expose their malign behavior, and impose economic sanctions and other designations, in order to press the Houthis to halt these attacks.

37. General Brown, are Iranian Revolutionary Guard—Navy (IRGNC, also known as Sepah Navy) and Iranian Navy ships that provide targeting to Houthis considered legitimate military targets?

General BROWN. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is inside Yemen, and they are serving side by side with the Houthis, advising them and providing targeting information. Houthi targeting has been overwhelmingly directed at internationally flagged merchant ships, and a small percentage directly at US Navy ships.

We have and will continue to hold Iran and the Houthis accountable for their actions at a time and a place of our choosing. We have and continue to degrade their capability, and every single day they attempt to attack us, we're eliminating and disrupting them in ways that are meaningful.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, is there sufficient ROE for Commanders of United States Navy warships to target vessels confirmed as carrying munitions to re-supply the Houthis?

General BROWN. All Regional Combatant Commands maintain plans to respond to a range of activities and are constantly adjusting them based on achieving intended effects. These plans do include routing additional authority, including ROE, requests through the Department of Defense. The Joint Force remains committed to protecting international maritime lanes.

RED SEA SELF-DEFENSE & MUNITIONS

39. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, U.S. and coalition ships continue to expend costly missiles in exercise of their inherent right of self-defense to shoot down comparatively inexpensive inbound unmanned systems and anti-ship missiles. Have we been able to bring down the cost-per-intercept since October 2023?

General BROWN. Air defense interceptors are far more expensive compared to the multiple Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) threats United States Forces face, most notably the Iranian Shahed-series one-way-attack UAS.

Since March 1, 2024, the Joint Staff and Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSD A&S) have been co-chairing a Warfighter Senior Integration Group (W-SIG). The W-SIG is looking closely at this problem, taking into account Combatant Command requests, and invest in existing capabilities that can help to solve the capacity concerns of more affordable air defense interceptors at a more feasible cost-ratio to the threat.

In addition, there are also effective non-kinetic capabilities that we continue to develop and employ that significantly change this cost paradigm. The US engagement of inbound unmanned aerial vehicles and systems have been executed primarily via non-kinetic effects. The Department continues to explore and invest in non-kinetic capabilities to intercept unmanned systems and anti-ship missiles.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, the United States has interdicted weapons from Iran meant for the Houthis and then sent those weapons and munitions to Ukraine for their use against the Russians. Are our coalition partners assisting with this interdiction effort?

General BROWN. Several of our coalition partners have previously interdicted Iranian weapons bound for the Houthis and continue to assist with those interdiction efforts today. United States and United Kingdom Naval Forces regularly conduct combined maritime security operations to disrupt the flow of illicit cargo in Middle Eastern waters.

In February 2023, the United Kingdom Royal Navy confiscated anti-tank guided missiles and missile components from a vessel in the Gulf of Oman that originated from Iran. France has also assisted with interdiction efforts and, in January 2023, French naval forces seized thousands of assault rifles, machine guns, and anti-tank missiles in the Gulf of Oman.

AUKUS

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, in the proposed fiscal year 2025 defense budget, you cut procurement of the *Virginia*-class submarine from two to one. This obviously creates doubt in Australia that we can deliver 3–5 *Virginia*-class submarines as part of the optimal pathway for Pillar II. What are you telling your Australian counterparts to assure them of our commitment to increasing *Virginia* production and executing the optimal pathway?

Secretary AUSTIN. Our undersea supremacy is a key strategic advantage. Supporting Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered, conventionally armed submarines only reinforces that advantage and strengthens our national security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region for decades to come. In order to build the submarines needed for ourselves and Australia, we must improve the submarine industrial base (SIB), which currently faces significant backlog challenges. That is why the fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 budget requests included \$1.9 billion for the SIB, and the fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$4 billion to develop supply chains and attract and retain skilled workers. Additionally, we requested \$3.3 billion for the SIB as part of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental. Australia will also contribute to our SIB.

We are fully committed to fulfilling the President's promise to deliver a new-construction *Virginia*-class submarine to Australia by 2038 as part of the Optimal Pathway. Currently, we are focused on uplifting the SIB to meet our commitments for submarine procurement and sustainment. With continued annual U.S. SIB investments, coupled with Australia's contribution, we are working hard to get our SIB on track to meet a *Virginia*-class construction cadence of 2.33 boats per year to meet both United States and Australian requirements.

General BROWN. We execute regular exchanges with our Australian and United Kingdom counterparts on the timing and investments in the US Submarine Industrial Base (SIB). It's an open dialog, and the message remains the same: The United States is committed to support the creation of a sovereign Australian conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability regardless of the number of submarines procured in fiscal year 2025.

The annual United States SIB investments, coupled with Australia's infusion of \$3 billion, will be used to support the SIB to meet the *Virginia*-class Submarine (VCS) construction cadence of 2.33 boats per year and meet both United States and Australian requirements. This deliberate approach demonstrates a commitment to advanced procurement and ensures that the supplier's industrial base is fully funded and able to expand to meet future submarine requirements.

ATTACK SUBMARINES

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, recognizing that attack submarines are one of our biggest advantages compared to the PRC do you agree that our inability to produce at least two submarines per year (and deliver them on time) increases risk in the Indo-Pacific during this decade?

Secretary AUSTIN. The PRC remains our number 1 pacing challenge, but it cannot match our strategic advantages, including our undersea capability. I continue to be laser-focused on building the right mix of capabilities to keep deterrence real and strong long into the future. This is why our budget continues to be driven by our National Defense Strategy. With respect to building submarines, our submarine industrial base (SIB) faces significant challenges. That is why the fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 budget requests included \$1.9 billion for the SIB and the fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$4 billion to develop supply chains and attract and retain skilled workers. Additionally, we requested \$3.3 billion for the SIB as part of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental.

Rather than procuring a second submarine in fiscal year 2025 that the SIB could not produce in a timely way, the President's Budget invests additional funds in the SIB that will enable the SIB to support a more robust rate of submarine construction in future years. This will increase our ability to meet both United States Navy demand for *Virginia*-class submarines as well as AUKUS requirements in an enduring way.

General BROWN. The United States Navy's priority remains undersea warfare capabilities and the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB).

The Department's Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) budget invests in 9 out of 10 planned *Virginia*-class Submarines (VCS) between fiscal year 2025 and fiscal year 2029 with additional SIB investments directly supporting AUKUS partnerships that strengthen Indo-Pacific security.

To achieve the Navy's desired production rate of two VCS by 2028, the fiscal year 2025 President's Budget request procures one VCS this year, rather than the two

previously planned. The decision to procure one VCS vice two was a difficult choice, but we believe it provides the SIB an opportunity to recover the backlog within the submarine production line and for SIB investments to take greater effect in future years to meet the two VCS per year demand.

Procuring one VCS in fiscal year 2025 enables workforce efforts, manufacturing, outfitting, assembly, and delivery efforts to all be synchronized and efficiently functioning, thereby ensuring that the ramp to “1+2” is executable and can be achieved in calendar year 2028.

ARCTIC STRATEGY

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary McCord, the Department is planning to release an updated Arctic Strategy this spring. Recognizing that each service has unique mission requirements and acquisition needs related to Arctic operations and presence, how is the DOD working with COCOMs to address priorities for Arctic operations?

Secretary McCORD. DOD is committed to ensuring that the Arctic remains a secure and stable region where United States national interests are safeguarded, the United States Homeland is defended, and nations work cooperatively to address shared challenges. The Arctic is an evolving security environment. We must present a credible deterrent to conflict and maintain flexibility to respond promptly and effectively to contingencies there.

In an effort to strengthen partnerships, the Joint Staff is utilizing international forums such as the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR), to draft a framework for a holistic, comprehensive approach to increasing domain awareness and synchronizing campaign operations in the Arctic.

To increase strategic competition, the Department’s components, in conjunction with the Combatant Commands and Military Services, are working with allies and partners to improve domain awareness, including through advancing capabilities in the challenging Arctic environment by replacing outdated systems, upgrading current capabilities, expanding regional coverage, investing in emerging technologies, and improving interoperability in both unclassified and classified programs.

Decisions concerning force structure, logistics, and infrastructure require thorough assessments—often in collaboration with other U.S. Government agencies and entities—to ensure alignment of multiple national priorities.

44. General Brown, Alaska is the only U.S. State in the Arctic. What advantages do you see in having multiple ports in the Aleutians and Western Alaska that can refuel U.S. Navy ships?

General BROWN. Aleutian and Western Alaskan ports provide enhanced access to the Arctic. United States military operations in the Arctic are crucial for national security and Homeland defense. Having a deep-water port will enable the country to maintain a persistent presence in the Arctic and serves as a strategic countermeasure against the presence of Russian and Chinese ships. Failing to maintain an Arctic presence will significantly limit the country’s ability to exert influence on the region.

45. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, homeland defense is the NDS’ top priority, yet in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific, the one hundred 5th generation fighters based in Alaska would flow into theater, along with KC-135s, leaving a capability gap in our Homeland defense capability. While fighter aircraft can surge from the Lower 48 to execute the Homeland defense mission, their ability to operate in the middle of winter is uncertain at best. What steps have you taken to identify Lower 48 fighter units that would backfill the Alaska-based F-35s and F-22s if they deploy into combat and make sure their pilots and maintenance crews are capable of year-round operations in Alaska?

General BROWN. The backfill of Alaska-based fighter aircraft would be sourced by Contiguous United States-based fighter squadrons. Pilots from multiple Contiguous United States alert aircraft locations would be identified that have completed arctic survival training (through previous assignment to Alaska, or rapid training), and receive augmentation of their air crew flight equipment (survival gear).

46. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, the Arctic is becoming an increasingly contested environment. For the last two summers, Russia and China have sent a combined naval task force to the coast of Alaska. In 2022, our response was to send one small Coast Guard cutter to intercept the PRC-Russian flotilla. In 2023, the Navy sent four DDGs and a P-8, a much more robust response. How is the Depart-

ment synchronizing availability of ships and aircraft to respond to a PRC-Russian naval flotilla off the Alaskan coast in 2024?

General BROWN. The Department routinely conducts threat assessments to determine the risk that People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russian deployments pose to the Homeland. That risk is evaluated against other operational requirements to determine resourcing priorities, which would include a broad array of integrated military capability focused on defending the Homeland and holding those PRC and Russian resources at risk.

47. Senator SULLIVAN. General Brown, has military sealift command trained for cold weather replenishments at-sea to ensure U.S. Navy ships can sustain Arctic operations if needed?

General BROWN. The USNS *Robert E. Peary* (T-AKE-5), USNS *William McLean* (T-AKE-12), USNS *Medgar Evers* (T-AKE-13), USNS *Big Horn* (T-AO-198), USNS *Arctic* (T-AOE-8) and USNS *Supply* (T-AOE-6) have all successfully supported operations in the Arctic in recent years (2016–2022). Prior to cold weather events, Military Sealift Command (MSC) ensures its vessels are outfitted with cold weather gear, conducts training on exposure, and ensures operations can be sustained, including fuel type, and conducting material checks on sea chest heaters, as well as fire main, fuel, and lube oil heating systems.

The T-AO and T-AKE ship classes have an American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) Ice Class of "1C." This identifies that the vessel is certified to operate year-round, safely and independently, in areas of open first-year light ice coverage (less than .6m). The T-AKE has an ice belt, but no reinforced bow or hull below it.

DOD SPECTRUM SHARING

48. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, the United States was the global leader in 4G deployment and now has the opportunity to continue that leadership in 5G deployment. How do you envision a collaborative relationship between the U.S. wireless industry and DOD to bolster our Nation's long-term leadership in next generation deployment?

Secretary AUSTIN.

Ensuring that we have the technical capability necessary to maintain and strengthen our warfighting efforts is always a key priority. We must do this alongside partnership with industry, including the U.S. wireless industry. Collaboration is key to the deployment of next-generation information communications technology. This involves working together, being open to innovation, instituting ground rules, clearly communicating, and establishing the roles and responsibilities necessary to implement and deploy next-generation technologies.

DOD is pushing the boundaries of what commercial industry can deliver, focusing on advancing critical capabilities that will be beneficial for both defense and commercial applications. This will provide market advantage to the U.S. telecommunications industrial base and stimulate new revenue generation for these vendors.

DOD is also working closely with U.S. mobile network operators on commercial coverage buildout at our military installations within the continental United States. We have set an ambitious target date for the deployment of 5G infrastructure at all military installations by the end of calendar year 2028.

49. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, are the ways the Department is exploring to leverage 5G an asset that can be used for national security?

Secretary AUSTIN.

5G will support numerous national security functions, requiring the DOD and the U.S. national security establishment to consider requirements for a U.S. supply chain to consistently preserve capacity within the U.S. telecommunications market. Integrated communication and networking technologies, including future generation wireless networks, are one of the White House's designated critical and emerging technologies (per the National Science and Technology Council's February 2024 report). Missions and functions will increasingly transition to 5G to take advantage of its increased network speeds, bandwidth, and capacity.

DOD is also evaluating ways for 5G to support drone missions and communications across a spectrum of military and civilian functions. This could provide commanders with timely access to actionable intelligence data, in turn improving operational decisionmaking.

Standards bodies and users of commercial systems have increasingly focused on the security of wireless technology. The trajectory of security has been steadily increasing through successive generations, and native 5G is significantly more secure

than prior generations. Security enhancements focus on core security, edge device integrity, traffic segmentation, and malicious system detection.

50. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, do you agree that a U.S. wireless industry-DOD collaboration is a critical opportunity to help the United States continue to outpace our foreign adversaries?

Secretary AUSTIN. Yes, for example, engagement between the U.S. wireless industry and DOD is critical to ensuring that we can identify and address vulnerabilities in equipment that can be used to conduct malicious cyber activities targeting the United States and our allies.

Additionally, more efficient use of limited spectrum resources will drive technological innovation, boost U.S. industrial competitiveness, and foster scientific advancements, while enabling DOD to dominate in an increasingly congested and contested environment.

U.S. ENERGY AND OUR ALLIES

51. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, the Biden administration recently decided to halt the approval process for liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to non-Free Trade Agreement countries. At a time when war is ongoing in Ukraine and tensions are rising in the Middle East and Asia, it is particularly important that allied nations can rely on the United States for a reliable, long-term fuel supply. What do you see as the implications from this stop in the approval process for our allies, like Japan, who rely on a steady flow of United States LNG?

Secretary AUSTIN. I defer to the Department of State and Department of Energy to address the Administration's actions related to liquified natural gas.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin, where might our allies and partners turn if U.S. LNG exports are restricted?

Secretary AUSTIN. I defer to the Department of State and Department of Energy to address partners and allies' access to liquified natural gas.

UKRAINE

53. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, when I met with President Zelenskyy at the Munich Security Conference this year, he explained how important longer range ATACMS were to striking Russian positions in Crimea, including airfields, naval bases, and logistics nodes. Have we been able to free up ATACMS for transfer to Ukraine through procurement of replacement systems such as the Precision Strike Missile or new orders of ATACMS?

Secretary AUSTIN. Yes, the President authorized the provision of long-range ATACMS to Ukraine as part of a Presidential Drawdown package announced on March 12. We were able to provide this capability to Ukraine while maintaining the readiness of United States Forces given a limited number of new ATACMS coming off a production line, as well as initial quantities of the Precision Strike Missile—the replacement munition for ATACMS—entering production.

General BROWN. We are in constant communication with Ukraine leadership and synchronize with them on their battlefield requirements. We will continue to provide Ukraine with the support and capabilities needed to defend their sovereign nation against Russian aggression. The effects of every munition we send to Ukraine is analyzed against impacts to United States readiness and we constantly balance current risk against future requirements.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

RECRUITMENT

54. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, a March 2023 GAO report noted that the Department of Defense is facing its most challenging recruitment environment in 50 years. As the report notes, there are many aspects to recruitment and retention that deserve our collective attention. What effect do you see the comprehensive compensation and benefits package for uniformed service personnel having on recruitment and retention rates?

Secretary AUSTIN. A comprehensive compensation and benefits package for servicemembers remains important to our recruiting and retention efforts. Today's military compensation package is robust and highly competitive with the private sector, and the military benefit package exceeds private-sector benefit packages by a wide margin. I take the health and well-being of the force and our military fami-

lies extremely seriously, and this includes making sure our troops get the pay they deserve.

While we are conducting an extensive review of military compensation, the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, we are not waiting to take action to strengthen the economic security of our force. The President's Budget Request includes a 4.5 percent military basic pay raise for 2025; increases funding for housing and subsistence allowances by 4.2 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively; invests in childcare (\$33.5 million for redesigned childcare provider compensation and \$293 million in child development center new construction); commissaries (adds \$120 million above the amounts added in the fiscal year 2024 budget); safe, quality housing (e.g., approximately \$1.1 billion for new unaccompanied housing construction); and much more.

Our troops are driven to service because of their desire to protect and defend the Nation. We are grateful for their service, and for the contributions and sacrifices of our tremendous military families.

55. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, what effort is the Department making to enhance the total compensation package for military personnel?

Secretary AUSTIN. Over the last year, we have worked to reduce costs and increase resources for our servicemembers and their families. We reduced the cost of childcare for most families with a total income under \$120,000 and helped ease the burden of permanent change of station moves. We also have worked hard to increase opportunities for employment for military spouses. Through the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program, we expanded educational and career support to military spouses around the world. In addition, we launched the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot.

Furthermore, with Congress's help, we delivered a historic 5.2 percent basic pay raise in January 2024. That is the largest raise in over 20 years for our military. The fiscal year 2025 budget request recommends a 4.5 percent basic pay raise for servicemembers and increases in the basic allowance for housing and subsistence to ensure military compensation remains competitive, so we are able to recruit and retain the force we need. We need to stay focused on this issue.

We also expanded eligibility for the Basic Needs Allowance, ensuring that we are helping those servicemembers with families who are the most financially challenged and in need.

This year, the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation is conducting an in-depth review of many forms of compensation, and I have directed my team to move with speed and bring actionable recommendations forward as soon as possible.

56. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, are there areas Congress could consider beyond the benefit structure currently in place?

Secretary AUSTIN. We appreciate Congress's support of this year's basic pay raise of 5.2 percent. That is the biggest raise in over 20 years for our military. The fiscal year 2025 budget recommends another 4.5 percent increase for our servicemembers, to start in January 2025. If Congress supports this pay raise, then servicemembers will have received an approximately 15 percent pay raise over the past 3 years.

It is important to recognize that, in addition to starting pay of over \$20 per hour and increasing to over \$25 per hour by the end of the first year, our military provides a very significant benefit package for our servicemembers—one that exceeds private-sector benefit packages by a wide margin. This notably includes free health, dental, vision care, and pharmacy benefits; 30 days of paid leave per year; Post-9/11 GI Bill educational assistance; highly subsidized childcare; a fully inflation-protected lifetime retirement plan that begins paying out after only 20 years of service; and a 401(k)-type plan with a government contribution and match.

I look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, which are expected toward the end of this year, regarding any additional improvements we can implement.

CAMP LEJEUNE

57. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act was signed into law in 2022. The purpose of the law is to provide an equitable and swift path to compensation for victims of toxic water exposure at Camp Lejeune. Nearly 2 years later, our understanding is that very few claims have been paid. While I support any veteran's desire to fully litigate this matter, I know some veterans may prefer a speedier administrative payout, especially if they are of advanced age. How

many CLJA related claims have been filed by servicemembers and dependents with the Department of the Navy?

Secretary AUSTIN. As of May 10, 2024, there are approximately 227,309 Camp Lejeune Justice Act administrative claims on file with the Department of the Navy.

58. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, how many CLJA claims have been processed by the Department of the Navy?

Secretary AUSTIN. As of May 10, 2024, there are approximately 227,309 Camp Lejeune Justice Act administrative claims on file with the Department of the Navy, which are under review or about to commence review.

59. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, what information is required by the Department of Navy in order to process a claim?

Secretary AUSTIN. Before the Camp Lejeune Claims Unit can adjudicate a claim, the filer must submit sufficient evidence to enable the Department of the Navy to investigate the factual basis for the claim. For any claim submission to be considered properly presented, the file must initially include, at a minimum, the following information in writing:

1. Name of the injured person (i.e., the claimant);
2. The basis of the claim (basic description of harm/injury as a result of presence at Camp Lejeune);
3. The demand of the claim stated as a "sum certain;"
4. If an agent/representative files on behalf of the injured person, the basis of the filer's authority to act on behalf of the injured person; and
5. Signature of the individual filing the claim.

Once properly presented, the claimant bears the burden of proof to substantiate the claim by providing the documentation necessary to prove the allegations set forth in the claim. The Camp Lejeune Justice Act sets forth the eligibility requirements for an individual to recover damages because of exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune during a specified timeframe. To adjudicate a claim, the Department of the Navy must first determine if a claimant meets those eligibility requirements to include documentation showing when and for how long a claimant was exposed to water at Camp Lejeune and what harm or injury, if any, the claimant sustained as a result. The Camp Lejeune Claims Unit may request documentation from claimants to substantiate and adjudicate a Camp Lejeune Justice Act claim, but no documentation is required to file a claim.

60. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, how would you characterize the working relationship between the Department of the Navy and the Department of Justice on this matter? What formal arrangements are in place to ensure coordination?

Secretary AUSTIN. The working relationship between the Department of the Navy and the Department of Justice is collaborative. The Department of Justice currently serves as the settlement authority for Camp Lejeune Justice Claims. For that reason, the Department of the Navy submits all settlement recommendations to the Department of Justice for review and approval. Additionally, the Department of the Navy and the Department of Justice hold recurring coordination meetings to discuss litigation impacts to the claims process, processing discovery requests as part of the litigation, and other areas of coordination as appropriate.

61. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, based on the information available to the Department of Defense, how many total claims have been paid pursuant to CLJA?

Secretary AUSTIN. To date, 551 Camp Lejeune Justice Act claims contain all the evidence necessary to support a claim settlement decision (e.g., medical and housing documentation). Law firms filed more than 200,000 Camp Lejeune Justice Act claims, and the Department of the Navy is actively communicating with the attorneys representing claimants to identify the types of documentation necessary to substantiate a claim. The Department of the Navy is also communicating with individual claimants to identify additional documentation necessary to substantiate their claims.

The Department of Justice approved 63 settlement recommendations with the remaining recommendations still pending review and approval. As a result, the Department of the Navy made 63 offers to settle Camp Lejeune Justice Act claims, of which 33 settlement offers were accepted, three were declined, and the remainder are pending a decision by the claimant. The Department of the Navy expects settlement numbers to increase with the introduction in early April 2024 of the Claims Management Portal, which enables filers to securely upload evidence directly into their digital claims file. This capability significantly reduces the time required for

receipt and review of substantiating documentation as well as the overall time required to review a Camp Lejeune Justice Act claim.

62. Senator TUBERVILLE. Secretary Austin, from your perspective, do you have any objection to the appointment of a Special Master or a Claims Administrator to provide veterans a speedier path to compensation?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department of Justice is currently interviewing candidates for a Special Master position and proposing names to the court for consideration. The Department of Defense will continue to support Department of Justice efforts, as appropriate.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARKWAYNE MULLIN

CHINA

63. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin, we know that Chinese President Xi Jinping has directed his military to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027. If we somehow knew that the United States would be forced to enter a high intensity conflict with China in 2027, and you had the next 2½ years to spend the DOD's annual budget over that time, let's say 1.7 to 2 trillion dollars; are we spending money in the precise fashion we need to in order to provide the right training and equipment readiness of what we have, and the sustainment to see that fight through to victory?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department continues to assess that conflict in the Indo-Pacific region is neither imminent nor inevitable. Nevertheless, we are realistic about the pacing challenge posed by the PRC, and about the importance of meeting the challenge with focus and resources. That is why the Department is laser-focused on building the right mix of capabilities to strengthen deterrence today and into the future. Our strategy-driven budget request for fiscal year 2025 demonstrates this commitment. This budget request makes targeted investments in the missions and capabilities that enable us to meet our pacing challenge with the urgency, attention, and resources we need.

64. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin, do we have any metrics that we are doing better on getting contracts to innovative companies that are not prime contractors, who are not performing well in many cases? Not small businesses, but larger mid-sized businesses who are competing against the primes—like Anduril. Aren't more procurement contracts how we get more competition in the industrial base and stop consolidation?

Secretary AUSTIN. Our defense industrial base is critical to our ability to protect American national security interests, and our small and mid-sized companies are a core part of it. We have several programs that work to address this part of our industrial base directly. The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs provide funds to enable small businesses to build dual-use technology. APFIT provides initial procurement funding to help transition successful small business innovation research and technology transfer programs and other small, mid-sized and non-traditional efforts from development to production. The Department's Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) further enhances our engagement with non-traditional commercial technology providers by identifying and acquiring dual-use technologies. From June 2016, to September 2023, 38 percent of DIU prototyping contract awards were first-time DOD vendors, 87 percent were non-traditional vendors, and 80 percent were small businesses. Over the next year, we will build on this progress by expanding outreach to companies, labs, accelerators, academic partners, and investors, and we will continue to provide more resources to small, mid-sized, and non-traditional providers. We appreciate Congress' continued support in providing the authorities and resources we need to do this important work.

65. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin, while our mutual work has improved the picture on munitions, there's still much more to do. I look at this budget and I see plenty of places where we are not maxed out on munitions. Would you buy those back if you had a higher topline?

Secretary AUSTIN. I am laser-focused on building the right mix of capabilities to execute our National Defense Strategy. The most important thing Congress can do is pass the President's full budget on time. Multi-year procurement is one proven and powerful tool to deliver critical capabilities to the warfighter at speed and scale, support the defense industrial base, and maintain munitions procurements. Continuing resolutions prevent us from executing on many multi-year procurement con-

tracts, robbing us of valuable time needed for the industrial base. For example, during fiscal year 2024, we lost nearly half a year's time under a continuing resolution. That is time we could have spent ramping up our production through multi-year contracts that were authorized by Congress for critical munitions—and, specifically, the seven munition multi-year procurements requested in the fiscal year 2024 budget request. Our adversaries do not operate under continuing resolutions.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request prioritizes long-range and precision munitions most needed across multiple domains and builds off of procurement of critical munitions through multi-year procurement efforts requested in fiscal year 2024. Specifically, this request includes \$29.8 billion for munitions and prioritizes the most critical Indo-Pacific relevant munitions. Passing the full fiscal year 2025 budget on time will help stabilize the demand signal to the defense industrial base and ensure that capacity exists and will strengthen our ability to respond quickly to future contingencies.

66. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, how useful are our advanced fighter and bomber aircraft or our nuclear submarines if they lack precision guided munitions?

Secretary AUSTIN. While advanced fighter and bomber aircraft and nuclear submarines remain powerful weapons platforms, their effectiveness is greatly multiplied using precision guided munitions (PGMs). PGMs improve accuracy, reduce collateral damage, and allow for a wider range of mission types. Most U.S. military aircraft and submarines are equipped to carry and use PGMs. The Department has and continues to invest in PGM development and deployment.

General BROWN. While advanced fighter and bomber aircraft and nuclear submarines remain powerful weapons platforms, their effectiveness is greatly multiplied by the use of precision guided munitions (PGMs). PGMs improve accuracy, reduce collateral damage, and allow for a wider range of mission types. Most US military aircraft and submarines are equipped to carry and use PGMs. The Department has and continues to invest in PGM development and deployment.

67. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, regarding the previous question, have we studied how many times we could rearm our fleets, and are you comfortable with that number?

Secretary AUSTIN. Readiness of the Joint Force is one of my top priorities. We are constantly evaluating our current inventory of precision guided munitions and future requirements. The Joint Force conducts various studies of U.S. inventories, force readiness, effectiveness, and projections to ensure that we are adequately postured to respond to any contingency against any actor, focusing in particular on a near-peer adversary. In those studies, we include results of wargames, exercises, and Joint Force Rehearsals to validate assumptions and ensure we have the most accurate picture possible.

General BROWN. Readiness of the Joint Force is one of my top priorities. We are constantly evaluating our current inventory of precision guided munitions (PGMs) and future requirements. The Joint Force conducts various studies of U.S. inventories, force readiness, effectiveness, and projections to ensure we are adequately postured to respond to any contingency against any actor, especially focusing on a near-peer adversary. In those studies, we include results of wargames, exercises, and Joint Force Rehearsals to validate assumptions and ensure we have the most accurate picture possible.

DOD POSTURE

68. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, with potential war with China in 2 to 3 years, does it make sense to be shrinking our Air Force and Navy by divesting capable airframes and ships when, in reality, we should be building up both the Air Force and Navy to provide deterrence, and a force capable at defeating any competitor?

Secretary AUSTIN. I am laser-focused on building the right mix of capabilities to execute our National Defense Strategy. Divestments represent a potential for around \$3.3 billion in savings. Under the budget cap required by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, we will need help from Congress this year to prevent significant drag on our topline. As we look to our key challenges, we must divest vulnerable platforms that can no longer be affordably modernized or maintained to provide credible combat power. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will allow us to balance resources and mitigate risk to current missions to an acceptable level as we develop and field the next generation of capabilities.

Divestment priorities include the A-10 and older Ticonderoga class cruisers. These platforms suffer from frequent breakdowns, sustainment challenges, and high operating, maintenance, and refurbishment costs. The A-10 is a legacy single-role fighter. It is not effective in a high-end fight. We need its funding, aircrew, and maintenance manpower for emerging 6th-generation fighters. Older *Ticonderoga*-class cruisers are phasing out as the mission transitions to Flight III guided-missile destroyers. Funding and personnel devoted to sustaining a legacy platform can often be used for the replacement capability, but only after the legacy platform has been retired.

General BROWN. I am aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches to advance Joint Force design, modernization, and development of our capabilities. But we must transition by divesting outdated platforms no longer relevant to the threat to make way for newer capabilities and a trained Joint Force that can deliver credible deterrence and a force capable of defeating any adversary.

69. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, can you defend the Air Force divesting of 250 airframes and replacing with 91, and is that setting us up for failure?

Secretary AUSTIN. The Department conducts rigorous analyses across DOD components, the Military Departments, the Joint Staff, and Combatant Commands to determine the right mix of capabilities for the Joint Force. The constraints of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 forced tough choices, and the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request balances the needs of the current force and investments needed to develop and field the next generation of capabilities.

General BROWN. The Air Force is divesting aircraft that are older and not as effective against the pacing threat, in accordance with the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS). The 2022 NDS reoriented the Joint Force toward strategic competition with our pacing threat; many of our existing legacy systems are no longer credible in a future fight. The Department must pivot from aging weapons systems and shift resources to contemporary high-end battle systems. Legacy aircraft cannot accomplish the full spectrum of missions required to compete with an advanced adversary. The Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget Request reflects tough but necessary choices and enables a capable, sustainable, and affordable Joint Force that can operate across the entire range of mission sets.

70. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, the Navy is also getting rid of 19 ships and ordering 6. As a business owner, I can tell you that the way to signal demand is by placing orders. Why are we only ordering one *Virginia*-class submarine?

Secretary AUSTIN. No other country can match our undersea warfare capabilities. We are committed to making the necessary investments in our submarine industrial base to ensure that it can meet demand. That is why the President's National Security Supplemental included \$3.3 billion primarily for the submarine industrial base, and the Fiscal Year 2025 budget requests \$4 billion. This funding is necessary to build to an annual production rate to meet our own requirements and keep us on a path to fulfill our AUKUS commitments. This funding will also enable us to invest further in supply chain development, infrastructure, and workforce development. These investments rely on on-time, full-year appropriations, and Congress's continued support is critical.

General BROWN. The United States Navy is the most lethal Navy in the world and our submarines are unmatched in undersea warfare. The shipbuilding industry and specifically the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) has proven unable to meet production timelines to produce submarines at two *Virginia*-class submarines per year. Analysis through various studies, such as the SIB-25, show that bolstering the SIB is the necessary foundation to regain momentum and sustain building two *Virginia*-class submarines per year production and 1 *Columbia*-class submarine in the future. The fiscal year 2025 President's Budget request includes a \$4 billion investment into the SIB, and the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental includes an additional \$3.3 billion in funding allocated toward bolstering the SIB.

71. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, if we want to build capacity in the Defense Industrial Base, don't we need to order at least two *Virginia*-class submarines?

Secretary AUSTIN. We continue to enjoy the strongest Navy in human history. And I intend to keep it that way. There is significant funding across the submarine enterprise associated with material procurements. Nevertheless, *Virginia*-class submarine production is currently below the two per year rate. Removal of the second ship from the fiscal year 2025 budget request was a difficult choice, but the Navy

is optimistic that this provides an opportunity to reduce the backlog within the production line and for submarine industrial base investments to take greater effect. Shipbuilders are currently delivering the equivalent of just 1.3 nuclear-powered attack submarines per year. To support Navy requirements and AUKUS commitments, the industrial base will need to improve its production rate to 2.33 *Virginia*-class submarines per year, plus one *Columbia*-class per year.

General BROWN. We are working closely with the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) to provide stability, predictability, and adequately signal requirements for combat capabilities. By continuing to provide Joint Force requirements early and often to our commercial partners, the DIB can build a sustainable production schedule that will meet the Joint Force needs. We concur for the need to improve production rate to 2.33 per year but need to ensure we assist the industrial base in building production capacity and developing realistic schedules.

RECRUITING

72. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, did either of you graduate with student loan debt and why not?

Secretary AUSTIN. I attended the United States Military Academy, and was required to complete an initial Active Duty service obligation upon graduation. I have remained in public service for over 40 years. The Military Service Academies provide an outstanding education and will continue to create future leaders and public servants, potentially even future Four-Star generals and Secretaries of Defense.

General BROWN. I was fortunate to have earned my degree and commission through a 4-year Air Force ROTC scholarship at Texas Tech University. Education benefits are and continue to be a highly valued benefit of United States Military Service, whether through commissioning programs, enlisted education programs, tuition assistance, or the GI bill post-Military Service.

73. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, I think the services are struggling with recruiting because, in some ways, the DOD has been politicized. Would either of you say that one of the main recruiting incentives the DOD offers is education?

Secretary AUSTIN. Data show that one of the top reasons young people join the military is for the education it provides. Education incentives, such as the Student Loan Repayment Program, Tuition Assistance, and the Post-9/11 GI Bill, remain important to achieving our recruiting goals.

General BROWN. Education benefits are one of the main recruiting incentives the DOD offers amongst many other benefits. Educational assistance is not only “vital for recruiting,” but it helps servicemembers continue to grow as individuals and bring enhanced knowledge and skills to their respective units.

74. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, I’m tracking DOD has service academies, a robust ROTC program and the GI Bill. Don’t the services also offer programs to cancel student debt in exchange for enlisting?

Secretary AUSTIN. Military personnel can apply for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program offered under the Department of Education after serving 10 or more years in the military. The Military Services also offer the Student Loan Repayment Program as an incentive to encourage enlistment, affiliation, and retention in designated military career fields, skills, or services for specified periods of obligated service.

General BROWN. Yes, Military enlistees can receive student loan repayment assistance. Federal student loans and even some private student loans may be forgiven. While each program has unique processes and requirements, they’re all enlistment incentives designed to help recent college graduates manage education debt.

75. Senator MULLIN. Secretary Austin and General Brown, I think now of all times is an especially poor time for the Administration to “forgive” student load debt as it undercuts recruiting for the DOD besides being illegal and unfair. Would you say forgiving student loan debt helps or hurts recruiting for the DOD?

Secretary AUSTIN. Our data show that education benefits continue to top the list of reasons that youth enlist in the military. The Military Services offer many education programs, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Student Loan Repayment Program, and Tuition Assistance, to assist military members in their pursuit of education and to help them manage their student loan debt.

General BROWN. Education benefits are one of the main recruiting incentives the DOD offers amongst many other benefits. In a competitive job market, the military

offers a robust compensation package, whether enlisting or commissioning. Although recruiting has been a challenge, we are seeing positive trends across the Services. Retention across the Services also remains high, which indicates that servicemembers enjoy the many benefits of military service.

F-35

76. Senator MULLIN. General Brown, you once called the F-35 Lightning the “cornerstone of our fighter capability” and yet the DOD continues to ask for fewer and fewer planes each year. That is worrying to me. Why did the DOD decide to reduce the number of F-35’s ordered across the service branches?

General BROWN. The F-35 is the best multi-role aircraft in the world, the capacity fighter for the joint force, and offers the survivability and lethality that we need. We need to get the Block 4 aircraft into the fleet; however, acceptance is on hold as the tech refresh is struggling to deliver the hardware and software upgrades as required. The decrease in quantity allows the Department to use those funds to confront key development, interoperability, sustainability, and affordability challenges to acquire, upgrade, and retrofit the F-35 fleet to obtain the required capability and capacity as quickly as possible within projected resource constraints. The Fiscal Year 2025 President’s Budget Request funds the Block 4 upgrades with Tech Refresh 3, which includes the technology and capabilities we need in our F-35 to deter our pacing challenge. The F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) and Lockheed Martin (LM), the prime contractor for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, announced that deliveries of the first Technology Refresh-3 (TR-3) configured F-35 aircraft resumed in mid-July.

77. Senator MULLIN. Secretary McCord, not only are we reducing the number of planes, but we are reducing their capability. Is it accurate to say that the F-35’s alternative mission equipment has gone unfunded for the last couple of budget cycles?

Secretary MCCORD. The F-35 alternative mission equipment (AME) program, included in the Ancillary Equip cost element of the P-5 Cost Analysis budget justification document, has been funded in prior budget submissions. F-35 AME requirements and budgets are reassessed each fiscal year to include managing existing inventory and funding new requirements to keep the F-35 AME program solvent.

78. Senator MULLIN. General Brown, this equipment, including bomb racks and adaptors, provides options that we are currently lacking in other aspects of our fleet. Why has this line item gone unfunded?

General BROWN. The Department is committed to providing adequate Alternative Mission Equipment (AME) for F-35 while balancing procurement quantities against other Service and DOD requirements. While risk exists, it is managed within existing AME inventories. For example, in fiscal year 2023, the Department preserved the production portion of sustainment support for F-35 (which included depot activations and AME) at the expense of purchasing more tails that came in over their original estimate in Lot 17. The F-35 Joint Program Office and the Services continue to prioritize operations and sustainment through the Global Support Solution framework and the Air Vehicle Sustainment Strategy.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND
UNITED STATES CYBER COMMAND POSTURE**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive an update on the readiness and posture of U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Cyber Command. Our witnesses are Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Christopher Maier; Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, General Bryan Fenton; and Commander of U.S. Cyber Command and Director of the National Security Agency, General Timothy Haugh. I would like to welcome General Haugh to his first posture hearing.

On behalf of the Committee I would ask our witnesses to convey our appreciation to the men and women you represent and their families for their service and professionalism.

The elite capabilities of our special operations and cyber forces have never been more important. We live in a complex world, most clearly defined by threats from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and non-State actors that are working around the clock to find ways to undermine America's interests. Prevailing in this environment will require the tailored and often clandestine capabilities that only our special operations and cyber forces can provide.

The United States has been reducing its footprint in conflict zones around the world for several years. As such, the special operations community is evolving to match new threats. The skills, knowledge, and perhaps more importantly, the relationships with

foreign partners that our Special Operations Forces have developed over the past 20 years of combat make them well positioned to contribute significantly to our long-term strategic competition with China and Russia.

Our special operations have also been learning from our allies and partners, including in Ukraine and Israel. Since the Hamas attack on October 7th, the United States has deployed special operators to the region to provide crisis evacuation options and to work with Israeli partners on hostage recovery operations. These forces have also been critical in countering attacks from Iran's proxies in the region.

Assistant Secretary Maier and General Fenton, I would ask for an update on the role of our special operators in advising you as partners in Europe and the Middle East and what lessons you are drawing to help focus and prepare our special operations for future challenge. I would also ask that you provide the Committee an update on efforts to strengthen the ability of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict to fulfill its service secretary-like responsibilities for the oversight of the organization and readiness of our special operations.

Turning to Cyber Command, I would like to commend our cyber forces and the intelligence community for their performance over the past several years in exposing Russia's activities and helping Ukraine defend itself against both kinetic and cyber assaults. These efforts have made a tremendous difference on the battlefield and in deterring broader conflict.

Some of the tools in our toolbox, like section 702 authority from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, are critical to our ability to counter our adversaries' malign activities. General Haugh, the Committee would appreciate your views on the importance of section 702, which expires next week, and why you believe it is essential that we renew the authority immediately. We would also like to know what guardrails are in place to give the public confidence that the authority is being used judiciously.

CYBERCOM has been working to make sure the cyber force advances its capabilities to conduct defensive, offensive, and supporting intelligence operations. It is widely recognized that our cyber mission forces are struggling with shortfalls in personnel readiness. We know that addressing this issue is your highest priority, and that the private sector has realized the immense value of our cyber operators and is offering them very high compensation to leave the military. The service must adjust accordingly by providing a creative combination of incentives to compete for and retain these personnel.

Finally, over the last decade a recurring debate has been waged over whether to sustain the "dual hat" arrangement, whereby the Commander of Cyber Command also serves as the Director of the NSA. Last year an independent panel, established by the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense, and led by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joe Dunford, concluded that the "dual hat" arrangement should be sustained. We would welcome your thoughts on this issue.

Thank you again to our witnesses for your service and appearance before us today. I look forward to your testimony.

As a reminder to my colleagues, there will be a closed session on SVC-217 immediately following this session.

Now let me turn to the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me say, Mr. Chairman, that you and I are shoulder to shoulder on almost all of this—concern about the shortfalls that you mentioned, renewing section 702 and doing so in a timely manner, and the support for the “dual hat” concept.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today, and let me say, since we met last year, we have seen a troubling rise in cyberattacks, targeting critical infrastructure across the country and in U.S. territories. Foreign adversaries are exploiting vulnerabilities in our networks, they are evading detection while carrying out malicious activities, or prepositioning themselves for future malicious activities and attacks.

Today’s hearing is an opportunity to discuss CYBERCOM’s efforts against these dangers, to tell us areas where we need to bring immediate attention. We will talk about CYBERCOM’s work with Federal partners in the U.S. Government and in the defense industrial base. We will talk about their collective endeavors to improve our cyber resilience and to defend against threats to military systems and networks as well as public and private critical infrastructure.

I also look forward to hearing about building CYBERCOM 2.0. The Committee recognizes that cyber threats evolve quickly. We therefore need CYBERCOM to be equipped to address new challenges rapidly as adversaries consistently shift tactics and strategies in this domain. As part of this discussion I hope to learn more about how international cyber cooperation activities, improvements to cyber military personnel readiness, and investments in cyber intel can help U.S. cyber forces generate an enduring advantage in this dynamic threat environment.

General Haugh has been both the Commander of CYBERCOM and the Director of the NSA for only a very short period of time. So we hope to hear his early analysis and ideas gained from this early experience with the “dual hat” arrangement and the importance of maintaining leadership over both agencies to meet mission objectives more effectively, and again, the Chair and I are in the same place on this issue.

Separate but no less important are our special ops forces. The men and women serving under General Fenton at U.S. Special Operations Command, SOCOM, are responsible for some of the Nation’s most sensitive and complex missions, and are often the first to respond to urgent and unforeseen emergencies around the world. Yet SOCOM is facing a daunting challenge. It is being asked to build a force capable of combatting State actors like China and Russia, simultaneously, while remaining fully engaged in the fight against violent Islamic terrorist groups operating from Africa to South Asia. At the same time, special operators must be ready to respond, with little to no notice, as our Nation’s preeminent crisis

response force. So we need to know what you need to accomplish this mission.

The demands on SOCOM are increasing. Meanwhile, it is being asked to accept significant risk because it is undersourced. Its budget has remained flat since 2019. When you adjust that for inflation, this amounts to roughly a 14 percent budget cut in purchasing power. At the same time, SOCOM is in the midst of implementing two rounds of cuts to its force structure.

This Committee will want to ensure that General Fenton's command is fully resourced so that it can mitigate risk. I would like to ask Secretary Maier whether their authorities and resources in the upcoming year are sufficient for mission requirement. Gentlemen, tell us what you need to get the mission done.

It is clear to me that the role and importance of Special Operations Command is greater today than at any time since its establishment back in 1987. The resource we provide should reflect that necessity.

So thank you, gentlemen, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Now let me recognize Secretary Maier. Mr. Secretary.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER P. MAIER,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT**

Mr. MAIER. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the global posture of our Nation's Special Operations Forces, or SOF. I am honored to appear alongside General Fenton and General Haugh, who have dedicated their careers to safeguarding U.S. national security interests against unconventional threats. I thank General Fenton and Command Sergeant Major Shane Shorter for their continued partnership as we posture SOF to address many of our Nation's most pressing and complex challenges.

I would like to begin by recognizing the dedication, service, and sacrifice of the men and women of SOF. There is no starker reminder of the sacrifices of this community than the 15 teammates we have lost in recent months, as they prepared for and executed high-risk missions in support of integrated deterrence, crisis response, and counterterrorism in Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Their service and sacrifice are emblematic of the dedication, professionalism, and selflessness of our SOF warriors, many of whom continue to bear visible and invisible wounds from their service.

As a direct result of your leadership on the SASC, we provide comprehensive services for our teammates through the preservation of the Force and Family Program and the Warrior Care Program. SOF continues to lead in the development of new strategies and technologies to protect brain health and enhance cognitive performance, including partnering with academia and private entities to prevent and address traumatic brain injury.

I would also like to acknowledge this Committee's foresight in establishing SOLIC, the organization that I run, and U.S. Special Operations Command, or USSOCOM, and for your continuing

strengthening of SOLIC's service secretary-like responsibilities. In this role, I remain focused on ensuring SOF's value is accounted for in the Department's planning, resourcing, and decision processes. In partnership with SOCOM, SOLIC is enhancing our analytic capabilities to ensure the Department's wargaming processes are informed by SOF-focused data and insight, especially related to our critical role prior to conflict.

I appreciate Congress authorizing a second principal deputy to help me lead our service-like responsibilities. A recent GAO report noted SOLIC's expanded role in senior leadership fora and our progress in strengthening the Secretariat for Special Operations. Within the Secretariat, we have established a directorate dedicated to SOF's most important asset, our people.

In another sign of progress I am joined today by SOLIC's first Senior Enlisted Advisor, Navy SEAL Command Master Chief Brad Rylander, who adds a SOF-unique perspective alongside the Pentagon's service senior enlisted leaders.

Over the past year we have seen an increase in demand for SOF, including evacuating U.S. personnel from high-threat environments, responding to attacks on our allies, maintaining pressure on ISIS and al Qaeda, and campaigning in support of integrated deterrence. As we modernize and transform to meet the challenges of our global competitors, we remain vigilant for threats to Americans across the globe, including from ISIS and al Qaeda.

Representing less than 2 percent of the defense budget, SOF provide an outsized role in the National Defense Strategy. SOF creates dilemmas for our adversaries, dismantles their proxy and illicit networks, and provides options for the joint force through unique understanding of the operational environment that benefits from generational relationships with allies and partners. We do this in more than 80 countries at any given time, and in all domains and environments.

In the Pacific, I have seen firsthand the tangible impact of SOF in strengthening the resilience of our regional partners. As China seeks greater regional and global influence, SOF's unique placement and access provide the foundation of integrated deterrence. Working with natural partners, CYBERCOM, SPACECOM, and STRATCOM, SOF is well-positioned to operationalize integrated deterrence against the PRC globally.

In Europe, SOF draw on generational relationships with Ukraine in aiding its fight against Russian aggression and build resilience in other vulnerable frontline states. We are also deepening integration in the High North, with Norway, a founding NATO member, and with Sweden, our newest NATO member, improving interoperability and addressing unique challenges of operating in the Arctic.

In addition to my service role I am also responsible for a range of policy issues that directly impact SOF, such as irregular warfare, counterterrorism, information operations, counternarcotics, counterthreat finance, and civilian harm mitigation. Of note, SOLIC led the development of the most comprehensive approach to addressing civilian harm by any military in the world. I see SOLIC's roles as mutually reinforcing, allowing for enhanced integration of policy and strategy with the allocation of resources and capabilities.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this Committee and your partnership and support. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.
General Fenton, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL BRYAN P. FENTON, USA, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

General FENTON. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Joining me is Command Sergeant Major Shane Shorter, a two-time COCOM Command Senior Enlisted Leader with over three decades of service in special operations. He represents our incredible noncommissioned officer corps that is without equal. Our NCOs stand at the very center of our command, making us the envy of militaries across the world and the object of fear among our foes.

Together, CSM and I are honored to represent the 70,000 uniformed and civilian members of SOCOM, including 28 international special operations teammates and our interagency team at our headquarters. I am equally honored to testify alongside Secretary Chris Maier and General Tim Haugh. Secretary Maier's leadership and the SOLIC team's advocacy are vital for the readiness, modernization, and well-being of our Special Operations Forces and families.

As Secretary Maier mentioned, we lost 15 of our special operations teammates over the last 5 months. They made the ultimate sacrifice and remind us of the utmost devotion to duty present in our formations. Never forgetting our fallen and supporting their families remains our sacred obligation.

In this decisive decade, our Nation faces autocrats and terrorists that threaten our world. From the People's Republic of China to Russia, from Iran to North Korea and violent extremist organizations, our adversaries seek to divide and weaken the United States, our allies, and our partners. The PRC's global coercion, debt diplomacy, and cyber intrusions are common practice in their pursuit to rewrite the international order.

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine grinds into its third year with attacks on innocent civilians, abductions, and other crimes fueling their objectives in Europe, all while their disinformation campaign spreads chaos across the globe. The DPRK is increasingly belligerent on the peninsula and complicit in supporting Russia's untoward aggression in Europe. Iran, a long-time malign actor, leverages its proxies, Hamas, the Houthis, Hezbollah, and militias to sow instability in the Middle East, all while Al-Shabaab, al Qaeda, and ISIS still seek to threaten our Homeland and interests abroad.

To combat these threats, your SOCOM team delivers asymmetric and asynchronous advantage for DOD, through our enterprise priorities of People, Win, Transform. Our people, the competitive and comparative advantage, and your special operations attract the most talented men and women, driven to solve the most complex problems in politically contested and sensitive environments. With them we win, by asymmetrically deterring our adversaries, tearing

apart violent extremist organizations, and rapidly responding to crisis.

To be clear, DOD's main effort, integrated deterrence, is SOCOM's main effort. Since 1942, your SOF have accumulated six decades of strategic competition experience, now combined with over 2 decades of hard-earned combat experience in the global war on terror. Those 8 decades make your special operations tailor-made for this era, providing integrated strategic options to prevent great power war, winning before conflict, simultaneously preparing the environment to ensure the joint force prevails if conflict occurs. Those eight decades highlight that integrated deterrence and strategic competition are in our DNA—always have been, always will.

Added to this, your SOCOM team preserves strategic focus through our sacred duty to maintain exquisite capabilities to degrade violent extremist organizations, denying them their goals, while continuing to rescue U.S. citizens and diplomats anywhere in the world.

Our final priority is Transform, to address the rapidly changing environment and character of war. Here, we start with our people, enhancing warfighter performance in education, then wrapping technology around them, like AI and uncrude systems to solve problems for the joint force with agile innovation. With Congress as the architect of Special Operations Command, in 1987, we thank you for your foresight, leadership, and continued support.

To those listening today, considering service through our Nation, know the profound sense of calling, purpose, and fulfillment those serving in uniform share. Because within our formation you will meet people from every background and every walk of life. If you want to serve in jobs like cyber, intelligence, operations, and more, join our ranks.

We appreciate being here today. Thank you, and I look forward to taking your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Mr. Christopher P. Maier and General Bryan P. Fenton follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER P. MAIER AND
GENERAL BRYAN P. FENTON

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the posture of our Nation's Special Operations Forces (SOF). We are honored to highlight the priorities, activities, and investments that ensure SOF remain a decisive advantage for the Nation and Joint Force to meet current and future challenges.

On behalf of the special operations community, we thank you for your leadership and steadfast support. Both the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)) and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) were established through the foresight and determination of Congress. Your support ensures our SOF remain the world's most capable and credible, safeguarding and advancing U.S. national interests.

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge and Russia as the acute threat, both seeking to upend the rules-based international order. State-sponsored proxies and violent extremist organizations (VEOs) present immediate challenges to global stability. State and non-State actors seek advantage through coercive and malign activities in the "gray zone," below a threshold they perceive as likely to prompt a U.S. military response. Rapid technological advances and a complicated security environment place our Nation in what President Biden has described as a "decisive decade."

For an annual investment of less than 2 percent of the Defense budget, SOF provide scalable, tailorable, and asymmetric options for our senior leaders and present dilemmas for our adversaries. We do this by:

- *Strengthening Partnerships.* SOF cultivate a global network of generational relationships, building partner force capacity and assisting allies and partners in countering aggression, addressing malign influence, and deterring conflict.
- *Preserving Strategic Focus.* SOF prevent attacks on the Homeland and respond to crises allowing the Nation to focus on the pacing challenge and acute threats.
- *Preparing the Environment.* Strategic competition is in SOF's DNA with decades of extensive access and placement to shape the future operating environment.
- *Enabling the Joint Force to Prevail.* SOF enable the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Warfighting Concepts across the spectrum of conflict.

Through our civilian-military partnership, SO/LIC and USSOCOM ensure the force is well-prepared for current and future challenges through three priorities: People, Win, and Transform.

ADVANCING CIVILIAN-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP

SO/LIC and USSOCOM make up the SOF enterprise, and we continue to strengthen our civilian-military partnership to ensure SOF are fully integrated into the Department's analytical, planning, programming, and budgetary processes. With responsibilities for oversight of SOF organization, training, and equipping, the ASD(SO/LIC) reports directly to the Secretary of Defense and represents the SOF enterprise in a variety of decisionmaking bodies alongside the Secretaries of the Military Departments and other Office of the Secretary of Defense components. At the same time, the ASD(SO/LIC) serves as the Department's principal advisor for a range of issues relevant to SOF, such as counterterrorism, irregular warfare, information operations, civilian harm mitigation and response, counter-small unmanned aerial systems (C-sUAS) prior-to-launch, counternarcotics, counter-transnational organized crime, counter threat finance (CTF), stabilization, civil affairs, and peacekeeping. With these mutually supporting roles, SO/LIC is uniquely positioned within DOD to optimize the integration of SOF capabilities into defense planning and analytical processes that shape SOF's role within the Joint Force.

Over the past year, SO/LIC has continued to enhance the Service-like side of its organization. For example, SO/LIC has realigned its Irregular Warfare Technical Support Directorate under its Service-like functions, enhancing its integration with SOF and leveraging its extensive international partnerships. The Deputy Secretary has allocated additional Senior Executive Service (SES) positions to SO/LIC, which will materially enhance how SO/LIC can execute its Service-like responsibilities. Within the next few months, SO/LIC will have grown from one to four SES leaders dedicated to its Service-like responsibilities. With USSOCOM's support, we have added the first-ever SOF senior enlisted advisor in SO/LIC to contribute a SOF-specific perspective to departmental decisionmaking on the welfare of our servicemembers and civilian personnel, alongside the senior enlisted leaders of the Services. Reinforcing our priority on people, SO/LIC has also established a new directorate focused exclusively on Manpower and Force Resiliency. Through a reinvigorated Special Operations Policy Oversight Council and participation in other DOD decisionmaking bodies, we continue to deepen our engagement with the Military Departments and Combatant Commands in caring for our people and in addressing shared challenges.

People: Strengthening the Resilience of the Force

Consistent with the first SOF Truth that Humans are More Important than Hardware, our people are our comparative and competitive advantage. Ensuring the readiness, resilience, and well-being of our men and women and their families remains our #1 priority. The unique nature of the SOF mission demands an extraordinarily talented workforce capable of operating in remote and austere environments, working alongside our global allies and partners, and harnessing advanced technologies to succeed in any warfighting domain. USSOCOM embraces, educates, and empowers our people to tackle the Nation's most complex problems.

Embracing America's Greatest Resource

America's core advantage over its adversaries is its dynamic, diverse, and innovative society. To generate a force that can succeed in today's complex security environment, SOF embrace the best of our Nation by recruiting, assessing, selecting, training, and employing the Nation's most talented and committed men and women. We continue to invest in thorough assessment, selection, and SOF-peculiar training programs to generate the most advanced fighting force in the world. These efforts depend upon the support of the Military Services for recruiting and critical enablers as most special operations require non-SOF support.

In SOF, quality is more important than quantity. Our Component Commands continue to maintain rigorous assessment and selection standards amidst current recruiting challenges. They are also working closely with their parent Services to help address shared recruiting challenges. For example, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Command began outreach engagements with a new recruiting cell, which increased contacts by more than 80 percent in fiscal year 2023. SOF-specific recruiting efforts continue to enable the Services by providing high-quality military servicemembers to the Joint Force. For instance, approximately 75 percent of the 1,000 sailors that annually assess for NSW go on to serve in conventional Navy units. Similarly, approximately 80 percent of the 3,000 annual Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOFF) Ranger and Special Forces recruits go on to serve in conventional Army units.

Diversity in our SOF formations provides an asymmetric advantage. SOF teammates with unique skillsets, experiences, and backgrounds can devise culturally attuned and innovative solutions to key operational problems. USSOCOM employs “big data” analytics from recruitment, assessment, selection, and retention to better understand and harness the talents of servicemembers and civilians. Similarly, to capitalize on unique language and cultural expertise,

U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has initiated a pilot program that allows legal permanent residents who meet SOF standards to be assessed directly into SOF units.

USSOCOM continues to develop and retain a talented workforce while fostering an inclusive organizational climate and maintaining our high standards. For example, to ensure that SOF draws upon the broadest pool of talent, we remain committed to supporting our women servicemembers’ ability to serve and advance within the SOF community. USASOC continues to implement the recommendations from its Women in ARSOFF Study, such as enhancing mentorship, leadership opportunities, childcare, and gender-specific equipment. Across the SOF enterprise in 2023, we saw an increase of more than 12 percent in women joining the community. USASOC is leading efforts for the Army with tailored uniforms and body armor specifically designed for use by our ARSOFF Servicewomen. Furthermore, NSW expanded female instructor billets in 2023 to normalize the presence of women in the training pipeline. Finally, USSOCOM units hosted several events for the interagency and Joint Force to demonstrate how women are integrated into SOF and the operational impacts of their service.

Educating to Solve the Nation’s Hardest Problems

We continue to invest in our personnel with SOF-specific education and training, which we constantly adapt to address current security challenges. Our men and women who are entrusted to perform special operations must be equipped to succeed in an ever-evolving operational environment in close coordination with interagency, international, and industry partners. Because SOF’s tactical actions often carry strategic and political consequences, our educational programming and training remain critical for preparing our forces.

Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) is the focal point of our Joint SOF education. Through engagement with academia, the interagency, and international partners, JSOU provides accredited resident and distance learning to prepare SOF professionals to solve novel problems.

JSOU’s Senior Enlisted Academy introduces strategic thinking to tactical action for SOF non-commissioned officers renowned for their creativity, disciplined action, and understanding of the strategic environment. Additionally, JSOU assists Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) with programming focused on integrated deterrence and works closely with allies and partners. As a priority effort, JSOU is increasing course offerings regarding the Indo-Pacific region. In support of our European partners, JSOU promotes interoperability across NATO and provides instruction regarding the intricacies of countering Russia’s malign influence on a global scale. Similarly, JSOU continues to update its counter-violent extremist organization (C-VEO) courses to reflect the evolving nature of global terrorist networks.

Likewise, USSOCOM’s components are also updating training curricula based on the ever-evolving character of warfare. In 2023, ARSOFF added several training programs based on lessons learned through Ukraine’s resistance efforts against Russia’s illegal invasion. Examples include Slavic and Baltic language instruction, air defense training, robotics and unmanned systems integration, and the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into operations. Similarly, USASOC’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is establishing an Irregular Warfare Academy at Fort Liberty, NC. NSW is integrating modern underwater demolition tactics and near peer scenarios into training. Last, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command is emphasizing special reconnaissance training in lit-

toral environments. These training updates provide relevant tactical expertise, while ensuring training is conducted in accordance with rigorous safety standards.

Empowering Those Who Serve at the Tip of the Spear

SO/LIC ensures that the care and well-being of the men and women of SOF are elevated in leadership venues such as the Deputy's Workforce Council, management meetings with the Deputy Secretary, and the Secretary of Defense's bi-weekly meetings with the Service Secretaries. SO/LIC and USSOCOM continue to take a holistic approach to optimizing performance and enhancing readiness through SOF-unique support programs. The Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) and the Warrior Care Program are the Command's premier programs to strengthen readiness and resilience for SOF personnel and their families by addressing SOF-unique challenges for a performance-based organization that cannot be met through Service-common support resources.

The POTFF program exemplifies DOD's focus on taking care of people and is a model for similar programs, such as the Air Force's True North and the Army's Holistic Health and Fitness programs. POTFF focuses on five domains to optimize readiness and strengthen resiliency: physical, psychological, cognitive, social (family), and spiritual. POTFF focuses on holistic engagement to identify and address chronic issues before they impact performance. Recent data shows that SOF personnel who use the POTFF strength and conditioning program return to duty from non-surgical injuries after an average of 5 treatments, compared to 12 treatments by non-POTFF users. Over the past decade, USSOCOM has seen a steady increase across several mental health diagnoses, with a substantial rise in recent years particularly with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries. We attribute this to an increased emphasis on mental health, brain health, destigmatizing care, and SOF utilization of available programs. In the psychological domain, POTFF provides evidence-based interventions that fit within SOF training and deployment schedules with access to providers typically available on the same day.

Responsive and effective care that extends careers is an enterprise priority. For SOF personnel who are wounded, ill, or injured, the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program provides recovery care coordination services to ensure they have a comprehensive plan to get the treatment and resources they need. The primary objective is retaining talent and returning our personnel to their unit so they can continue serving. The combination of POTFF and the Warrior Care Program provides a continuum of support for our personnel through performance enhancement, injury recovery, and transition assistance. Over the past year, the program supported more than 7,000 cases, resulting in the retention of nearly 70 percent of wounded, ill, and injured Active Duty SOF.

USSOCOM also collaborates with various non-profit organizations to preserve our forces and their families, particularly when faced with complex injuries and illnesses. For example, the Warrior Care Program collaborated with a non-profit organization dedicated to healing the invisible wounds of war to develop the Comprehensive Brain Health and Trauma Program. This intensive clinical program documents symptoms, histories, and exposures while providing a comprehensive treatment plan. The program has improved and saved the lives of our SOF personnel. One testimony from a senior Navy SEAL explained how through participation in the program, providers found malignant tumors that turned out to be life-threatening. He received care coordinated through the Warrior Care Program that saved his life and ultimately allowed him to continue to serve.

Because SOF warfighters have higher rates of repeated blast exposures and blast-related injuries, USSOCOM continues to lead efforts to identify methods to protect warfighter brain health in close collaboration with academia. In partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, USSOCOM concluded The Repeated Brain Blast Exposure Study, the most comprehensive work of this kind to date. As part of this effort, in September 2023, USSOCOM published the Comprehensive Strategy for Special Operations Forces Warfighter Brain Health, which focuses on monitoring brain health and cognitive performance, optimizing cognitive capacity, advancing brain health science, and connecting wounded, ill, and injured with resources to seek treatment. This USSOCOM Directive is in alignment with the Department's Warfighter Brain Health Comprehensive Strategy and Action Plan. USSOCOM appreciates the support from the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2023 that provides resources to conduct traumatic brain injury research.

Determined to prevent suicide and other forms of self-harm, the SOF enterprise has engaged the Nation's leading experts to identify novel suicide prevention approaches and address the underlying cognitive and emotional health of our personnel. Through quarterly events with SOF leaders from the tactical to strategic

levels, the SOF enterprise has worked to ensure the force is aware of all the resources available and has destigmatized seeking help. Additionally, USSOCOM is modernizing suicide prevention by developing virtual reality training tailored to SOF-specific scenarios to help members of our formation identify and respond to teammates in crisis. As a member of the Department's Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee, ASD(SO/LIC) ensures that Department-level, Service, and USSOCOM-specific efforts are closely aligned. SO/LIC has also directed funding to support and implement rapidly the most promising suicide prevention training technologies for the SOF enterprise.

Maintaining a professional and healthy culture is essential to the well-being of our teammates and their families along with the accomplishment of their operational responsibilities. USSOCOM has zero tolerance for any behaviors that would undermine a positive work environment. Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other harmful behaviors erode cohesion and trust. DOD's establishment of the Office of Special Trial Counsel helps cement accountability across the formation and ensures that serious offenses are handled fairly within the military justice system. USSOCOM completed the implementation of 16 Comprehensive Review recommendations in 2023. Despite the official close out, the Command will continue follow-on actions to foster a healthy climate and culture across the SOF enterprise.

WIN: DECISIVE ADVANTAGE FOR THE NATION

SOF provide a decisive advantage for the Nation as an integral part of DOD's approach to integrated deterrence. In 2023 and early 2024, we have seen an increase in the Combatant Commands' demand for SOF capabilities and our critical enablers in support of campaigning toward NDS priorities. We regularly review and prioritize these requests due to demand exceeding capacity. Representing less than 2 percent of the Defense budget, and less than 3 percent of DOD personnel, SOF provide an exceptional return on investment in supporting NDS priorities. SOF prepare the global operating environment to enable the Joint Force to prevail in the event of conflict by providing options to senior leaders and dilemmas to our adversaries—all based on years of persistent campaigning. Additionally, USSOCOM preserves strategic focus for the Nation by countering VEO and responding to crises with agile and tailored capabilities. We have learned failure to maintain persistent pressure on extremist elements may allow them to reconstitute and pose a renewed—and sometimes greater—threat. Moreover, USSOCOM continues strengthening relationships and leveraging unique authorities to operate alongside our unrivaled global network of allies and partners.

Preparing the Environment and Enabling the Joint Force to Prevail

SOF's operations, activities, and investments in support of integrated deterrence can undermine an adversary's confidence in its capabilities and shape its decision and risk calculus to our advantage. The access, placement, and influence generated by SOF's long-term engagements improve interoperability and provide the Joint Force with expanded, low-cost options to gain awareness prior to conflict. SOF's unique access enables the Joint Force to prevail in conflict by building civil-military resilience, supporting resistance elements, facilitating operations in the information environment, enhancing kill webs, and working alongside regular and irregular forces.

SOF's placement and access are unique in breadth and depth. On any given day, SOF personnel are deployed to more than 85 countries conducting special operations missions, training, and exercises supporting the Joint Force while campaigning for military advantage in all domains. Our active duty force is bolstered by National Guard and Reserve SOF, supporting wide-ranging operations in approximately 30 countries, making them ideally suited to identify a competitor's coercive activities and counter them with precise, scalable, and credible all-domain options for the Joint Force. Through our Civil-Military Engagement program, USSOCOM-assigned Civil Affairs Soldiers provide a persistent SOF presence in priority countries with small teams of highly trained and culturally attuned professionals who advise and support military forces, host nation institutions, and indigenous populations to increase resilience to malign influence.

SOF campaigning activities are focused on enabling partners and deterring aggression by the PRC and Russia, while emphasizing the PRC as our pacing challenge. Over the past 4 years, SOF support to Combatant Command activity to counter coercion and deter aggression has more than tripled—comprising nearly 50 percent of SOF's deployed and forward presence in fiscal year 2023.

In the Indo-Pacific theater, SOF have leveraged generational relationships to support and reassure partners and allies vulnerable to PRC aggression. SOF form the core of joint training efforts that integrate civil and military resilience to deter and,

if necessary, resist external aggression. In the Philippines, longstanding SOF partnerships developed over years of counterterrorism efforts continue and have expanded to ensure maritime domain awareness and support the lawful exercise of navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea. Through our persistent presence and partnerships, we have demonstrated that we stand ready to support and defend a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In Europe, SOF's decades-long commitment to building capacity and enhancing interoperability with allied and partnered SOF continues. Three decades of training with Ukrainian Forces contributed to the development of a non-commissioned officer corps and special operations capability. Following the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, SOF supported multinational training efforts that included critical resilience and resistance capabilities. SO/LIC and USSOCOM remain steadfast partners with NATO SOF and contribute to U.S. European Command's response and deterrence options. We continue to support Ukraine's defense, fully aligning these activities with the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine. Multinational SOF have provided expert capabilities in countering Russian disinformation, as well as training and materiel support to Ukrainian SOF partners.

Competing with the PRC and Russia extends beyond the Indo-Pacific and Europe. The PRC and Russia seek resources and partnerships globally, competing with us, our allies, and our partners for influence in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Arctic. SOF provide critical support to broader United States Government efforts to address this challenge. For example, DOD counterdrug-funded analysts across DOD, including at USSOCOM, support interagency efforts to illuminate transnational organized criminal groups aligned with Russian private military companies that have led to the denial of visas, sanctions, and seizure of assets and currency. USSOCOM also supports these regional partners by exposing malign environmental and illicit encroachments by PRC actors and their state-owned enterprises. As an example, SOF support partner nations' efforts to prevent PRC illegal fishing throughout the Western Hemisphere and Africa, an issue of enormous economic concern to many countries in those regions.

Our servicemembers, civilians, and their families will face increasingly sophisticated misinformation and disinformation at home and in every operating environment. It is imperative to

equip them with the skills and tools to protect themselves and conduct their missions in virtual and physical domains. To that end, SO/LIC led the development of the Department's Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment (SOIE). The 2023 DOD SOIE identifies four lines of effort to enable the Department to integrate and modernize operations in the information environment to strengthen integrated deterrence: People and Organizations; Programs; Policies and Governance; and Partnerships. This strategy recognizes that internet-based Military Information Support Operations (MISO) are indispensable in 21st century warfare, which includes the development of critical information force capabilities such as civil affairs and psychological operations.

As DOD's Joint Proponent and Coordinating Authority for Internet-based MISO, SOCOM is focused on the evolving information environment—to enable the Joint Force during competition and conflict. MISO to counter strategic competitors have more than tripled in the past 3 years—comprising more than 60 percent of SOF's worldwide MISO activities in fiscal year 2023. The USSOCOM-hosted Joint MISO WebOps Center (JMWC) enables Combatant Commands' MISO campaigns conducted via internet platforms, actively engaging foreign audiences to illuminate and counter hostile propaganda and disinformation. The JMWC provides Combatant Commanders with options to generate desired effects globally, especially in countering propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation from Russia, the PRC, and C-VEOs. Due to the increased demand signal from across the Joint Force, the number of Combatant Command representatives in the JMWC doubled in 2023.

Modernized and updated authorities enable SOF to campaign effectively against State and non-State actors and achieve an outsized impact across multiple mission sets and domains. We greatly appreciate Congress' support in codifying section 1202 authority under 10 U.S.C. 127d (Irregular Warfare), which will improve the range of options to impose costs on malign actors. Other authorities, such as 10 U.S.C. § 127f (Clandestine Operational Preparation of the Environment and Non-conventional Assisted Recovery) and Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA Section 1057 (Intelligence / Counterintelligence) are valuable in illuminating and countering malign influence and preparing for potential future military operations.

Irregular warfare is a critical tool for campaigning across the spectrum of conflict, enhancing interoperability and access, and disrupting competitor warfighting advantages while reinforcing our own. To further institutionalize irregular warfare across the Joint Force, SO/LIC is updating policy, informing doctrine, and modernizing ir-

regular warfare education and training. As part of this effort, in close coordination with the Joint Staff, SO/LIC recently updated DOD's definition of irregular warfare to better reflect the role of the Joint Force. Irregular warfare activities impose costs on our adversaries, strengthen our network of allies and partners, and interrupt our adversaries' decision cycle.

Irregular warfare is a fundamental component of the DOD's contributions to a larger whole-of-government approach to strategic competition. Through the conduct of irregular warfare education and training, along with joint and combined activities and operations, our allies and partners are better equipped to deter and resist aggression from the PRC, Russia, Iran, and other malign actors. Irregular warfare enhances posture and options to counter an adversary's gray zone activities and their counter-intervention strategies. Consequently, an enhanced understanding of irregular warfare will bolster deterrence and make large scale conflict less likely. While SOF may perform the preponderance of the DOD's irregular warfare operations and activities, it remains the responsibility of the entire Joint Force. Shared investments in irregular warfare across the DOD will enhance interoperability and disrupt our competitors' advantage.

Preserving Strategic Focus

SOF preserve DOD strategic focus on NDS priorities by executing crisis response and counter terrorism missions. This focus allows the Nation to direct efforts on the pacing challenge of the PRC and the acute threat of Russia. SOF continue to play a critical role in degrading VEOs—including those supported by our adversaries—and disrupting plots to attack Americans and our interests. SOF's crisis response capabilities remain a strategic hedge in no-fail missions to protect U.S. citizens and our vital national security interests globally.

USSOCOM is optimizing its global posture while sustaining the ability to respond to crises worldwide. In the past 3 years, the requirement for USSOCOM to fulfill its crisis response remit has increased more than 130 percent over the previous decade's annual average. Repeatedly during 2023, SOF provided vital forces and command and control for global crises requiring rapid deployment, complex problem-solving, and synchronized effects. For example, SOF executed an emergency evacuation of United States Embassy personnel from Khartoum, Sudan, when conditions deteriorated and placed American lives at risk. More recently, SOF postured to prepare for a wide-range of contingency operations in Israel and Lebanon following the Hamas attacks on Israel and subsequent regional instability.

Presidentially directed crisis response and C-VEO operations are inherently unpredictable and vary year-to-year in terms of timing, duration, and total cost. With an increase in the frequency of crises and compounded cost increases, reimbursement via supplementals is inefficient. Paying for previous crisis response deployments draws resources away from modernization efforts that aim to meet future challenges. We look forward to working with the committee to address these challenges.

USSOCOM is the DOD's Coordinating Authority for C-VEO through our Department-wide campaign planning, assessments, and recommendations. The conflict in Gaza, combined with perceived anti-Islamic sentiment, risks making certain populations more vulnerable to extremist appeals. Iran and aligned regional groups are leveraging the conflict to promote anti-United States sentiment and impose costs on the United States across the Middle East and Africa. Ongoing geopolitical, technological, economic, and climate change challenges exacerbate regional instability, threatening effective governance and fueling radicalization. As a result, violent extremism and terrorism persist as a threat to the United States, our partners, and our allies.

After sustained global pressure since 2001, the threat to Americans, to include the United States Homeland, posed by VEOs based in the Middle East and Africa is less acute but more diverse and amplified by destabilizing activities from nation-states like Russia and Iran. No individual organization is as great a threat to the United States Homeland as al Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) when they were at their peak; however, the number and operating areas of VEOs with intent to threaten the Homeland and interests abroad have increased. Additionally, the continued availability of safe havens and under-governed spaces provide opportunities for continued threats against U.S. interests overseas. We must continue to pressure VEOs wherever they emerge, to prevent them from having the time and space to develop into threats to Americans, the Homeland and U.S. interests abroad. We have learned from the past and cannot become complacent.

In East Africa, Somalia has emerged as a critical hub for both al Qaeda and ISIS. Al-Shabaab presents an ongoing risk to United States interests both in Somalia and throughout the region while maintaining ties to the larger al Qaeda organization.

For its part, ISIS-Somalia has emerged as a prominent element of the larger ISIS enterprise. We are working closely with our Somali counterparts to push back on and prevent these organizations from establishing safe havens for future operations. In West and Central Africa, socio-political instability and the operations of Russian private military companies exacerbate the threats posed by al Qaeda's affiliate Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and ISIS in the region. SOF are providing indications and warnings of threats from these regions and posturing to respond when directed.

In Afghanistan, ISIS Khorasan is strengthening its connections to the broader ISIS enterprise and is increasing attacks across the region while exploiting links into Central Asian diasporas abroad to encourage attacks against the West. Despite the removal of key leaders since 2019, ISIS continues to demonstrate the intent to target United States interests in the Middle East and reconstitute military capabilities.

Since the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023, the United States has leveraged SOF heavily in our response. SOF deployed quickly and stood ready in nearby countries to provide our Nation with crisis evacuation options. SOF continue to work closely with Israeli counterparts to locate and rescue the American citizens suspected to have been taken hostage by Hamas. Moreover, in the subsequent regional unrest, SOF often have the lead to counter the malign influence of Iran and its proxies. Due to their unique placement and capabilities, SOF are on the front lines of these efforts.

With the Secretary of Defense's priority to protect civilians during military operations, SO/LIC and USSOCOM are leaders in implementing DOD's civilian harm mitigation and response (CHMR) efforts. SO/LIC spearheaded the effort to develop the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, and USSOCOM continues supporting its ongoing implementation through best-in-class innovations and approaches. USSOCOM proactively revised kinetic strike protocols and implemented mandatory target engagement authority training across the enterprise. The CHMR policies and procedures outlined by the Department assist with C-VEO efforts as they prevent underlying dynamics from creating more extremism.

As we focus our campaigning to address the priorities of integrated deterrence, SOF continue to pursue a sustainable approach to C-VEO operations. A sustainable approach consists of prioritizing threats to the Homeland, modernizing ways to degrade VEOs' capabilities, and working closely with international and interagency partners. For example, now celebrating its tenth year, United States leadership of the 87-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS has undermined a well-understood strategy of globally aspiring extremist groups. These groups seek to overextend individual governments into resource-intensive commitments that eventually deplete national resolve and popular will. Against individual countries, this global strategy can be effective. Against a unified group of like-minded countries, it cannot, and our leadership of the Coalition since 2014 has been a cornerstone of a sustainable United States approach to defeating ISIS. Following National Security Memorandum-13 guidance, SOF embrace a "partner-led, U.S.-enabled" campaign approach to C-VEO, built on a disciplined prioritization of risks to drive decision-making. During operations over the past year to counter ISIS, SOF have worked closely with international and interagency partners to disrupt illicit financing, interdict foreign fighters, and illuminate propaganda with the operation in January 2023 to capture the ISIS financier, Bilal Al Sudani as an example. Our interagency efforts also have included close cooperation with the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development with the implementation of the Global Fragility Act in Coastal West Africa—fundamentally focused on preventing crises and failed states before they can occur.

Now in its tenth year, Operation Gallant Phoenix (OGP)—a U.S. interagency and multinational C-VEO initiative—has enabled international and interagency partners to share information from battlefield captures to asymmetrically disrupt 16 distinct al Qaeda and ISIS groups in fiscal year 2023. Coupled with counter threat finance authorities and analytical expertise, operations like OGP provide expanded and cost-effective ways to disrupt illicit financing and deter activities. Operations for U.S. and OGP partners contributed to more than 1,500 investigations, in excess of 6,000 foreign disclosure releases, and support to partners repatriating more than 60 individuals in fiscal year 2023. DOD counter-threat finance analysts also supported numerous Treasury designations against VEO finances and facilitators. The OGP model could apply further to countering coercive activities and deterring aggression.

Violent extremists continue to incorporate new technologies and adapt their tactics, posing an ongoing global threat to our citizens. Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) pose a pressing challenge, exhibiting a rapid evolution in employment and

lethality exceeding that of improvised explosive devices over the past two decades. In addition to the evolving UAS threat from VEOs, capable State adversaries and their aligned paramilitary forces have also successfully employed UAS to target American, allied, and partner forces—most notably in the Arabian Sea along with Iraq, Jordan, and Syria over the past year.

In its longtime role as the Coordinating Authority for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD), USSOCOM draws upon its international, interagency, and joint relationships to deter weapons of mass destruction proliferation by State and non-State actors. USSOCOM hosts annual CWMD Senior Leader Seminars to bolster support for DOD-wide strategies, plans, and policies while improving interoperability with our international partners. USSOCOM incorporated select allies and interagency partners in planning for the updated DOD Functional Campaign Plan for CWMD. The forthcoming plan will drive interoperability and strengthen deterrence to defend the Homeland, our allies, and our partners' interests.

Strengthening Partnerships

Extensive partnerships are the cornerstone of SOF's contributions to integrated deterrence, C-VEO, and crisis response. Unparalleled integration and interoperability with allies and partners, the interagency community, and the Joint Force are all characteristics that SOF have strengthened over the past two decades. While the shared challenge of countering violent extremism facilitated unprecedented levels of operational partnerships, these mutually beneficial relationships have now extended to the full range of SOF operations globally, including integrated deterrence and irregular warfare capabilities. Small footprint and persistent low-cost SOF deployments allow our allies and partners to build capacity and bolster their security to prevent wider conflict.

SOF's generational partnerships across the globe provide the Joint Force an asymmetric advantage. In 2023, SOF formations executed 168 Joint Combined Exchange Training iterations in 76 countries, training more than 2,000 U.S. SOF personnel alongside more than 7,500 allies and partners. Through persistent engagement, SOF have fostered extensive interoperability with allied and partner SOF, deepened by operating shoulder-to-shoulder during combat and other high-risk operations for over two decades. Authorities under 10 U.S.C. § 333 (Building Partner Capacity) and 10 U.S.C. § 322 (SOF Training) are the foundation of SOF's generational relationships to further enhance collaboration and promote interoperability. Additionally, Headquarters USSOCOM hosts 28 foreign liaison officers who provide a level of trust that cannot be surged during a crisis.

An enduring advantage for the United States is its unrivaled network of CT partners who continue to bring bespoke capabilities and remain committed to countering terrorists that threaten all our citizens. SO/LIC and USSOCOM closely coordinate with these partners to ensure unity of effort, streamlined communication, and common priorities. In every CT campaign, we find capable and willing allies, dedicated to the defeat of terrorist organizations, and ready to partner with us in our efforts. Operations supported by 10 U.S.C. § 127e (Counterterrorism) are an example of partner forces providing flexible options to apply pressure against violent extremists in otherwise inaccessible, contested, and ungoverned areas—while reducing risk to U.S. Forces.

Moreover, SOF serve as added connective tissue to the interagency community for the Department and a force multiplier for integrated deterrence. Integration with U.S. interagency partners—such as the Department of State, the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the National Counterterrorism Center, among many others—enhances the U.S. Government's response to various threats and efforts to mitigate instability over the past year. As an example, USSOCOM CTF analytical support led to high-level indictments of Chinese companies that import fentanyl precursors to the Homeland and was lauded by the Drug Enforcement Administration for supporting the identification and distribution of fentanyl and other drug trafficking, including a global money-laundering network. FBI recognized CTF analysts at Special Operations Command-Pacific for their support to investigations involving Chinese transnational organized crime groups linked to PRC malign influence networks.

USSOCOM serves as the DOD's lead component for synchronizing CTF activities. Since the DOD counterdrug program funds the great majority of DOD CTF activity, USSOCOM uses Title 10 U.S.C. § 284 (Support to Counterdrug Activities and Activities to Counter Transnational Organized Crime) authorities and the associated Fiscal Year 2004 NDAA Section 1022 authorities to support interagency partners in identifying and countering competitors' illicit activities. In 2023, USSOCOM supported dozens of transnational criminal investigations. Notably, these included the

Attorney General's prioritized investigations involving Mexico-based cartels, China-based chemical companies, investigations involving international money laundering associated with narcotics, and several other cases involving high-priority inter-agency targets. As discussed, DOD counterdrug authorities provide options to illuminate and counter malign activity by VEO networks along with PRC and Russian-affiliated transnational organized criminal networks, which are often closely tied to drug trafficking organizations. However, SO/LIC recognizes that the DOD counterdrug program should not underwrite all of the Department's CTF capability. We are working to establish a standardized training program to enable other parts of DOD to develop their own CTF analysts and expand the reach of this critical methodology.

As the DOD Global Coordinator for C-sUAS prior to launch, USSOCOM has coordinated numerous DOD and U.S. Government actions to disrupt adversaries' networks and organizations responsible for sUAS production, proliferation, and use. USSOCOM continues active coordination with the Joint Force and partners to synchronize intelligence collection and analysis, technology development, plans, and operations to disrupt and degrade adversary sUAS operations. These efforts have enabled law enforcement partners to directly affect criminal networks procuring U.S. components for use in UAS production. DOD support to these cases last year helped to disrupt more than \$46 million of revenue in illicit part procurement and assisted partners, such as the Departments of Treasury and Commerce, to designate entities involved in evading U.S. financial sanctions and export controls. Despite this significant progress, our adversaries' rapid advancement of sUAS technology continues, challenging DOD's future ability to protect, project, and employ forces. To assist USSOCOM in synchronizing DOD C-sUAS prior-to-launch efforts, SO/LIC stood up the Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Prior To Launch Executive Committee to serve as the senior forum to develop and recommend policy, develop strategy, and oversee DOD's C-sUAS prior-to-launch mission to address critical gaps and issues. SO/LIC also understands that partners in the interagency community have critical roles in the effort to curb the production and distribution of C-sUAS among our adversaries and has also led the effort to build on DOD's collaboration with partners such as the Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security.

USSOCOM also maintains collaborative, mutually supporting relationships across the Joint Force. Close coordination with regionally aligned Combatant Commands enables SOF to support regional and transregional campaigning efforts—particularly important as the PRC and Russia pursue malign strategic objectives globally. USSOCOM's TSOCs, are each aligned with a specific Combatant Command to coordinate SOF campaigning in their respective theaters to ensure activities both support regional strategic objectives and maximize transregional efforts. Operating transregionally is critical for both C-VEO efforts and countering our strategic competitors' coercive gray zone activities.

Strong collaboration in support of SOF, space, and cyber operations with other Combatant Commands ensures synchronization across warfighting domains. The nexus of USSOCOM, U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. Space Command, and U.S. Strategic Command, each with a specific functional focus, creates synergy with complementary capabilities to support the Joint Force. This nexus specifically enhances kill webs—the integration of sensors from seabed to space and the options to eliminate targets. It also creates new opportunities to degrade an adversary's confidence and capabilities before conflict. For example, SOF often require cyberspace and space capabilities to see and sense the operational environment and, if needed, conduct strikes against an adversary. Likewise, cyberspace and space operations often rely on SOF's physical access to deliver effects to enhance Joint Force targeting.

SOF produce groundbreaking tactics, techniques, procedures, and materiel solutions. However, in the absence of specific doctrine or standard operating procedures, traditional force modeling and projections are inadequate. This is a problem we share with our colleagues wielding cyber and space capabilities. SO/LIC and USSOCOM are working together to model SOF effects and to better integrate into Joint Staff wargames and analysis—especially below the threshold of armed conflict. ASD(SO/LIC) has issued the establishing order for a new Center for Special Operations Analytics to organize and direct the growth of the SOF enterprise's analytic capabilities. Beginning in 2023, USSOCOM's Title 10 Wargame, SHADOW WARRIOR shifted from an internal missions focus to how SOF can best support the Joint Force in overcoming key operational problems in conflict. We further saw the utility of SOF enabling the Joint Force during the past two Globally Integrated Wargames. SOF as a force in the deep area produced tangible benefits for the Joint Force's performance. SOF have identified vital concepts to assist the Joint Force and will integrate those concepts in Joint and Service-specific Wargames in 2024. The SOF en-

terprise is scrutinizing our internal force structure to optimize our efforts to support integrated deterrence. Optimization includes divestment of some legacy counterterrorism-only capacity, while streamlining our force to prepare for the next conflict. Integrating SOF capabilities into Service planning will ensure that the Joint Force can improve resource utilization in long-term planning.

Last, USSOCOM is fully integrated with Joint Force training and exercises critical to achieving NDS objectives. As a notable example, Special Operations Command Korea revitalized biannual exercises to support the training of Korean Joint and Combined Forces with Freedom Shield. ARSOF participation in Pacific Sentry 2023 supported the Joint Force in the exercise of large-scale combat operations. In 2023, USASOC participated in Project Convergence and will participate again in 2024 to promulgate lessons learned to assist in the development of the Army's Information Advantage doctrine and training. Also in 2023, AFSOC hosted Emerald Warrior with international partners from France, Germany, and Lithuania to support the United States Air Force's approach to operations and Agile Combat Employment.

TRANSFORM: MODERNIZE FOR THE FUTURE

USSOCOM is building an enduring advantage through investment in our people, technologies, and organizations with a commitment to evolve, modernize, and optimize for the future operating environment. With the direction of ASD(SO/LIC), USSOCOM is accelerating its wide-ranging modernization efforts and capitalizing on our Nation's innovation ecosystem. Our innovation efforts emphasize surface and subsurface maritime platforms; C-UAS; next-generation intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; mission command systems; and collaborative and autonomous unmanned systems. USSOCOM is a trailblazer for data-driven decisionmaking to both inform and execute our Service-like and Combatant Command responsibilities, focused on the talent, architecture, and processes needed to capitalize on data and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-related technologies.

Building an Enduring SOF Advantage

The SOF enterprise continues to modernize its capabilities and incorporate emerging technologies to build an enduring advantage. The Command leverages our acquisition authority to modernize special operations capabilities in five key technical challenge areas: battlespace awareness, emplacement and access, all-domain communications and computing, scalable precision effects, and warfighter performance.

Supported by SO/LIC through the Department's programming and budgetary processes, USSOCOM has coordinated closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)), the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), and the Services to collaborate and experiment in each of these focus areas. Twice a year, the SOF enterprise holds a joint summit with the USD for Acquisition and Sustainability as well to ensure the Department is benefiting fully from SOF's agility and ability to operationally test new concepts and technologies. USSOCOM's acquisition authorities, along with its unique attributes of being inherently joint, partnered, and globally deployed, position it to greatly contribute to the overall modernization of the Joint Force. Specifically, the Command is well-positioned to be the partner of choice supporting three of USD (R&E)'s technology priorities: within cyber, focusing on MISO capabilities; within directed energy, focusing on electronic warfare/electronic attack, and biotechnologies. USSOCOM also partners with DIU on several projects to demonstrate and accelerate the vetting of commercially proven technology for operational use.

Battlespace awareness enables finding and fixing targets in contested environments and effective decisionmaking at the tactical edge supporting the Joint Force. Technologies fuse operations and intelligence information from multiple data streams to enhance tactical commanders' domain awareness and connect warfighters to small autonomous and collaborative unmanned systems. In the cyber domain, we are integrating tools to provide an open architecture mission command system optimized for SOF's role in integrated deterrence. We are also leveraging the full range of open-source data to ensure SOF can access timely, geo-rectified, and accurate data to inform their decisions. To harness advances in space, USSOCOM has established a collaborative arrangement with United States Space Force and the Space Development Agency to experiment with payloads that will provide its forces with space-based capabilities at the tactical level. Finally, we are aggressively pursuing collaborative autonomy through our AI for small unit maneuver efforts across our ground, air, and maritime unmanned and unattended sensor portfolios.

As part of our emplacement and access efforts, we continue to modernize our platforms to prevail in contested environments while working closely with the Services. We are equipping our existing aviation platforms with advanced infiltration and

penetration capabilities, including the Silent Knight terrain-following/terrain-avoidance radar, which enables our rotary-and fixed-wing fleets and radio-frequency countermeasures for our MC-130's. In close partnership with the Navy, we are investing in modernized surface and undersea maritime platforms. These efforts in developing, testing, and fielding a range of maritime capabilities will strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and across the globe.

Within all-domain communications and computing, USSOCOM is advancing technologies for influence operations in the cyber domain and hyper-enabling Joint SOF and partner forces to provide decision advantage. We focus on optimizing information processing and sharing for individuals and teams conducting partnered operations with the goal of enhancing effectiveness across all domains in contested and congested environments. The Mission Command System/Common Operating Picture deployed after a single year of development due to embracing agile software development techniques. This system is our gateway to DOD's Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control (CJADC2).

As SOF operate in increasingly contested environments, USSOCOM must provide identity management capabilities to protect our personnel, their families, and our SOF partners. Acknowledging the criticality of network infrastructure, USSOCOM implements a zero-trust architecture, providing greater information security across the SOF enterprise. To ensure alignment, we work closely with partners across DOD, including the National Security Agency and the Defense Information Systems Agency. We also seek to accelerate the transition to cloud-based architectures with modern data science environments. These efforts are integral to advancing CJADC2 and ensuring resilient networks. Finally, USSOCOM will continue to modernize internet-based and other MISO efforts through automation and AI-enabled capabilities to operate more effectively in the rapidly evolving information environment.

Precision and scalable effects are not limited to kinetic fires. USSOCOM explores cyber and electromagnetic effects through expanded experimentation, and it remains in close coordination with SO/LIC and the Army's Joint C-sUAS Office to detect and defeat any UAS that poses a threat to deployed SOF and our partners. USSOCOM has taken a unique software-centric, open architecture, system of systems approach to C-sUAS that will allow for the rapid integration of both proven and emerging technologies.

The final modernization area, warfighter performance, focuses largely on developing human-centric technologies, enabling SOF to deploy promising capabilities rapidly. These efforts are closely aligned with the POTFF program to address the physical and cognitive well-being of SOF, including the effects of blast exposures on brain health. We are combining leading-edge data with nutrition, health, AI, and industry partnerships while leveraging commercial scientific and academic labs.

Across all areas, USSOCOM leverages acquisition pathways such as Middle Tier Acquisition and contracting strategies including Commercial Solutions Openings that leverage Other Transaction Authorities. Additionally, USSOCOM is exploring novel solutions to get warfighters what they need. Acquisition agility enables USSOCOM to benefit from rapidly changing technologies, many of which are evolving quickly in the commercial sector and are often produced by small businesses. As the DOD focuses on modernizing the defense industrial ecosystem, USSOCOM seeks to bridge gaps with industry and the private investment community to maximize available disruptive technology for the SOF warfighter. Educating the private investment community on current and future capability gaps will provide alternative finance streams and is crucial to energizing this vital portion of the defense industrial base to act akin to tech scouts for our warfighters.

Accelerating Momentum

SOF has been a pathfinder for the Department in leveraging AI to support tactical operations against VEOs. SOF pioneered some successful capabilities the Services incorporate today, such as the Project Maven Smart System. To meet the demands of the NDS, SOF view the relationship of data, analytics, and AI as a strategic imperative that will not only create advantages in integrated deterrence for the Joint Force and international partners but also improve our management functions associated with organizing, training, and equipping SOF in the future.

In line with the Deputy Secretary of Defense's 2021 memorandum "Creating Data Advantage," SOF has invested in making our data accessible, linked, and secure. USSOCOM has also deployed more than 50 data stewards throughout the SOF formation, implementing the SOF Data Strategy and establishing initial digital talent capacity in each Headquarters Directorate, USSOCOM Components, and TSOCs. This includes cataloging more than 1,300 SOF data assets in 2023 alone. USSOCOM deployed a mobile education team to provide basic data literacy at the Headquarters and each of our subordinate Commands. Additionally, USSOCOM has

invested in modernizing our digital infrastructure to scale SOF's ability to leverage modern data management platforms and tools.

SOF are exploring the application of data, analytics, and AI for mission and management impact. USSOCOM recently developed a capability to internalize, transform, and transport data to fuse with intelligence and enhance analysis. USSOCOM CTF analysts are using advanced commercial tools to identify illicit cryptocurrency transactions and combine that analysis with other types of government and commercial data to illuminate and disrupt illicit networks globally. The operational application of AI focuses on augmenting human capacity in the tactical environment. Additionally, SOF intelligence units seek to develop machine learning and AI as a force multiplier for processing, exploiting, and disseminating multiple forms of information.

SOF data needs and use cases remain nested with the rest of the Department. This partnership and additional investment drive insights on various use cases across logistics, readiness, acquisition, force planning, financial and budget issues. Most importantly, SOF are closely aligned with Departmental policy on developing trustworthy AI. Specifically, algorithmic development in support of autonomy efforts will closely adhere to Departmental policy. As SOF pursue advanced AI models, such as large language models and generative AI, SO/LIC and USSOCOM will ensure it does so in full compliance with test and evaluation requirements. AI capabilities can provide a decisive advantage; as a result, SOF is committed to the ethical development and incorporation of these capabilities for the Nation.

CONCLUSION

Your SOF stand ready to meet the complex challenges of this decisive decade with specially assessed and selected personnel, enabled by cutting-edge capabilities and training. Decades of problem-solving, courage, and relentless determination, attest to SOF's ability to prepare the global operating environment, contributing to integrated deterrence. SOF's unique capabilities generate options that enable the Joint Force to prevail while preserving the Nation's strategic focus. Whether creating dilemmas for our competitors, countering coercion, reassuring allies and partners, disrupting VEOs or responding to crises, SOF provide a decisive advantage for the Nation. SO/LIC and USSOCOM will continue to provide the leadership and advocacy necessary to ensure that your SOF remain the world's most highly skilled and capable special operations force. The men and women of Special Operations are grateful for your continued support.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Fenton.
General Haugh, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL TIMOTHY D. HAUGH, USAF, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CYBER COMMAND; DIRECTOR, NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY; CHIEF, CENTRAL SECURITY SERVICE

General HAUGH. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to testify beside Hon. Chris Maier and General Bryan Fenton.

Joining me today is Chief Master Sergeant Kenneth Bruce, the U.S. Cyber Command and National Security Agency's senior enlisted leader. We are honored to represent the men and women of U.S. Cyber Command.

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and increasing interconnectedness, cyberspace has emerged as a vital domain for protecting our national security. The People's Republic of China is our greatest strategic competitor and poses unique challenges due to its advanced cyber capabilities, state-sponsored cyber operations around the globe, and a strategic focus on leveraging cyberspace for military, economic, and political purposes.

Russia's cyber espionage campaigns prioritize sensitive U.S. Government and military infrastructure and information and spread

disinformation campaigns to influence public opinion and undermine our democratic processes.

Iran, North Korea, terrorist organizations, and transnational criminal groups also challenge U.S. interests in cyberspace and are engaged in ongoing efforts to exploit vulnerabilities in U.S. networks, conduct influence operations, and erode our national security interests.

With cyber operations becoming more sophisticated and frequent it is vital to evolve our capabilities against new and novel threats. I am confident Cyber Command is well postured to meet the ever-evolving challenges we face today, creating advantage for the Department and for the Nation.

Our mission is to direct, synchronize, and coordinate cyberspace planning and operations to defend and advance national interests in collaboration with domestic and international partners. We defend forward by countering cyber threats, before they can reach U.S. networks and critical infrastructure. These proactive defensive measures, ranging from network hardening and threat hunting to information sharing bolster the resilience of our systems and foil potential cyberattacks before they can materialize.

We are aligned with the National Defense Strategy and the DOD's Cyber Strategy to protect Department of Defense information systems, support joint force commanders with cyberspace operations, and defend the Nation from significant cyberattacks.

I am excited with what 2024 means for the maturation of U.S. Cyber Command. This is a year of opportunity for us, and I would like to thank Congress for the service-like enhanced budgetary control authorities granted by the 2022 NDAA, and enacted in the 2024 appropriation. This authority creates tighter alignment between requirements in acquisition, which results in faster capability and fielding to our cyber mission force.

Since Cyber Command's elevation in 2018 to a unified combatant command, Cyber Command has worked hard to make the most of its authorities, resources, and support. Of those authorities, none is as vital to national security and the command as Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which is essential for identifying malicious cyber actors and protection of the Nation and the Department of Defense. I am confident we are successful in our mission each and every day, thanks to our people, our innovation, and our partnerships.

My top three priorities that ensure we deliver outcomes against national priorities in foreign intelligence and cybersecurity. First, our strength lies in our people, skilled cyber warriors who are dedicated to protecting the Nation from threats posed by our rivals and adversaries in cyberspace. We win because of our people.

Second, Cyber Command remains committed to a relentless approach on innovation, to strengthen our military now and into the future. Our investment in technological innovation is key to maintaining our overmatch against our adversaries.

Last, Cyber Command maintains our competitive advantage through sustained and deliberate partnerships. In addition to the unique partnership with the National Security Agency, Cyber Command further embraces a team approach, working with my fellow combatant commanders and our agency partners, collaborating

with academic and industry experts, and cooperating with our allies and partners by establishing collective security around the globe.

I am extremely proud of the efforts that Cyber Command has achieved and the direction we are headed. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Timothy D. Haugh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL TIMOTHY D. HAUGH

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for your support and for the opportunity to represent the men and women of U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM). I am honored to appear beside Hon. Christopher Maier, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, and General Bryan Fenton, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the current strategic landscape, the accomplishments of the Command in 2023, and the opportunities ahead in 2024. This is a year of opportunity for USCYBERCOM as we create enduring advantage for the Joint Force, our partners, and the Nation. Our Command is maturing and innovating to perform its missions as threats and technology change. Authorities granted by Congress and the progress made by my predecessors are foundational to the Command's current and future success. Advantage in cyberspace goes to the entity postured to understand and anticipate changes in the environment and act on fleeting opportunities with speed, scale, agility, and precision. Understanding changes across the threat and technology landscapes will continue to drive Command initiatives.

In that context, we have worked hard to make the most of the authorities, resources, and support that USCYBERCOM has received since its elevation to a unified Combatant Command in 2018. We optimized our force and operations to contest adversaries working to gain strategic advantage in and through cyberspace below the level of armed conflict. Recent events have shown how quickly new technologies can change the dynamics in cyberspace and also how rapidly competition can escalate into conflict. USCYBERCOM must be ready, which means added expectations for our force and capacity. I will explain in more detail what we are doing to address this challenge.

WHO WE ARE

The Cyber Mission Force (CMF) is the premier cyberspace force. Each of the Armed Services contributes servicemembers to the CMF and they are the key to its success. Each one of the Service Cyber Component Commanders also serve as Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber Commanders reporting to the Commander of USCYBERCOM. Additionally, the command works closely with Coast Guard Cyber Command within the Department of Homeland Security. Finally, it is important to note our DOD-wide components: our sub-unified command—the Cyber National Mission Force-Headquarters (CNMF-HQ)—along with our Joint Task Force Ares, and our Joint Force Headquarters-DOD Information Network (JFHQ-DODIN).

The National Security Agency (NSA) is our closest partner; our roles, missions, and responsibilities of USCYBERCOM complement those of the NSA, and vice versa. In 2022, the Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence sponsored a study of the dual-hat leadership arrangement under which I serve as both the Commander of USCYBERCOM and the Director of the NSA. The study concluded that protecting our national security would be more costly and less decisive if NSA and USCYBERCOM were led by two different leaders, and that the dual-hat arrangement produces better outcomes for the Nation. The Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff subsequently determined to maintain the arrangement and we are now focused on ensuring an enduring and sustainable dual-hat arrangement.

Our servicemembers and civilians are aligned to the National Defense Strategy. We foster Integrated Deterrence through campaigning and building enduring advantage across the force by reviewing force generation, accelerating needed technology, and investing in our people. Our Code is “we win with people.” USCYBERCOM personnel come to work every day to counter highly capable and determined adversaries who seek to harm the United States and its allies above and below the threshold of armed conflict. We strengthen warfighting advantage so we are prepared for conflict; strategic advantage below armed conflict, and decision advantage

for policymakers and military commanders in strategic competition. We amplify the impact of Federal, military, foreign, and private sector partner activities and synergize how our Nation applies all instruments of national power against adversaries.

USCYBERCOM executes four assigned missions. We defend the Nation from malicious cyberspace actors who threaten critical infrastructure and democratic processes. We defend Department of Defense Information Networks (DODIN) to ensure mission advantage for the DOD. We integrate options and capabilities into Combatant Command campaigns and plans, posturing to support the Joint Force across the conflict spectrum, and, we increase DOD cyber effectiveness through collaboration with allies and partners.

SHIFTING THREATS

The United States and our allies face sophisticated cyber threats from both State and non-State actors. Malicious cyber actors are difficult to observe and attribute. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russia Federation have integrated cyber attack capabilities into military planning and operations to gain advantage during a crisis or conflict. In addition, Beijing, Moscow, and Tehran increasingly use social media and state-sponsored disinformationsites, both overt and covert, to shape narratives and sow confusion. We are particularly concerned with adversaries probing and exploiting our military and intelligence networks, compromising the U.S. defense industrial base networks in order to steal weapon system technology and accessing or attempting to compromise U.S. critical infrastructure. Additionally, our adversaries are targeting social media to coerce our personnel and monitor troop movements of U.S. Forces.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC is our pacing challenge. The PRC is the only competitor with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity, to reshape the international order. The PRC is our closest competitor in cyberspace and central to the global technology supply chain; it employs the world's largest cyberspace operations workforce and an even larger set of enablers in its defense, cybersecurity, and information technology industries.

USCYBERCOM is laser focused on the strategic and operational challenge the PRC presents in cyberspace. We seek in particular to support USINDOPACOM deter conflict and defend its area of responsibility, and to give ADM Aquilino the tools he needs to perform his missions. Additionally, we work daily to counter PRC-based cyber threats to our Homeland, allies, and partners. We are particularly focused on defending against the PRC's persistent access and pre-positioning for attack on U.S. critical infrastructure systems. We will do everything we can to deter the PRC from using these accesses to attack the United States. Our Command understands the value our allies and partners bring and will continue to work closely with them to counter PRC strategic intent. We have prioritized deterring and countering aggression both in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility and globally. Overseeing this effort is the China Outcomes Group (COG), a USCYBERCOM-NSA collaboration illustrative of the value of our dual-hat command relationship. The COG enhances intelligence insights, improves cybersecurity, and delivers operational outcomes in support of Joint Force commanders and for the Nation.

Russia Federation

Russia is an acute threat to the free and open global system. Moscow violates international norms with its continuing aggression in Ukraine, threatening the peace and stability of Europe. Moscow's need for more weapons and munitions has Russia buying arms from Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in violation of international sanctions. Indeed, Russia is strengthening ties with the PRC, Iran, and the DPRK to bolster its defense and commercial complexes, and this growing alignment poses a major challenge to the United States and our partners.

Russia's military and intelligence cyber forces are capable and persistent. Their focus on the conflict in Ukraine has diverted, but not ended, their worldwide intelligence and operational efforts in support of Moscow's foreign policy. Russian actors also attempt to divide Western allies and undermine them both abroad and internally. Moscow likely views the upcoming U.S. election as an opportunity for malign influence and has previously targeted elections in the United States and Europe. We assess they will most likely do so again in this year's elections.

In collaboration and coordination with USEUCOM, USCYBERCOM works with allies and partners to support Ukraine's independence and the success of its resistance to the Russian invasion. USCYBERCOM has collaborated with military and civilian partners since the crisis began in order to strengthen the DODIN's security

and defenses, enhance the resilience of our NATO Allies, and assure the defense of our critical infrastructure, especially our nuclear command and control.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran's growing expertise and willingness to conduct malicious cyber operations make it a threat to the security of U.S. and allied networks. Iranian actors aggressively collect intelligence via the cyber domain, and back Tehran's objectives through cyber attacks, cyber-enabled propaganda, and regime control of domestic Internet access. We assess Iran particularly seeks to increase operations and targeting of industrial control systems to disrupt critical infrastructure.

USCYBERCOM supports USCENTCOM in its work to deny and deter Iran. In addition, from the outset of the Israel-Hamas war, USCYBERCOM has supported significant efforts to bolster the cyber defenses of Israel and other regional partners. The Command has focused on securing key networks in the region, and provided actionable information, insights, and options to policymakers.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The DPRK maintains increasingly capable cyber forces comprising both a growing cyber force within its borders and DPRK information technology workers living abroad. Pyongyang's use of cyberspace to collect intelligence, circumvent sanctions, and generate illicit revenue through cryptocurrency exploitation likely supports the regime's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, affecting regional and global security.

Much as with Iran, USCYBERCOM works in alignment with USINDOPACOM's regional objectives of deterring war on the Peninsula and impairing the DPRK's ability to violate sanctions. In addition, the Command is working in support of national security objectives wherever DPRK cyber actors are seeking to counter allied global security interests.

Non-State Actors

Non-State actors remain a threat in cyberspace. Cyber criminals, some operating from Russia and with ties to Russian military and intelligence services, continue to find new victims in the United States and globally. USCYBERCOM and the NSA enable efforts by the Department of the Treasury, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other partners to disrupt ransomware, cryptocurrency theft, and other criminal activities. In addition, violent extremist groups still operate in cyberspace. Though their capabilities have been eroded, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups maintain the intent to target Americans. Our Joint Force Headquarters-Cyber (Marines) works in conjunction with U.S. military and diplomatic efforts, and with allies and partners, to disrupt propaganda and mobilization online as well as to provide critical intelligence.

Technology Change

Technologies change rapidly, with the private sector driving many innovations. Automation, autonomy, and artificial intelligence proceed apace, boosting collection, detection, exploitation, maneuver, and command and control at ever greater speed and scale. Our allies, partners, and adversaries are all tracking and propelling this progress. For example, PRC investments in AI, cloud computing, 5G, and related technologies, coupled with the PRC's smart cities initiatives and extensive industrial base, guide its development and deployment of big data and AI for strategic advantage. Finally, we project that both the PRC and Russia will use artificial intelligence to develop autonomous cyber weapon systems to optimize offensive cyber operations.

USCYBERCOM IN 2023

USCYBERCOM's overarching responsibility is to defend the Nation in and through the global and interconnected domain of cyberspace. Over the last 2 years we expanded our "Set the Theater" efforts to defend military systems and the data that they convey and store, which in turn provide warning, situational awareness, and synchronization and sustainment for our fellow Combatant Commands in their respective geographic and functional areas of responsibility. In addition, we now work more intensively across the Joint Force and with a variety of partners to secure networks and the critical infrastructure that enable national security—what we call "Setting the Globe." Every Combatant Command operational plan across the Department assumes that our leaders and commanders can communicate orders and data securely. It is our job to ensure that foreign adversaries cannot impair that connectivity or decisionmakers' trust in its security.

The Cyber National Mission Force conducts missions to counter malicious cyberspace activities, supporting all aspects of our defend-the-nation mission set. CNMF

personnel have deployed 22 times to 17 countries in partner-enabled, hunt forward operations that constrained adversary freedom of maneuver, supported our partners' efforts to increase cyber defenses, and generated important insights for our defense. For the first time in the history of the Command there were active hunt forward operations occurring simultaneously in all Geographic Command AORs. These missions led to public releases of more than 90 malware samples for analysis by the Nation's cybersecurity community. Such disclosures can make billions of Internet users around the world safer on-line, and frustrate the military and intelligence operations of authoritarian regimes.

Enhancing the security of government, private sector, and critical infrastructure systems grows ever more imperative. Foreign adversaries continuously update how they operate, and frequently work through American-owned networks and devices. USCYBERCOM works in partnership with the Military Departments Counterintelligence organizations, the FBI-led National Counterintelligence Task Force, and DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), sharing actionable intelligence that helps counter adversary activities, making them more expensive and less consequential. Consistent with congressional support, USCYBERCOM is sharing information with industry to help bolster their ability to defend themselves against exploitation by malicious cyber actors, and to share more broadly the insights that both our industry partners and we gain from our collaboration. Our UNDERADVICE program, a voluntary collaboration with dozens of private partners, links cybersecurity expertise across industry and government. It has led to dozens of operational successes to impose cost on our adversaries, and enabled network owners to eradicate the threats from their systems. Due to the foresight of Congress, USCYBERCOM has enhanced authority to share information with private sector information technology and cybersecurity entities, enabling industry to defend itself better.

USCYBERCOM and NSA are working with partners to counter foreign influence or interference in our upcoming elections. The prospect of undermining our democratic processes is too tempting for some foreign regimes and actors. The combined USCYBERCOM-NSA Elections Security Group (ESG) began working well before the start of the primary season to coordinate cybersecurity, intelligence, and operations, to better enable domestic partners to defend electoral processes. We are committed to supporting the interagency effort to ensure election contests across our states and territories proceed from caucuses to certifications without effective foreign influence. Let me assure you that our mission focus is foreign actors overseas. We shall work with scrupulous regard for the privacy and civil liberties of U.S. persons and in an objective, non-partisan manner as we have for the past 6 years.

USCYBERCOM IN 2024

USCYBERCOM campaigns in and through cyberspace to support national strategic goals in competition and set conditions for the Joint Force to deter and prevail in crisis and armed conflict. In 2024, we will create advantage for the warfighter, the Department, our partners, and the Nation through enhancing readiness, implementing Service-like authorities, and advancing mission partnerships. Sustaining cyberspace operations at-scale against determined and capable adversaries was a requirement not fully projected when the Department established USCYBERCOM in 2010. We needed and received additional authorities and resources for this effort from 2018 onward. The foundation has been set, but now we must build on it.

We have undertaken an initiative we call "CYBERCOM 2.0" to develop a bold set of options to present to the Secretary of Defense on the future of USCYBERCOM and DOD cyber forces. To maximize capacity, capability, and agility, we are addressing readiness and future force generation. Provisions on readiness and force generation in recent National Defense Authorization Acts provide an opportunity for the Department to define the next decade of growth, impact, and warfighting outcomes by modernizing the cyber force, enshrine mechanisms for services/secretary-like oversight, and shape the future of USCYBERCOM.

The Enhanced Budgetary Control (EBC) authority granted by Congress is transformational for the Command. When fully implemented with our fiscal year 2024 appropriation to USCYBERCOM, it entrusts more than \$2 billion in DOD budget authorities to USCYBERCOM, and streamlines how we engage the Department's processes. EBC is already paying dividends in the form of tighter alignments between authorities, responsibility, and accountability in cyberspace operations. Greater accountability, in turn, facilitates faster development and fielding of capabilities.

Agile acquisition is crucial to creating advantage for our commanders, component elements, and operators. The most important effort in this regard is our Joint Cyber Warfighting Architecture (JCWA), an integrated system of systems with associated

capabilities that facilitate the full-spectrum of cyberspace missions and foster overmatch against evolving, sophisticated, and motivated adversaries. JCWA is accelerating tool development and data flows within and across the Command and mission partners. In 2024, the Command will partner with the Services and DARPA (among others) to ensure our acquisition strategies can achieve agility, scale, and precision at cyber-relevant speed.

USCYBERCOM recently received the JCWA systems engineering and integration (SE&I) authority from the Office of the Under-Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions & Sustainment (OUSD (A&S)). The SE&I authority will allow USCYBERCOM to define the interoperability standards between the subcomponents of JCWA, currently managed by the Services. In addition, OUSD (A&S) is working with USCYBERCOM to establish Program Executive Office (PEO) JCWA and provide milestone decision authority/decision authority at the appropriate point as the PEO grows in size and capability.

All of these efforts begin with people. We must hire and retain the right talent and keep our personnel ready to meet the challenges of competition and conflict in and through cyberspace and the information environment. We are working to grow uniformed cyber leaders at all levels, up to and including the officers who will eventually succeed me in this post. The staffing and training of our teams improves every year, and the Command's cyber readiness system is now able to ingest data directly from the Defense Readiness and Reporting System without manual input. USCYBERCOM's authorities as Joint Cyberspace Trainer will enable Joint training standards across the entire Department, boosting its ability to defend networks while enabling CMF teams to focus on hunting and contesting foreign adversaries. Additionally, over the past year, we have worked to fill our civilian billets, driving down security and personnel processing times by 25 percent and accelerating hiring actions to fill more than 250 vacancies across the Command. We are using special hiring authorities offered in 10 U.S.C. 4092 to attract top technical talent to join USCYBERCOM. We have made job offers to key experts and look forward to hiring more in 2024. Indeed, we are maximizing use of DOD Cyber Excepted Service authority to streamline civilian hiring and offer competitive employment incentives.

This year will mark the first year in which the Department of the Army is acting as the Combatant Command Support Agent (CCSA) for USCYBERCOM. The Army's military and civilian leaders have been superb in managing this transition and making sure our civilians experience this as a seamless and transparent process. USCYBERCOM is also exploring innovative ways to enhance our operations using the expertise resident in the National Guard and Reserves. We operate side-by-side daily with activated members of the Reserve Component integrated into our teams, and we engage National Guard units on State Active Duty and State Partnership Program engagements.

Strong partnerships with government, industry, academia, and foreign colleagues amplify our effectiveness and create advantages in turn for our partners. Our Components, when working in unison with diplomatic, military, law enforcement, homeland security, and intelligence capabilities, make a powerful combination that can disrupt the plans of malicious cyber actors wherever they hide. In addition, our Regional Cybersecurity and Engagement Strategy in the Indo-Pacific will guide efforts with partners such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea to counter and contest foreign adversaries.

Our Academic Engagement Network (AEN) of more than 120 institutions is unlocking new partnerships and bringing fresh ideas to our mission challenges. The AEN is able to tap into a broad knowledge base to encourage in-depth analysis in areas where we lack expertise. Through Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) and Education Partnership Agreements (EPAs), USCYBERCOM is formalizing and enhancing its AEN relationships. USCYBERCOM signed its first EPA with Norwich University in November 2023, and USCYBERCOM signed an EPA and a CRADA with the University of Missouri—Kansas City (UMKC) this January.

Finally, in an environment transformed by Artificial Intelligence and big data, operational and strategic advantage will accrue to the side that achieves and sustains superiority in collecting and ingesting data, building models and algorithms, and deploying and updating them at-speed and scale—while also denying the same to adversaries. We are focused on ensuring our data and analytic infrastructures deliver advantage over adversaries, and that those systems have deep resilience that enables them to function even under attack. The Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act called on DOD and USCYBERCOM to develop a 5-year AI Roadmap for adoption of AI for cyberspace operations. Finalized in September 2023, this AI roadmap enables DOD and USCYBERCOM to accelerate adoption and scale capabilities across the Joint Force. We have employed forms of AI for years now in

various aspects of our work, and we know that people, data, organization, and infrastructure are critical elements to future success. Our collaboration with more than a dozen partner organizations has fostered a community to drive Roadmap implementation in three main areas: delivering AI capabilities for all cyberspace mission sets; countering AI threats and exploiting emerging opportunities; and enabling AI adoption. We recognize the need to employ multiple innovation strategies to achieve speed, agility, and scale in operations, capability development, data sharing, and procurement.

CONCLUSION

USCYBERCOM creates advantage for the Joint Force, for the Department, for our partners at home and abroad, and most of all for the Nation. We work every day against capable and determined cyber actors, many of them serving adversary military and intelligence services. Our operational experience reinforces the importance of campaigning globally in and through cyberspace across the conditions of competition, crisis, and armed conflict. The Command now has ample authorities to plan, program, budget, and execute the Program Objective Memorandum; control budgets; and set and validate requirements. It has a mandate to partner with the services to organize, train, and equip the force. Fully executing the tasks assigned to us with the significant new resources and authorities Congress and the executive branch have provided is bringing us closer to operating with the speed, scale, agility, and precision that the cyber strategic environment demands. We must realize our full potential in creating advantage. We will collaborate, innovate, and accelerate for future success.

The men and women at USCYBERCOM are grateful for the support this Committee has given to our Command. Our servicemembers and civilians look forward to demonstrating how well they can manage their responsibilities and accomplish their missions to strengthen our Nation's security. With continued strong partnership with Congress, I know we will succeed. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Haugh.

Mr. Secretary and General Fenton, you referred to, in your opening statement, a GAO report, and they made several recommendations, one to develop a staffing model for SOLIC, two, implement a systematic approach for identifying necessary updates to DOD policy, and third, clarifying the service sector-like responsibilities.

Could you comment, both of you, on the progress that has been made in those regards?

Mr. MAIER. Yes, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question, and again thank you, in particular, for your and this Committee's continued support of the service secretary-like role that SOLIC has under section 922.

I think the GAO report is on the mark. It highlights a number of what might be seen as more tactical things we need to do in terms of building out the force that works for me, that is indeed the people who go in the room in the Pentagon and talk to the programs and resourcing side. The SOF enterprise has a great reputation on the operation and policy side. It is much more challenging to characterize the impact of special operations to the elements that are determining priorities of budget, how to fit SOF into wargames, how to include SOF in experimentation, and this is particularly important as we develop a future warfighting concept.

So I think, as I have said in previous years in testifying in front of you, Mr. Chairman, I think we are moving in a good direction at this point. I think we seek irreversible momentum, but even with the support of Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks I do not think we have achieved that degree of momentum. Many of these advances are reversible, so I think I would very much continue to support the advocacy of this Committee and your partners

on the House Armed Services Committee who continue to, I think, see the value of SOLIC.

So we embrace all the comments in the GAO report, and indeed have moved out on many of those, sir.

Chairman REED. General Fenton, your perspective about the value of the SOLIC, please.

General FENTON. Chairman, vital is what I would call it from the perspective of the SOCOM Commander perspective. I think it goes against really two parts. First, the service-like side of SOCOM and SOLIC, which is a tide that in some ways really lifts all boats, when we think about, in the SOCOM enterprise, budget, advocacy, the work we are doing in technology, and certainly relationships with not only the Department writ large but the Congress, and the American people. It is very, very important for us that SOLIC is at the lead.

I think on the ops and policy side, as well, which we have a huge stake in, as you know, critical, to have Secretary Maier in those discussions, understanding what the SOCOM team has put forward in terms of concepts and operations, and leading not only OSD through how SOCOM is thinking about it but certainly when we are required, with interagency coordination. So I would just call all of that very, very vital or critical for the SOCOM team in the way SOLIC does what it does.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Haugh, first let me commend you for your rather clear support of Section 702. I think also it is critical, and hopefully we can get it done, and that is a feeling I think that is shared by everyone on this panel.

One of the areas we have to look at it is the Cyber Operations Forces, to improve their readiness and also enhance budget control. Is that being used to accelerate that readiness?

General HAUGH. Senator, enhanced budget control is, from the authority that you have now given us, it allows us to now control the requirements—what are the things our force needs, how do we allocate the resources from U.S. Cyber Command against that, and then allows us to be able to prioritize how that gets build and used, things like our persistent cyber training environment, being able to increase that and be able to focus on readiness, on the things that matter most to our force.

Chairman REED. You feel that you are making progress with the operations forces?

General HAUGH. Last year you required us to do a readiness evaluation. We identified five things that were really around personnel administration policies of the services. We have seen them respond to those particular requests, and we have seen a jump in our readiness. I look forward to being able to talk through in more detail about how each service has been able to respond to our requests.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Senator WICKER, please.

Senator WICKER. General Fenton, you made a great recruiting statement in your opening remarks, and I do appreciate that. Let me ask you, though, about the 14 percent cut in purchasing power. This will be to both General Fenton and Secretary Maier.

Top line budget has remained flat since 2019. A cut of approximately 14 percent, when adjusted for inflation. This comes on top of multiple rounds of cuts to Special Operations Force, approximately 700 beginning in 2023, and another approximately 3,000 beginning in fiscal year 2025.

Agree or disagree and comment with this statement: On the one hand, the rationale for reductions is that SOCOM grew significantly in the aftermath of 9/11 to account for counterterrorism requirements, and now counterterrorism is no longer a priority. On the other hand, the reality is that SOCOM is responsible for, number one, supported integrated deterrence efforts against China, Russia, and Iran, and number two, countering global terrorist groups, and number three, crisis response.

So General, you first. Comment on that and tell us which side you come down on.

General FENTON. Senator, I strongly come down aligned with the side that says we have, at SOCOM, three big mission buckets for the Department of Defense, given to us by the Secretary of Defense—integrated deterrence, and all that entails, and I am happy to talk a bit more about that; countering terrorism, because we absolutely know that ISIS, al Qaeda, and Al-Shabaab have not gone away, to include their ideology, which is still running around unconstrained, and we are responsible in a big way with partners to get after that; and then crisis response, which we call a secret obligation, to be out the door very quickly, as a SOCOM team, to either recover diplomats of ours and partners and allies under duress, or rescue hostages, and we have to do all three of those in a very big way, in an environment where those requirements are going up on both spectrums.

Senator WICKER. Well, does that mean that you are able to absorb a 14 percent cut in purchasing power and in your budget?

General FENTON. Senator, I would say, probably like all colleagues that have been here before me, a 14 percent reduced buying power, whether based on inflation, supply chain, many other things, absolutely hurts, and it causes us to move, as you should expect us to do, toward making hard choices. Certainly when those choices are finished, and we keep the SOCOM enterprise in equilibrium, being more purposeful and impactful with less, and I think that each and every day that is what we remain focused on.

Senator WICKER. Mr. Secretary.

Mr. MAIER. So Ranking Member, this is pretty straightforward. I think if you look at even just the last year, we have had a number of crisis response requirements that we have had to meet. I think everybody knows that the counterterrorism mission continues to be a priority. It says that in our National Defense Strategy. You don't have to look much farther than the attack in Moscow in recent weeks to know that ISIS-Khorasan is out there, and then we have a mission to help the Department and the joint force on the pacing threat of China and the acute threat of Russia.

I think fundamentally when you look at the three things that we have to balance—missions, we are going to do the missions. We are going to carry out these missions, many of them Presidentially directed. Readiness, we do everything we can to make sure our forces go out the door exquisitely prepared. That is what makes us so

much better than our adversaries. Then third is modernization. That is what gets squeezed when there isn't as much to go around. We know that, and we take a risk-informed approach to this. But that is the real impact, sir.

Senator WICKER. Okay, and perhaps you want to supplement that.

General HAUGH. There is CYBERCOM 2.0. Is that a specific program or is this just another name for what you are supposed to do anyway, and that is top-to-bottom review of what you are doing? Also, you have been at this for a short time, but why didn't you ask for any unfunded requirements? I find it hard to believe that there is nothing else important that you need that isn't already being asked for.

General HAUGH. Senator, I will take the second question first. In terms of how we approached our budget, this is the first year that we are going to execute enhanced budget control. The President submitted a budget for around \$2.9 billion for U.S. Cyber Command. We were marked down to around \$2.6 in that budget.

What we really have heard, uniformly, from various elements of Congress, from the Administration, and from the Department, they want us to demonstrate that we can successfully execute the dollars that we have received. We are confident that we will. We have got a strong plan, and within the Department, leveraging the Washington Headquarters Service to execute the dollars.

But we believe the President's budget and what has been submitted for fiscal year 2025 is what we need. So a fully funded budget that would eliminate those marks for 2025 would really help us close the gap in terms of the dollars we need to execute.

Senator WICKER. Take on the record because I am way over. Are there any additional tools, resources, or hiring authorities you need to help develop the next iteration of the military cyber forces?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator MANCHIN, please.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and General Fenton, I was surprised to learn during our discussion in my office a few weeks ago that some believe our special forces only perform a counterterrorism role. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we spoke. For the public watching this hearing, our special forces were created out of a need to fight using unconventional tactics that we all call irregular warfare.

While the counterterrorism fight is still ongoing, countering our adversaries like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, and the non-State actors is the bread and butter of irregular warfare concepts, which our special forces continually develop.

If you would like to expand on that, what we are doing and the need for our special forces, in making sure that we have the support to be able to compete on the highest level in the world.

General FENTON. Senator, thanks first for the conversation in the office that day. Really helpful for us to be able to discuss with you where we have, as a SOCOM entity, incredible capability across the full range of missions—the missions of integrated deterrence, great power competition, where you would see us, across the world today even, with 6,000 special operations teammates in over

80 countries, developing relationships, building capability and capacity for those partners and allies. Frankly, also getting a great deal of information and understanding themselves about that environment, all in an effort to (a) prevent any great power conflict by building partners and allies, and certain if, indeed, at some point conflict is on the horizon, prepare—

Senator MANCHIN. If I could ask you one more question on that, because we talked briefly. The cost-effectiveness of using the National Guard, in the special ops we have in the National Guard, how does that benefit you?

General FENTON. Senator, thank you for that, as well. I would start with the National Guard across the Department of Defense, with State partner programs and many other factors, it is a blessing. It is a very unique capability; we have been grateful. In special ops even more. With 19th and 20th Special Forces Group, in particular, in the Army, and National Guard, and Special Force Reserves throughout the other components, it is a key part of who we are as a total component, special operations organization.

Senator MANCHIN. Also we spoke multiple times about the need for an East Coast training venue for special forces instead of these units spending more time and half of their training budgets on transporting themselves to the West Coast, to other training venues where they have to jump through hoops for approval on basic training needs to meet their readiness goals.

Do you believe an East Coast training venue capable of hosting readiness events would be beneficial, cost effective, and current to the future Special Operations Force?

General FENTON. Senator, I think the Department—and I will defer to Secretary Maier if there are certainly additional comments—is doing a study to look at training events and efforts across the continental United States. I would absolutely align myself with we need all types of training locations and events for multi-domain, interdisciplinary, and certainly to see different environments and terrain.

Senator MANCHIN. Let me just say this. For states like myself that don't have a military compound, but we are made up of National Guard forces that are very strong and very diligent, and I think Secretary Maier understands it very well, they are committed to adding value and also readiness and readiness operations and so many of your needs. So I hope that you would look toward that.

General FENTON. Absolutely will, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. General Haugh, Locked Shields is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection exercise that work with foreign militaries around the world. Last April, the West Virginia National Guard, under the leadership of the Defense Information Security Agency, hosted, in Morgantown, West Virginia, more than 180 technical cyber experts and supporting representatives from the various Federal and State agencies to compete on behalf of the United States, Romanian team in the world's largest international cyber defense exercise, run virtually by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia.

I don't know how much you are involved in that, you are aware of that, participating. We want you to come. We want you to take charge of this thing and run with it.

General FENTON. Senator, tracking this one very closely. I think Locked Shields is a perfect example of what the DOD Cyber Strategy has asked us to do, which is to focus on partners and allies, and how do we grow the capacity of those partners and allies with the threats that we face in cyberspace. We did have deep involvement in it. We had our Commander of Joint Force Headquarters DODIN was a part of that, and we see that as a perfect example of what we want to do to grow the capacity of our partners.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you. Secretary Maier, to finish up, I am so proud of you being involved in our National Guard in the Martinsburg area. If there is anything that we can do, that you can integrate our expertise that we have in the National Guard. It is not the National Guard of our fathers or our grandfathers, I can assure you. So if you want to comment on that, what it has meant to you to be involved.

Mr. MAIER. Yes, Senator. Thanks very much. Can you get me out of drill this weekend because that would be great.

Senator MANCHIN. I don't think so.

Mr. MAIER. Btu I very much appreciate you acknowledging that, and thanks very much to the West Virginia Air National Guard, of which I am a member, and it continues to support me doing this job and that job.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Manchin.

Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Haugh, I appreciate our discussion on the pressing topic of cyber threats to the United States' critical infrastructure. I appreciate the work that CYBERCOM and NSA have done to share these threats with the public.

As you outline in your Cyber Advisory, cyber organizations linked to China are compromising the communications, energy, transportation, water, and wastewater organization in the United States and its territories. Do you view these attacks as primarily aimed as exfiltrating data or as Chinese cyber actors positioning themselves to cause severe disruptions to U.S. critical infrastructure in advance or during a potential conflict?

General HAUGH. Senator, thank you very much for the question. I think one of the primary things that we see as opportunity at U.S. Cyber Command is to expose these activities to the broadest audience we can, and we do that with all of our partners. Principal to that is the National Security Agency.

In this case I cannot see a reason, from a foreign intelligence perspective, why anyone would target critical infrastructure, so I am very concerned that these would be a pre-positioning for a potential crisis.

Senator FISCHER. As these attacks continue, how is CYBERCOM leveraging its expertise and technical capabilities to alert the Department and the American public and develop mitigation strategies?

General HAUGH. Senator, we start really everything that we look at, if we are seeing a campaign, and how we approach a threatening series of activities, we start with generating insights. How do we understand what is happening and how do we communicate that to the maximum number of organizations possible? How do we enable defense, whether that is partnering with another combatant command, like STRATCOM, when we think about our strategic capabilities, or TRANSCOM, for global logistics, or NORTHCOM, in terms of defense of critical infrastructure, how do we enable their defense?

Then we also deliver options of how we would impose costs, either directly or through our interagency partners. So we approach that at every step, but really what we see as one of the most impactful things is exposing and then giving the techniques for how to identify these activities so they can be countered by multiple organizations.

Senator FISCHER. How is CYBERCOM working with our allies, with our partners, to help them identify these threats, as well, that they might be facing toward their critical infrastructure?

General HAUGH. First, we do the same thing, which is, you will see on many of those cybersecurity advisories, it starts with who do we bring in that will have information, that will help illuminate this threat. In many cases that is industry, and it is also our foreign partners. So on many of those seals across the top of those advisories you will see many nations, and that will include our Five Eyes partners. We have also done them with Japan, and you will see that grow as we continue to expand those partnerships and we share information.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Over the last few decades, U.S. Special Operation Forces have been used primarily for counterterrorism operations. A conflict in the Indo-Pacific, however, would likely look much different.

General Fenton, can you explain to this Committee how you envision Special Operation Forces being used prior to and in a conflict with China?

General FENTON. Senator, I absolutely can, and I will start by saying, in essence, that is what special operations was born for, from the earliest of times, and I think for us we really take it all the way back to the Office of Strategic Services in 1942. It was about giving the allies—and at that point both in the European and Pacific theaters—an advantage, and giving any adversary dilemmas, being behind enemy lines, developing networks, building partners and allies.

That has absolutely transferred to today, and as I like to think about it, with 80 years, or 8 decades of experience, 20 of those being in combat, in the counterterrorism piece, a bit of a SOF renaissance. So what that looks like in many ways today, with the changing character and certainly environment, a number. Partners and allies build continues. Developing capabilities forward, your special operators sensing the environment, and bringing combatant commanders options and advantages they may not otherwise have, in particular with my teammate in CYBERCOM and in SPACECOM as sort of the nexus, that will allow us to get synergy. Also presenting dilemmas and disadvantage to any adversary, al-

most a thousand points of friction, before conflict, to prevent conflict.

I think also hold the remit, as well, for crisis response and counterterrorism, because we can never let those drop.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Secretary Maier, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr. MAIER. I would say, Senator Fischer, what SOF brings to especially a large-scale combat operation type environment is the ability to extend capabilities of the joint force, cyber, space, others, and do in a precise and risk-managed way, and we can do it in very small footprints. That, I think, is going to be incredibly important in the Indo-Pacific, where everybody is going to be looking at their magazine depth and figuring out what is a higher priority target. If you can hide in the noise you have an advantage, ma'am.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our witnesses today for your service.

General Haugh, I want to start with you. Your predecessor, General Nakasone, was very vocal about the need for FISA reauthorization, and you have also talked about Section 702 and the role it has played, for example, in identifying fentanyl supplies from China. Often FISA discussions, when we have them here, we have them in a classified setting, and that does not educate the public about how FISA is helpful.

Recognizing that we are unclassified, can you talk about examples like identifying fentanyl supply chains and others where FISA 702 is extremely helpful?

General HAUGH. Senator, thank you for the question. Section 702 is vital and it is indispensable. It is an authority that has been granted by Congress that allows us to collect on foreign intelligence targets outside of the United States. So the example that we talk about from a fentanyl perspective is our ability to use that authority when a communication is transiting a U.S. service provider, that allows us to be very focused on that foreign intelligence target to bring back information. In this case it allows us to connect dots, connect dots from the precursors as they start in China, and all the way through to the potential criminal organization within Mexico, in this case, where is most of that reporting.

We have produced significant amounts of reporting that allow law enforcement to now look at that from a targeted perspective, leveraging the data we have created in foreign intelligence outside the United States, to be able to then take action to limit risk to the American people.

Senator KAINE. General Haugh, I appreciate that answer. I am glad that we could have that in an open discussion.

General Fenton, you closed your opening testimony very strong, and one of my colleagues said it was promoting joining the ranks, and I think that was the phrase you learned. We want people to join the ranks. It was superb.

I have been running in recently, as I travel across the commonwealth, with a phenomenon that troubles me, and I have been raising it with key military leaders, and that is the phenomenon of a

young person who really wants to join the military. It might be Special Forces, it might be any of the branches of the military, and they go far through the process, and they are qualified, but then they get turned down toward the end of the process over a health issue that seems minor—childhood asthma or a history of allergies. Senator Cotton raised this point yesterday, and I think Senator Mullen raised it, as well.

In my experience in talking to some of these folks is when they get turned down it is just like a no, with no real explanation, and also no encouragement. Because you say we need people to join the ranks, the ranks in our military are uniformed service personnel and DOD civilians, and Guard and Reservists, and our contracting community that provide the supplies and equipment that our military members need.

If somebody gets turned down on a health issue that disqualifies them from serving in a particular service branch, but they want to serve the country, there are still ways for them to serve the country as a civilian or as a part of one of our contractors. I have shipyards in Virginia that are desperate for workers. We made a commitment to sell subs to the Australians in the 2030's. How are we going to meet our own need, much less theirs?

But what I find from a manpower standpoint is while we want to attract the best and the brightest, we often are turning people away who desperately want to serve the country without giving them the other pass, where they can serve. This is not a critique of you. I am just going off the closing argument that you made that was so powerful, that we want people to join the ranks. I sometimes think we don't necessary send that message that the ranks include the broader ecosystem of those who serve and also those who support those who serve, and I am just hoping that all of you might take that to heart as you are contemplating carrying out the important missions we entrust to you.

General FENTON. Senator, I am happy to comment. First, thank you for that, and I think it gets to the heart of why that was in our statement. It really is about service writ large, while, in particular, I can speak to service in the military, but you have laid it out. I also work alongside our incredible civilian teammates in the Department of Defense, incredible teammates across the whole of the interagency of the U.S. Government, from intel agencies and great teammates in Commerce and Treasury, all fantastic, and I imagine having a very valuable journey in their own particular way.

I think, as well, we are out very often, as Special Operations Command, in the communities, seeing mayors, seeing school board teammates, seeing folks who volunteer even for various clubs, and all to make the Nation better.

So it really is a call to all of that and more, Senator, and I appreciate you noting it, and I align myself with the way you laid it out. We would love to see more folks who would give us an opportunity to have their talents and skills, because it goes to the heart of really what we believe in SOCOM—people are number one. It is all about the people.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General. I appreciate that, and I have one more question for you, Secretary Maier. During the pos-

ture hearings last year you submitted written testimony talking about accelerating SOCOM's wide-ranging modernization efforts. Could you briefly describe how you are doing on the modernization side?

Mr. MAIER. Senator, I think we are doing well. We have distinct advantages in the special operations enterprise, in particular, at SOCOM with an acquisition executive that sits there and is integrated with the operators. So we are able to modernize at a local level.

I think, as already addressed in the previous question about budget, that ends up becoming a pacing function. It is increasingly more expensive to do higher-end combat, higher-end preparations. So we are looking for where we can do more affordable modernization and really, in many cases, building on what is already in the inventory and making it better. We call it "SOF peculiar." We rely on the services for the base and then modernize on top of it for the SOF-specific mission, sir.

So I think we are moving in a good direction. Everybody wishes it went faster. The adversaries are going to require that we move faster so we remain very focused on that, sir.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Maier, Federal Government, and General Haugh, thank you for your service to our Nation. You are responsible for stewarding that portion of our Nation's military that often operates in a gray zone between peace and war. But the actions those men and women under your command execute every day are extraordinarily effective and can even be decisive.

General Fenton, with regard to Special Operations, they are also very dangerous. Even though we talk about it being between peace and war, when we talk about being left of a conflict you still have young men and women that are in harm's way, as evidenced by the loss of 15 of your teammate members most recently.

We sometimes forget that even during those times in which we do not have active and obvious conflict, these young men and women are still in harm's way, and they not only should be acknowledged and respected by not just this Committee but by this country for their sacrifice and their service. I would like to extend our thanks to you and to their families for allowing them to serve when sometimes it looks like it is peacetime but it is not, and that in a very dangerous world they stand on the front line. So please extend to your extended family our thanks for what they offer every single day.

General FENTON. Senator, thank you very much for that. I appreciate any opportunity to talk about how our thoughts and prayers, and now added with yours, and I absolutely know this whole Committee, go out to the families, immediate and extended, and certainly the units that suffer those losses. While our teammates that you just noted gave their ultimate measure of devotion, I think add to that that first, as I mentioned in my opening, that is our sacred obligation to watch after those families, stay committed to them in

a way that you would absolutely expect of us, and we execute, and we are incredibly honored to do that.

On top of that, it is to continue to always, and safely, and deliberately do the type of training we know they will see in their activities in combat or overseas, and to do that in a way that really gets after being almost a protective wrapping around them as they go forward. They are that good, that whatever they see downrange pales in comparison.

So all that and more. Thank you very much for that, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, General, and look, our responsibility here is to provide them with all of the tools and support that they need so that they are never in a fair fight, that they always have, at every opportunity, the upper hand, wherever possible. Nonetheless, it is a very dangerous world, and part of what we sometimes talk about here we forget. This has a real-world impact.

I am going to go right over to General Haugh now because I appreciated your comments about a part of the law that sometimes gets lost in the politics of the day, and that is the reauthorization of 702, which is part of the FISA law that was put in effect so that we could fight terrorism, and so that our young men and women knew exactly what they were getting into whenever possible when they were in harm's way.

General Haugh, you mentioned that it was critical that we reauthorize 702, but I think sometimes, in an open setting, as the Senator from Virginia indicated, we don't get a chance to talk about how critical this is, and you are responsible for cybersecurity and about what happens in terms of our fight. Talk a little bit about what 702 does and what it does not do to the American public.

Misinformation is rampant when we start talking about 702 and the fact that some people think that we spy on American citizens. Can you clarify what is legal and what is not legal to be collected under 702 provisions?

General HAUGH. Yes, Senator, and I think first, I am really comfortable talking about this in an open setting. This is the most transparent intelligence authority we have. It is built with protections for the American people that only things that are authorized collection is foreign intelligence targets operating outside the United States. This authority cannot be used to collect against Americans.

Senator ROUNDS. Say that again. This authority cannot be legally used to collect against American citizens. Is that correct?

General HAUGH. Correct, Senator, and as we collect information against foreign intelligence targets, the way we then operationalize that into intelligence reports is we query that information. So we ask questions of the information, structured in a way to ensure that we are not bringing back any information that was about an American, that may have been incidentally collected.

But there are times when we will do queries about U.S. persons. I will give you an example from cybersecurity. So if we see China attempting to hack something in the United States, and we want to really quickly maneuver to stop that threat, and we see that there is a U.S. company that is the target, in our foreign intelligence collection, we would then query on that company, on their IP address or on specific things we have seen China target.

In doing that, that query about that U.S. entity allows us to really quickly understand what is being attacked, how can we rapidly identify it, and then how can we get that information to that U.S. company so that they can mitigate the attack as quickly as possible. So it allows us a set of protection of civil liberties, it allows to ensure the privacy of Americans, and then it has oversight built in, from the executive branch, the legislative branch, and from the courts, to ensure that we are using it properly.

If there is ever a misuse of that authority there are specific provisions in the upcoming bills that mandate civil and criminal penalties. We take every incident very seriously, we report it to Congress, and we hold individuals accountable if there is misuse.

Senator ROUNDS. I apologize. I see I am getting close on my time here. But would you say that 702 is critical in defending and allowing those young men and women who are in harm's way today, serving overseas, does 702 help to protect them in their day-to-day operations against our adversaries?

General HAUGH. Absolutely, Senator, and when we go to closed session I will give you a very specific example from the last 2 months that it has saved lives.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds, for your thoughtful questioning.

Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Mr. Chairman, I am going to defer to Senator King, and then take the next one.

Chairman REED. Senator King is recognized.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is a human tendency called the "recency effect," and that is to pay most attention to things that happened recently and then sort of lose track.

To put it most bluntly, I am afraid we are taking our eye off the terrorism ball, that because of September 11th is 20 years ago and now we are focused on China and Russia, which I think is appropriate, I just worry that we are losing focus on the threat of terrorism. The recent attack in Moscow indicates that ISIS wants to attack in other countries. There is no doubt that they would like to attack here, and the technology is developing where they can do so.

The thing that keeps me awake at night is nuclear terrorism. If one of these organizations gets their hands on a nuclear weapon, deterrence does not work because they do not have a capital city to worry about. They do not care about dying.

Mr. Secretary, I just hope that you will advocate strongly that we maintain the attention, both in the intelligence community and the Defense Department on the risk of terrorism. It has not gone away.

Mr. MAIER. Senator, your concerns are ones that I share. I have spent most of my career in the counterterrorism community, and I think we have done great things in keeping that threat at a low level. But I think you are recognizing some of the, if you will, asymmetric capabilities in the lack of deterrence of different groups if they get capability. It is something we need to remain very focused on.

I think we sometimes forget that the National Defense Strategy has five elements to it. We like to talk about the PRC and Russia, but one of those is counterterrorism, and has been across the Administrations for a long time.

So if we are taking our own direction, sir, it says that counterterrorism remains a focus for this country.

Senator KING. I just want you to be irritating in the councils of the Defense Department on this issue, and I understand that you are very capability of doing that, so please keep pushing. Because I do not want a hearing here 5 years from now or 3 years that everybody says, "What happened? How did we miss this?"

Mr. MAIER. Yes, sir. Well, I will certainly stay on it, and hopefully I do not have a reputation for being that irritating, but on this issue I think it is very important, sir, so I take your guidance.

Senator KING. Thank you very much.

General Haugh, one of the pillars of the Cyber Strategy is disrupt and dismantle threat actors. My concern is we do not have a deterrence strategy in cyber. We tend to patch, defend, sanction after the fact, but we really do not have a deterrence strategy. I hope that you will pursue "defend forward" and make it "defend aggressively," because if an adversary does not have any concern that they are going to pay any price for a cyberattack, whether it is misinformation in one of our elections or a cyberattack on our financial system or our electric grid, if they do not feel that they are going to pay a price, they are going to go ahead. It is a low-cost option for them. I believe that one of the weaknesses of our Cyber Strategy over the years has been the lack of a credible deterrent, which requires an offensive capability and the adversary fearing the use of that offensive capability by CYBERCOM.

General HAUGH. Senator, I think this is exactly where the Department wants us to go. So when we think integrated deterrence and we think about in cyber space, it is about how do we come together with a bunch of partners that all can make it more difficult for an adversary to operate and to impose costs, as necessary. That can be industry, in terms of ensuring that they are a much more difficult target than they are today.

It is our international partners, so in the DOD Cyber Strategy, which is how do we accelerate our partnerships with those international elements that can be a teammate that assists in the opposing costs, and then it is about how we use the resources we have to generate capabilities that allow us to have the effects that you are discussing. I think those are the areas that we also view in how we think about Cyber Command 2.0, which is how we use all the authorities you have given us to now have the greatest effect for the best interests of the Nation.

Senator KING. Well, as I say, I think the heart of deterrence is capacity and will, but another piece of it is that the adversary has to know about the capacity. Otherwise, it does not deter them.

Right now we are experiencing a sophisticated, consistent, and purposeful misinformation attack from Russia with regard to Ukraine, and it is very reminiscent of the attack of the Nazis in the late 1930's in terms of the pro-Nazi propaganda here in the United States, which went up to and included Members of Congress.

This is an attack. This is an effort to disrupt our political process by a foreign agent, and this is one of the things that the framers of this Constitution most feared, and we have to be active and not just say, "Oh well, it's just the Russians again."

I believe, again, I am advocating a strong response that will make them think twice before they undertake such an attack.

General HAUGH. Senator, I understand, and I do believe that both the PRC and Russia understand our capabilities, and I would like to be able to walk through with you, in the closed session, some examples of that.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King.

Senator ERNST, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks, gentlemen, for being here today and for your continued service to our Nation and for testifying in front of our Committee today. I think the discussion has been very helpful. All of you are playing a pivotal role in defending our country and deterring threats abroad and threats to the Homeland. They are certainly paramount.

So I want to take just a brief moment and recognize the loss of a true American hero that is special to many people within Special Operations Command. Earlier this week we saw the passing of Colonel (Retired) Ralph Puckett, known as the Ranger. He was an incredible human being and the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from the Korean War era. So I want to give my sympathies—I know this Committee will extend them, as well—to Jeannie and the rest of his family. So thank you for that moment.

General Fenton, I am going to start with you. In the current geopolitical landscape, our SOF capabilities are absolutely indispensable in countering emerging threats and advancing our national security interests. Now it is my understanding, and it is something that I have discussed with the Secretary, as well, that cuts to these forces risk compromising our ability to effectively confront adversaries and their actions and maintain stability in key regions.

So General Fenton, can you please speak to the critical role that these forces play in the era of global power competition and how these forces make decisive impacts in strategic engagement.

General FENTON. Senator, I absolutely can, and first thank you for the callout to our hero, Colonel Puckett, and the family.

Senator ERNST. Thank you.

General FENTON. We will pass that along to the entire SOCOM team. Thank you.

I would start with similar to the incredible conversation we had in your office yesterday—and I appreciate your time with us and our Rangers from the Ranger Regiment—laying out how they certainly see the world and integrated deterrence. I think it is a far cry from where folks may believe we only do counterterrorism, but they are intertwined.

Being in a location downrange, even if it is in a counterterrorism capacity, or even for crisis response, also very often has great power competition or integrated strategic kind of knock-on effects that the world is watching, in particular the adversaries, and they know we have the most incredible military, the most incredible special operations in the world.

I think specific to integrated deterrence—and I would be happy to cover just some more details in the closed session—it is about placement and access, partnerships and allies, developing their capabilities, and then bringing that back as operations and advantages to the Secretary of Defense combatant commands, and as disadvantages and dilemmas to any adversaries that oppose us.

Senator ERNST. That is a perfect segue into section 1202. So we saw the section extended in the fiscal year 2020 NDAA, and it will remain in effect until 2025. This has allowed the Department to work with our partners and allies in the irregular warfare space to achieve our U.S. objectives.

Can you briefly describe for the Committee how section 1202 has strengthened our partnerships?

General FENTON. Senator, I can, and first I do want to thank this Committee for substantiating that in law. We appreciate that very, very much. It is yet another option to partner, and for SOCOM, in particular, and for the Department of Defense, partnerships are the pacing item, and that is a very different proposition when we think about what the PRC and Russia do. They have clients and customers. They are parasitic. We like to build partners and allies, friends and family, if I might, and I think this absolutely helps in that arena along with what this Congress has authorized for counterterrorism and 127 Echoes. That authorization, what we do with 333 to build security cooperation capability, all of it adds to a really key piece for us, Senator. That is about the power of partnerships.

Senator ERNST. General Fenton, do you believe more opportunities and support for provisions like section 1202 will provide us an advantage in an era of great power competition?

General FENTON. Senator, I absolutely do, and I appreciate that folks are thinking that way, along with the flexibility we can build into them and that already certainly exists. SOCOM has got a key part in bringing that type of information to this Congress through the Department, but we are very grateful for all of them. At some point I think the more of them, the better, because the more partners, the better, when we get down to it.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely. I agree wholeheartedly, and thank you, gentlemen, very much for being in front of us today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Haugh, as you know, our Federal executive agencies, the military units, rely on the unique and highly specialized workforce in order to support cyber missions. In response to these unique needs the National Security Agency launched a hiring surge in 2023 called the Future-Ready Workforce Initiative. Its goal is to fill 3,000 positions alongside other efforts to retain our current employees.

So my question for you, General, is how effective was this hiring surge, and what are your specific plans to retain the current NSA and CYBERCOM workforce, which is essential for your mission?

General HAUGH. Senator, there is no more important topic than our people, in both National Security Agency and Cyber Command.

So when General Nakasone laid out the goals for a future-ready workforce there were a couple of things. One was related to overall the agency's hiring. The goal was 3,000. We came short of that, but had one of the largest years of hiring in the National Security Agency's history.

What Future-Ready was also built to do was really start to think about our people. How do we do care for our people, particularly those that are overseas? How do we develop leadership training so that we have the best supervision and create an environment that allows us to be innovative and take care of our people and really use the strengths of how we operate as part of our retention?

So I think from those objectives we have made strides in how we onboard. We have reduced the amount of time for hiring. We have got to continue to advance that. That has to be a priority for National Security Agency.

For Cyber Command, we have been given additional authorities from Congress, and now we are starting to leverage those, whether that is hiring data scientists, or it is now within using CES within our partnership with the Army, who is now our responsible personnel element, to be able to fully leverage those authorities. So we are pretty excited about what we are seeing in the trends for both.

Senator PETERS. Great. Great. General Haugh, at the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine we observed a series of high-profile cyberattacks. In fact, according to reports, nearly 50 percent of the destructive Russian cyberattacks against Ukrainian networks occurred in the first 2 months of the war, and often in tandem with kinetic military actions. However, now 2 years later, we have not seen significant cyber operations being deployed to impact the fighting on the ground.

So my question for you, sir, is what specific lessons from the conflict in Ukraine have we learned regarding the Russian employment of cyber operations to support their wider aims in the war?

General HAUGH. I think, Senator, what you saw from the initial were two major things. One was the preparations that Ukraine made. So the work that they did to be able to move their data that was into Western clouds made them more resilient. There are a number of lessons that we can learn from that resiliency. The other is that cyber planning looked an awful lot like all of Russian planning—not well thought out, not integrated.

So I think what we have seen is that while Russia is not quick to learn, they are learning. I think as we have seen the evolution of how they have applied their cyber force, increasingly that force is focused on collection and not trying to destroy thing, in attempting to creating advantage in the information environment. That is an area that we want to continue to help our Ukrainian partners be able to be as resilient as they can, with the best cybersecurity, and we will continue to work closely with EUCOM to enable that.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you, General.

Assistant Secretary Maier, we know that UAS operations are rapidly evolving on the battlefield, and certainly DOD is well positioned to quickly respond to this changing environment to address these threats. But with this in mind, my question is what internal DOD policy changes to airspace management, operational concepts, rules of engagement or tactics are going to be required to optimize

the use of counter-UAS systems, and also, how are you working with the rest of the Department to address some of these acute threats?

Mr. MAIER. Yes, Senator, I think it is one of the top issues certainly for the Secretary of Defense and, of course, me, as well. I think it becomes, in the first instances, understanding what the threats are. They come from a lot of different people, innocent citizens all the way up to malign actors who are actively trying to exploit our defenses here.

I think we have put in place, in the Department, a comprehensive approach to look at the external, outside the United States piece. There are a lot more Federal partners that we work with here domestically, and working out some of that is really where some of the policy fissures are still being worked through.

So we have certain areas where we can do things over U.S. military bases that we cannot do in areas surrounding that, and the ability to create defense in depth is far more challenging because it brings in law enforcement, other Federal entities.

So I think in the first instance we are trying to bring everybody online to understand what the threat is across the entire Federal enterprise, and then from there really be strategic in figuring out where we do need near-term policy changes, sir.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. Thanks to each of you for being here. Let me just start with General Haugh.

When I go back to Florida I get asked a lot of questions about the FBI's violation of 702 and how they surveilled American citizens. I think all of us understand the value of 702, although not many people back home see the value, and all they heard is what the FBI did. I think what frustrates people is they do not hear of anybody being held accountable, and then what they hear is nobody wants to make a change in the bill.

So as the Director of the NSA, how are you ensuring the civil liberties and privacy rights of American citizens are not infringed when your agency uses the 702 authorities, and if you discover somebody made a mistake and did violate the rules, how do you hold them accountable?

General HAUGH. Senator, we think accountability is an important part of the bill that is in front of Congress. It will mandate that the Administration identify minimum penalties from both a civil and a criminal perspective for intentional misuse of this intelligence authority.

From our perspective, in the National Security Agency, we are incredibly proud of our culture of compliance, and that is ingrained. One of the first things I did when I came into the role is I went and I sat with analysts and walked through this process, from how they seek to target information, how they query, how we review it, how we audit it, and how we report any incidents to Congress and to the FIS Court.

As we do that every day, we want to ensure that we are doing it for its intended purpose. It is our Americans that serve every day in the National Security Agency are about the defense of the Amer-

ican people, and that includes their civil liberties, their privacy, and we will continue to be transparent about how we use this authority to defend Americans every day in collection against China, against Russia, counterterrorism threats, and cyber threats that face the Nation every single day.

Senator SCOTT. Have the governments of China, Russia, and Iran decided to be our enemy?

General HAUGH. So I think each of them are not operating in the interests of the United States.

Senator SCOTT. So as a result of that would you recommend that Americans stop buying products made in those countries?

General HAUGH. I think when we look at where things are produced, I think from my perspective that is something I look at every day in terms of who gains benefit. So I think we should definitely be really scrutinizing where those products are coming from.

Senator SCOTT. So China, Russia, and Iran, they have highly capable cyber operations. Do you think they are worried about your offensive cyber capabilities?

General HAUGH. I do, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. General Fenton, do you have the wherewithal to get our hostages out of Gaza?

General FENTON. Sir, first, for your Special Operations Command in concert with Central Command, that is our laser-like focus, bringing those American hostages home, and we absolutely have capabilities, as have been demonstrated for years, in that arena to do just that. We train very hard to do that each and every day. It is our sacred obligation, and we absolutely have demonstrated those capabilities. No adversary should mistake that we could do that anywhere in the world, but in Gaza it is in concert with CENTCOM and our Israeli teammates.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think the President knows you have the capability?

General FENTON. Senator, I am very sure, having briefed him personally on a number of operations of the variety that we have that capability, as does the Secretary of Defense, and certainly as does Secretary Maier.

Senator SCOTT. So would you characterize the need for your services, special operations, increasing or decreasing over the last few years?

General FENTON. Senator, I would absolutely, uncategorically categorize it as increasing, and I will give you a bit of my thoughts on data to prove that. On the combatant command requirements that go across, their desire to have us either an integrated deterrence or in other form factors prior to conflict, that has gone up by about 35 percent over the last 3 years.

In the crisis response arena, defined as going out the door very quickly to rescue someone, recover diplomats, or keep an intense focus on U.S. hostages for future recovery, that has gone up by 150 percent in the last 3 years.

So I absolutely see those requirements going up. I do not think that is a blip on the radar screen. I think that is a pattern that will continue.

Senator SCOTT. Does it frustrate you when your budget does not increase, and I guess the Army just recently decided to cut 3,000 people from special operations. How do you deal with all that?

General FENTON. Senator, first it is in conversation with Secretary Maier and the Secretary of Defense presenting the information that I just laid out for you and the team, in concert with other services who have transformed objectives and also recruiting challenges. We all work together to come up with a final decision through a lens of modernization readiness, making hard choices.

But I do remind folks, Secretary Maier is a key helper and assistant, and all of us are in this together. Those requests and requirements are absolutely going up, in a budget that is flatter with a decreased buying power of 15 to 16 percent because of inflation. It drives us through those hard choices that we should make, and at some point we are, through a threshold of a risk-based approach, we will have to report that we will do less. Yet, at the same time, as resources become available we are able to scale up very quickly. So hard choices drive us to that, based on a fiscal and personnel environment.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Mr. Chairman, I am going to yield my time for now to Senator Rosen.

Chairman REED. Senator Rosen is recognized.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Reed. Thank you, Senator Kelly. I appreciate it. We have multiple hearings this morning. I want to thank Secretary Maier, General Haugh, and General Fenton for your service, for being here today, and of course all the conversations we have had in the past.

General Haugh, I want to talk to you a bit. It is my understanding that when the Nation faces a cyberattack there are two forces under your operational control that respond—the Cyber National Mission Force and the Joint Force Headquarters DOD Information Network.

As you know, in 2022, the Cyber National Mission Force was elevated to be a sub-unified command. General Haugh, how has this elevation helped CYBERCOM's operational readiness to respond to attack, and separately, how would also elevating the DOD Information Network to a sub-unified command enable CYBERCOM to be more resilient in future cyberattacks?

General HAUGH. Senator, thank you for the question. So as we looked to elevate the Cyber National Mission Force, that is our sub-unified command that allows us to defend the Nation, and they are really the mission that is responsible for defending against adversary hackers and also generating options against them.

So as we looked at that, we wanted to create that as a unique command that allows it to start to grow its force and also be able to start to drive how they acquire capability and how they train their force for their unique mission.

As we look at Joint Force Headquarters DODIN, our element that allows us to set the globe from a defensive perspective across the entire Department, that is an area that we are evaluating. So as we look at the studies that will make up our response for Cyber

Command 2.0, there are five studies that Congress has asked us to do this summer, and they look at our force, they look at our headquarters, they look at our acquisition team, and they look at our architecture.

We wanted to bring those back as one, to be able to then go to the Secretary and say here is what we see the vision of the future force is. A part of that is evaluating, is Joint Force Headquarters DODIN structured appropriately, does it have the right resources to do the mission we have been assigned. So it is an area that we are definitely going to look at.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. I want to build on that because in order to do your work you need that foundational cyber intelligence. That is really what you build everything on. So having accurate, actionable threat intelligence is really critical for the function of our Nation's cybersecurity posture, but simply having the right intelligence, of course, it is not the entire solution. It is important not only to know what the threat is but also to know how to target our adversaries' systems.

So that is why a dedicated, foundational cyber intelligence capability could possibly enable the DOD to more effectively utilize intelligence on cyber threat actors and their capabilities.

Do you think that the establishment of a cyber-specific foundational intelligence center would better prepare your forces for these types of operations?

General HAUGH. Senator, we think that growing the foundational cyber intelligence of the Department is benefit not to U.S. Cyber Command. It is all the other combatant commanders that we partner with every day. For us to do multi-domain integration it starts with our understanding of our adversaries, and the way the process normally works for foundation intelligence, that is our start point, particularly in crisis, to generate options. Today that is largely falling on Cyber Command and NSA. We want to see that grow across the defense intelligence enterprise, and General Kruse, as the new director, and I are kicking off some pilots together to be able to look at how could we begin to expand within DIA's architecture the amount of cyber intelligence focus that is out there to meet the needs for not just us but the other combatant commands, as well.

Senator ROSEN. I will look forward to those pilots. But in order to do all of this work, what do you need? You need a cyber workforce, right. So last year's NDAA included my bipartisan legislation authorizing a civilian cybersecurity reserve to provide CYBERCOM with qualified civilian personnel in reserve capacities to ensure that the U.S. Government has the cyber talent it needs to respond to malicious activity, to secure DOD's information, and of course, all of our system. So I look forward, as we have spoken about, to reviewing this implementation plan for the new pilot program when it is ready.

At the speed at which a future cyber war might be fought, do you believe that the current traditional reserve models would give you the necessary capabilities, the surge capacity in times of a crisis and help us rapidly scale up?

General HAUGH. Senator Rosen, thank you for that legislation. I think what we would like to see is to be able to do both. We want to leverage our traditional reserve and be able to use that as part

of our force, and we definitely want to examine what is the best way to create a cyber Reserve component that allows us to reach in to a broader portion of our Nation's talent. We have two components that are interested in executing pilots, and it is an area that we are excited to come back with you to what that will look like.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, gentlemen. Thanks for your service.

Secretary Maier, you are doing a good job. I would like to ask you this. With all these new conflicts popping up since you have taken office, how has your approach changed and what metrics do you have in place to oversee possibly new threats getting ready to pop up? Have you done anything looking to the future?

Mr. MAIER. Yes. Senator Tuberville, thanks for the question. It is really important because I think the world has only become more complex, really, over the last couple of years, and I think we look at it in a couple of different perspectives. We look across the three different mission sets that SOCOM has. General Fenton has already talked to the uptick in crisis response requirements. So we are going out the door more often for crisis response. Some of that is because we do not have as many forces forward, but some of that is because we are relying on this force more.

One of the metrics we have taken on board is determining whether this is a blip, as General Fenton said, or a trend. We think this is more likely a trend, so we are taking appropriate action to make sure that we are resourcing it with that idea that the requirement is going to be high and stay high.

I think counterterrorism, because it is something that the special operations enterprise is being looked to carry more of the burden on that, more of the mission space because the services are moving to integrated deterrence, we need to ensure that every time we are doing something in counterterrorism we are getting as much benefit for some of the other mission sets. So if we can do something against Russia while we are doing a counterterrorism mission, if we can do something against China, that is a twofer for us. That counts more.

Then I think we have already talked about the value we see in, if you will, competition and the ability to really have an outsized return on investment for limited force deployments. We look at that all the time as a standard metric of are we getting that high return on investment. If we are not, in many cases we are going to pilot to a different approach or a different TTP tactics, sir.

So those would be the three main areas I would look across and give you a bit of a sampling of how we are looking at it, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General Haugh, you are the new kid on the block, the new command. It is going to grow—we all know that. It is very, very important. Do you see yourself and your command privatizing, with all the competition we have in the private field, in cyber?

General HAUGH. Senator, we look at our industry partners as teammates. Our domain is unique. It is created by industry that builds out the cyber domain. So how we think about how we lever-

age it, how we defend it is part of the partnership that we will have with industry, with our international partners, and all of our fellow combatant commanders who leverage cyberspace every day, to conduct all the missions of the Department of Defense.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You have got all hands on deck. I mean, you are using everybody you possibly can. Is that correct? Is that what I am hearing?

General HAUGH. We do, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. Thank you. General Fenton, thank you for your service. We have had special operators deployed everywhere in the last 20 years. Have we lost some of our geographic standards across the country in terms of different locations with special ops? Because I know, for instance, the 20th Command is in Auburn, Alabama, and they have been working in different areas. They normally work the SOUTHCOM area. So are we too spread out?

General FENTON. Senator, first thank you for the work that all the National Guard teammates do in the special operations community, and in the case of the 20th Group, fantastic.

What I would say is there has been, as we have noted, increasing demand across the COCOMs for special operations, and my sense is absolutely rightly so. In an area where we want to prevent great power conflict, having special operators out there, being part of the fabric of any nation, building capability, teaching them to shoot, move, communication, sustain, medicate, learn now to do staff training, that starts a relationship, thickens it, and all builds toward partners and allies prevent that type of piece. That demand has gone up, as has the demand by the world voting for crisis response.

So my sense is the demand has gone up, and we have adjusted accordingly through a risk-informed approach. But on every given day everybody, all hands, total compo in SOCOM, active National Guard, Reserve, and civilians are absolutely needed on deck, and each and every time we make that risk-informed decision we are bringing it back to the Secretary and then we are moving out, because I see those demands continuing to grow up.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We just passed \$60 billion in Ukraine. We are up to \$120 billion, and of course we all hope that they can win. I know you are very involved in that, not physically but mentally, and a lot of your people are in training in terms of that. I wish we could give that \$60 billion to you and your people to build what we have.

Just one quick question to just get your thoughts. I ask everybody this. Can Ukraine win, and what does that look like? I know you are going to say yes, so what does that look like?

General FENTON. Senator, I absolutely will say yes. Ukraine can absolutely win. As you mentioned, the whole SOCOM team, but the command sergeant major and I, in particular, have been very involved outside of Ukraine, based on policy. But we have had the chance to visit with these Ukrainian special operators in European locations, again, outside of Ukraine, watching them train, watching them get better, watching them teach us, especially lessons learned. I have got to tell you, at each and every point they are incredible, committed, existentially focused teammates, and they

absolutely can win. They need our help, for sure, as the Secretary and Chairman talked yesterday. So I would say they absolutely can.

What does winning look like? First I am going to talk about my own perspective, what it looks like losing for Putin. I think it denies him the objectives he wanted in terms of fracturing NATO. It is stronger than ever, and we will keep it that way. I think it denies him the objectives of aggressing against a smaller democratic nation and covering up that whole territory, and we are working hard to keep it that way.

I think it also denies him the objectives that he might have had in the rest of Europe as he is tied down in this, losing equipment, general artillery pieces, everything else that he was depending on.

I think winning for Ukraine, I believe the definition of President Zelensky exactly, but I have got to feel it is a sovereign, democratic, independent Ukraine that is able to defend its borders, and is still partnered with NATO and with the United States.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. One last thing, not a question. I would love to get a report on those five special ops that lost their lives I think in the Red Sea or in the Mediterranean in a helicopter. One of them was an Alabama soldier, and I would love to get a report on that if I could, whenever you finish it. No hurry on that.

General FENTON. Senator, first I thank you. Our thoughts and prayers again go out to those immediate families, the extended families, the states which they come from, and thank you, as well, for noting that, and our units. We are working as fast as we can to go through the understanding of it, the investigation, and I will stop there, but as soon as we have it through the Secretary we will share it with the Department and this Congress.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. General Haugh, good to see you again. This year, INDOPACOM's number one unfunded priority is the Guam defense system, and this system is going to protect Guam from kinetic threats like hypersonic and ballistic missiles. But Guam also faces some real non-kinetic threats as well, and I am concerned there is not enough attention being paid to the cyber defense of critical infrastructure on Guam, both military and civilian.

China has made it clear that they want to hold critical infrastructure at risk. They are not just stealing intellectual property. They are clearly prepositioning on networks that support infrastructure, and we need to make sure that Guam's military systems have adequate cyber protection but also need to ensure the systems that support electricity, water, emergency response are adequately protected, as well.

We cannot let China ferment chaos if there is ever a conflict, and it is important to find where adversaries like China, where they are lurking on our systems, root them out, and make sure we fix the vulnerabilities that they take advantage of.

General Haugh, can you give us insight into how your cyber mission force works to detect our adversaries who are present on our critical infrastructure networks and how important it is to protect this infrastructure on Guam?

General HAUGH. Senator, I share your concern and the need for how we think about Guam and how we think about the infrastructure on Guam, both from the critical infrastructure and how it supports the Department. From our perspective, really the partnership that exists between NSA and Cyber Command, and how we approach these kinds of problems, first we want to generate insights that expose this activity. So you will be able to go on our website and be able to see, in great detail, exactly how the PRC has approached access on Guam, the techniques they have used, how they have done it, and then it also informs how elements, both within our government and within industry, can detect those threats so that we can work collaboratively to make it more difficult for the PRC to operate, to pre-position in those infrastructure.

I think the other areas, then, that we think about, enabling defense. How do we help everyone with strategies, and in support of INDOPACOM, how do we use our force, our defensive maneuver force, how do we apply it to ensure that we are protecting the things that are most important to INDOPACOM. Finally, we have to impose costs, and that is through our interagency teammates as well. How do we make it more difficult for PRC, and how do we make it that there is a cost for actions like this?

Senator KELLY. Any more authorities or resources that you need to do this?

General HAUGH. Senator, you have given us a number of authorities in this past year. One of those is enhanced budget control, which now allows me to drive where these investments go, and that is probably the most critical authority we needed. We now have service-like authority and responsibility. We will now be able to apply that in a way that allows us to be more adaptive to what these changing threats look like.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General. General Fenton, the Air Force Special Operations Command is establishing a new power projection wing at DM in Tucson. The new wing is going to give SOCOM a powerful wing, capable of strike, mobility, ISR. DM's proximity to training ranges in Arizona, specifically the Barry Goldwater Range, is going to ensure that the new wing has access to the training it needs to be lethal and be ready to deploy at any moment.

General, can you talk about the importance of these power projection wings and your insight on the status of the buildup of the wing at Davis-Monthan?

General FENTON. Senator, like SOCOM is with the other services we are closely aligned with our transformation efforts, in this case the Air Force transformation effort that really hits at the heart of the question you mentioned about Air Force Special Operations Command. I think as we have gone along on the journey, the gathering of that type of capability you mentioned, in terms of ISR, strike, mobility, and bringing it all together and allowing it to focus on a particular region is at the heart of what we understand the

Air Force and AFSOC is doing out at Davis-Monthan. We are a key part of it with our AFSOC team.

The timelines, I think we are still, in some ways, along the journey with AFSOC, and the particulars might be best answered by the Air Force writ large or maybe even I can get back to you for the record, to give it to you exact. I would not want to get out in front of my skis.

But the bottom line is your Special Operations Command team is absolutely interlinked and they are wired in what AFSOC and the Air Force is doing on those power projection wings.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, and could you also get back to me on, in this year's budget request SOCOM has taken the Armed Overwatch platform from 75 down to 62 aircraft. If you could just get back to us on what you think the right number of airplanes—if you think it is 62, I think that is a reasonable answer, but if you think it is something different than that could you please get back to me on it?

General FENTON. Senator, we absolutely will.

Senator KELLY. Okay. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Haugh, having the CCP think twice before they mess with our critical infrastructure or steal government officials' emails is extremely important given the fact that they are only going to continue to better their cyber operations and capabilities. The Storm-0558 hack, you and I have visited about that, and China burrowing into our critical I think is a big wake-up call in many ways, and that more can be done.

So I guess I have got a couple of questions. The first, how are you thinking about strengthening CYBERCOM's ability to really put fear in the heart of China as you put your team together in CYBERCOM 2.0? I think that is a very important aspect of this as sort of a deterrence here. How are you thinking about that?

General HAUGH. Senator, as we think about Cyber Command 2.0, you have asked us to study a number of things this summer. The most important of that will be our force generation study. How do we generate ready forces within the Department of Defense? That study requires us to do a number of things. One is how do we evaluate our current structure. The structure now has service-like authorities underneath what you have now given us in the 2022 NDAA and the most recent appropriation, and then evaluating whether we should have a cyber service. We will come back to you with that.

We also are evaluating our overall architecture and our acquisition. Inside that is how can we use our service-like authorities to be more aggressive in the capabilities we have to respond to each of these activities. We have a very solid set of capabilities we use today. We want to be able to move faster, and we want to be able to be more agile in terms of if a new threat emerges how can we generate the capability, put it in the hands of our cyber mission force to enable our portion of an interagency response.

Senator SCHMITT. That is a good segue to the followup question, is obviously this is moving quickly, right. The capabilities change.

The technology changes. DOD is not known writ large as adapting quickly, right, whether it is procurement or whatever. What are you doing in that domain that allows you guys to sort of adopt this cutting edge technology quicker?

General HAUGH. Senator, first the Department has now given us a number of authorities for our own acquisition. That was a step that allows us to move faster. When I first took over command I met with each of the program offices that are providing capability to U.S. Cyber Command. I saw each of them as really having an agile opportunity because we deal in software. We are not building large iron. We are building code, and so we have the right program office structure to move faster. We now needed the resources to do it. You have given us the enhanced budget control, and we have to combine it with that acquisition authority.

Senator SCHMITT. So I think one of the challenges that we have on this side of the dais is explaining to people, in a non-classified setting, what the real risk is, what the challenges are, the capabilities that the CCP has, say, for critical infrastructure. This is new kind of warfare for many people.

If you were going back to Missouri or Arkansas or Oklahoma and you were talking to folks back home, how would you explain what the capability is, what we need to be vigilant, you know, for, and the best way for us to approach this?

General HAUGH. Senator, I think the most recent things that we have exposed across the interagency about how China has established access in critical infrastructure is that wake-up call. In terms of pre-positioning in the critical infrastructure of Guam, other areas of the world, and in the United States, that really is no other purpose than to pre-position for a crisis. I think from our perspective we want to be able to communicate that in as clear a language as possible, and also in highly technical language that industry can leverage and be able to then pursue and root them out of that at every step along the way.

Senator SCHMITT. You and I have talked about this one-on-one too, but I just think it is absolutely critical that China understands our capability, and much like with other sort of platforms that have developed or weapons that have developed over decades, that there is a real deterrence here, that they understand that if they flip that switch, turning something off, that we have the capability and we are willing to do it, we will not hesitate ourselves. So that is, I think, a dynamic that is really important as we enter this new world.

I guess I will just close with this. Clearly this is happening here. We have got a lot of newer partnerships, established partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. As China sort of shows its fangs, many of those allies are coming our way because they understand the ambition that China has. What are you seeing in the Indo-Pacific, whether it is the Philippines or wherever, that would raise the red flag here?

General HAUGH. Senator, from our perspective those partnerships that we are growing in the Indo-Pacific are aligned with Indo-Pacific Command. So as we have talked to Admiral Aquilino and in the future Admiral Paparo, the areas, the nations that they are most concerned with is where our partnerships are.

What we have seen is a demand signal from many nations in the Indo-Pacific that are looking for assistance to counter the China cyber threat. We are using our forces to defend forward in some of those nations with our allies and partners to expose to them how China is operating in their networks so that we can root them out of their networks, but also then to be able to expose it to a broader audience.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Assistant Secretary Maier and Generals Fenton and Haugh for being here today.

General Haugh, speaking to that partnership in the Indo-Pacific, I just returned with a congressional delegation from the Indo-Pacific. We went to the Philippines, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea, and Japan, and everywhere we went we heard an interest in partnering with the United States, concern about what China is doing in the South China Sea, and real concern about the passage of the National Security Supplemental, because that includes support for the Indo-Pacific region, and it also sends a very strong message to Xi. So thank you. I totally agree with what you said.

Assistant Secretary Maier, on Monday there was a report that highlighted the scale and methods that Vladimir Putin has been using to sow distrust in the U.S. population and to amplify destructive rhetoric that jeopardizes the passage of important legislation like the National Security Supplemental. We also heard from both the Chair of the House Intelligence Committee and the House Foreign Relations Committee, who said that there were members of the Republican Caucus who were parroting Russian disinformation.

So can you talk about how those tactics further Russian operations in Ukraine and how they work to undermine our position in Ukraine?

Mr. MAIER. Senator Shaheen, I think the Russians, and probably the PRC as well, think they have a distinct advantage in the information space, and while we can certainly overmatch them conventionally, militarily, they see an asymmetric advantage to themselves. So I think we are very focused on denying them that advantage, where possible. Certainly I think the Russians take a very—we would be much more careful, let's just say. They are very not risk informed when they go about their information operations, be those in Ukraine, be those in the United States, be these elsewhere, and they are okay to fail, but what concerns me is what gets through and what starts to get traction.

I think the Ukrainians have been very adept at pushing back at the Russian malign influence activities because they have been familiar with it for a long time. I think one of the challenges we have is understanding fully where the Russians are attempting these types of malign influence activities. Some of this has been well documented, as you mentioned, going back to some of our elections. I think other places, though, we are only beginning to understand where they can pair activity with information, or they can use their information tools in a way that really attempt to break down some of the cohesiveness that we have as a Nation, and specifically how we approach it in a warfighting capacity.

I think the Ukrainians have figured out much of that because they have had to live with it. There are many lessons I think we could take on board, Senator, to figure out how to approach this from our own perspective.

Senator SHAHEEN. So can you speak more specifically in a classified setting about what we are doing to push back?

Mr. MAIER. Yes, Senator, I can.

Senator SHAHEEN. General Haugh, last week there was also a news investigation on CBS 60 Minutes that pointed to evidence of Russia's responsibility in the directed energy attacks, the anomalous health incidents or Havana Syndrome. Our office has worked with a number of victims from the earliest attacks because we had some constituents who were affected, and what they have asserted all along is that there was an adversary who was responsible.

Can you talk about what you are doing, if anything, to respond to those reports, and Secretary Austin, in his hearing yesterday, assured us that the combat support agencies under his oversight are remaining focused on this issue. Can you also assure us the same and what you are doing?

General HAUGH. Senator, I can definitely assure you that any new evidence that we receive we will pursue. So as the Director of the National Security Agency I am committed to that, and I am also committed to the eight employees that we have been designated as suffering from anomalous health incidents and ensuring their care and ensuring that we maintain our obligations to them, and also to continue to pursue and understand any of the potential causes of anomalous health incidents.

Senator SHAHEEN. So can you tell us if you are actively pursuing any of the information that was shared in that news report?

General HAUGH. Senator, we would look at that information and any other and routinely are looking to see if there is more information that we can garner from any lead that we can get.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Mullin, please.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Haugh, Mr. Secretary, and General Fenton, thank you for taking the time to meet with me individually, and thank you for the work you are doing and for being here in front of us too. General Fenton, thank you for bringing those three incredible Rangers by my office yesterday. It was such a pleasure to meet them. It makes you feel pretty secure about the future of the country with young men like that ready to serve.

General FENTON. Yes, it does, Senator.

Senator MULLIN. With that being said—and this is a question for General Fenton and Mr. Secretary both—I mean, we all know some truths about the SOF community, and one of them is that a complement of special operations forces cannot be created after an emergency. Correct? General Fenton, I think you said something very similar to that in the past.

So with funding cuts, are we threatened by the training capability for our SOF community, by numbers and by training, to be able to meet the threats that this country may be facing down the road?

General FENTON. Senator, yes certainly, and personally—and again, thank you for that office call as well yesterday. I appreciated you meeting with the Command Sergeant Major and I and the Secretary, but mostly with those three incredible Ranger that gave you the update on what they are doing, and I know they appreciated that as well, so thank you for taking your time on that.

I would say first our obligation to you and to this whole august body and our Nation and Department is always to give the best training, most rigorous, most arduous training to our Special Operations Command teams, to better and to ensure that they never see something downrange they have not seen back here. In fact, it should be a lesser task, in many ways, because of the training we are driving them toward. So you have got my commitment on that.

As we look forward in terms of the Iron Triangle, as I like to talk about it—modernization, training and readiness, and operations—I think personnel reductions and a flat or decreasing buying power of the budget, along with certainly continuing resolutions, which always hurt all that works together to help us make a risk-informed decision on where we go. But you have got my commitment on training, Senator. It is always going to be the toughest, hardest, and most arduous.

Senator MULLIN. I like how you said “risk-informed decision.” I understand you have to mitigate risk and do the best with it. When we talk down the road again, let’s visit more specific about that in a different setting. Mr. Secretary, the same thing. As I said yesterday, I am here to assist you guys. You are taking care of all of us, and we want to make sure that we are working together. As I like to say, we are on the same boat, rowing in the same direction.

General Fenton, just because this is something that is very important to me is TBIs. I know you have taken a lead with the SOF community, making sure that there is a lot more knowledge of the TBIs. Can you maybe explain to us a little bit more about any steps of new equipment that may have been issued to SOF to prevent or mitigate some of these TBIs?

General FENTON. Senator, I absolutely can, and that question, and certainly my answer, point right to the heart of our number one priority, as you and I and the Secretary discussed yesterday, our people. They are at a competitive advantage, and comparative advantage, and everything we do in health, safety, and welfare is really pointed toward that.

I would say on TBI, and certainly concussive type events, all affecting the brain, we are taking a number of steps. As a trailblazer and pathfinder, I think SOCOM was the first to come out with a brain health policy, that certainly has then been adopted by the Department and many others. That is because, to my point, we are committed to the focus of our people, and being a trailblazer for the Department.

I think the other thing you will see us doing is really, through a lens, we call trying to understand this, both a concussive type event and blast type events, going to any location that will do research for us. One of those was Massachusetts General Hospital, the Command Sergeant Major and I visited. We got an outbrief on that, and we were really able to determine where we might want to go on a longitudinal study. That was a shorter, probably 1-year

study, against 30 of our high-end teammates, but where we take that, along with some studies we are doing out of other research locations in North Carolina.

I think beyond that what you see us doing is learning to ID it, through baseline assessments, similar in some ways to what the NFL may be getting for concussive protocols. We are working closely with the NFL on how they are doing the work they are doing so we are informed by it, and we are sharing ours, as well.

Then blast sensors, as you just may have intimated, in terms of what we have for our teammates to wear. I think you would see us across all that.

Last, mitigating it. We recognize a lot of this type of concussive events, specifically the brain, comes in training, for our force to be as lethal as they need to be and to win every time downrange, when called upon. So you see us in places like our shoot houses or our blast ranges with absorbent material. You also see us doing a lot more, Senator, in the AR/VR space, so we can get reps and sets before have to actually get in the dirt and fire the weapon, though we have got to do that in order to stay lethal. You would see us also looking at the sensors, as I mentioned, to ID it, and then at some point we are even looking at printing lower blast or pounds per square inch charges, 3D printing charges we can use in the breach. Then last I would just add suppressors. We are getting after all that and more in order to protect our most incredible investment, our people.

Senator MULLIN. TBI is something very personal to me, something I would love to work with you on. Recently at SHOT Show, which I know a lot of your community is very familiar with that, I came across some equipment that I thought was extremely interesting, and I would love to maybe get it across your desk at some point.

General Haugh, I do have a question for you but I am out of time, Mr. Chairman, so I will submit it to the record.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Mullin.

Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here, and thank you for your service.

General Fenton, I wanted to ask about Task Force 10, TF-10, and the role that it has played in advising and training Ukrainian forces, very, very commendably and ably done, as I have seen on the five trips that I have made to Ukraine in the last couple of years, and I know they have been there continuously. They have been a critical source of advice and training.

In your knowledge and perspective on the Ukrainian special operators, have they increased in their abilities over these last couple of years? What have you seen from the standpoint of Task Force 10 in advising and aiding the Ukrainian forces during that time?

General FENTON. Senator, thank you for visiting with our teammates out there as many times as you have. I know they really appreciate it, we all do, that you get to see it in full motion when you are right next to them in the actual environment.

I would tell you we are very proud of Task Force 10 and the work it has done for almost 3 years now against the untoward illegal invasion and aggression of the Russian Federation. I would say that

as I think about that, at its heart it is about the power of partnerships, the partnership between U.S. Special Operations, while we do it outside of Ukraine, with Ukrainian special operations teammates who come out to get training on shooting, moving, communicating, staff, and communications, and many other things. That little task force is at the heart of all that.

I think the partnership extends beyond just the U.S. and Ukrainian special operations. As you saw, Senator, in there, there is a very robust, across-the-globe bunch of teammates in there from the special ops community in Europe, outside of Europe, who all, as well, are looking to help the Ukrainian special operators. So we are very proud of that. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk about it, and I think at its heart partnership, but it is a partnership for a consequence, for Ukrainian SOF to win alongside their Ukrainian military. They absolutely have increased in capability and capacity, as you have asked me, not only since JTF-10 arrived as a part of SOCEUR and our theater Special Operations Command request through us to put something out there for them and General Cavoli, but since 1994, because that is the very first time U.S. Special Operations had an opportunity to meet Ukrainian military. We have gone on the journey to build their special operators, noncommissioned officers, and that entire special ops since 1994.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I assume that the failure to approve a supplemental package of aid for Ukraine would have affected special ops aid for those Ukrainian special operators as well, just as they would the entire Ukrainian force.

General FENTON. Senator, it absolutely would. I think I will start first by, as the Secretary and others have said, Secretary of Defense, the message it sends across the world about democracy and where we stand.

The second thing is if Ukraine ever was just fighting Russia alone, that is not the case now, I think as you and the Committee here know. It is Ukraine versus Russia, plus Iran, plus North Korea, and tangentially even the PRC. So even the supplementals are woven together because the adversaries are linking themselves in that way I laid out.

Then last, it certainly backfills the stock that Special Operations Command has spent money on already in order to be part of the contingency that is all things Ukraine.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. On another topic, I know that the Army recently announced significant reductions across the force to include billets the Cavalry Scout, military police, and special ops community. I believe that no Green Berets will be cut, but instead the Army plans to cut enablers. I also am aware that recruiting efforts, obviously, are an issue for the Army.

I wonder, number one, how the cuts in those billets will affect the special operations community, and number two, how are recruiting efforts going for special operations?

General FENTON. Senator, I will make a couple of comments and certainly defer to Secretary Maier on this. I would say you rightly pointed, the heart of all this, I assess, the reductions, specifically against the backdrop of increasing demands that I have laid out previously in crisis response and many others, was the recruiting

challenges that the Army—and many services, but the Army—acutely is facing in a big way, along with fiscal challenges, and I think even at the heart of it, just the desire all of us have to transform.

I think as a result of the Secretary of Defense's decision we are still assessing the impacts, what that looks like across 5 years as we layer that into the 5-year defense plan against the skill rates and specialties we have been directed, communications, intelligence, logistics, and I think we are still assessing that.

But already I am getting a sense our theater of Special Operations Command that we will be able to meet less of what they demand, and I think we owe certainly the Secretary and the Secretary of Defense our assessment as we go forward.

I defer to Secretary Maier.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. My time has expired so if there are further responses perhaps you could provide them in writing. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator COTTON, please.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. General Fenton, I want to continue down that line of questioning from Senator Blumenthal about the cuts to Army special operations forces, about the logic behind that, in particular, which I think may be faulty.

You testified to the House recently the Army's proposed cuts to special operations forces are occurring, and this is your quote, "against the backdrop of ever-increasing demands from our combatant commands." Then Admiral Aquilino from PACOM testified that special operations in PACOM are critically important for training our partners and increasing combat capability.

So both of you are making the point that special operations forces play a very important role, not just in fighting and winning a war but in deterring conflict, both in the Pacific and around the world. Is that correct?

General FENTON. Senator, that is absolutely correct. We see those demand as not only I, but not even just the INDOPACOM Commander, I think others in testimony throughout the last couple of months—

Senator COTTON. Because one justification for these cuts, coming from the Secretary of the Army, is that special operators are supposedly less important right of boom. To put that in English, boom is when shooting war starts, people start returning fire. Left of boom then would be leading up to any kind of conflict.

In that space that you just talked about, aren't special operators in contact with U.S. partners and in some cases the enemy almost every day left of boom, so to speak? Why is that contact important? Could you explain that a little bit more?

General FENTON. I can, Senator. I will start by saying that SOF and SOCOM have a very important part to play for almost eight decades, starting right at World War II and the coming forward, it not only in-boom, in conflict, in high-end operations, but in particular where our value, my estimations is the highest is left of that, preventing it, preventing conflict, as our NDS and many other documents direct us to do. I think our skill sets are perfectly apportioned for that. Frankly, it is our DNA.

If, while we are out there, there is a potential for the rough edges of a conflict, we are also preparing the environment—developing options, different ways of doing business for our combatant commands that present challenges to any adversary. So there is a whole bunch of value left of conflict.

SOF has got value in conflict as well, and then I would just offer, Senator, additionally in a protraction, because you and I both know that no conflict is 30 days or 40 days. Those things protract, and I think SOF has got value there, as well.

Senator COTTON. Let's be even more concrete. Let's look at a specific case study with Ukraine. After the first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, our Army Special Operations Forces, well, U.S. special operators more generally, were in routine contact with Ukraine. Can you explain the payoff that pre—well, in this case it was post-conflict and pre-conflict—post-'24 invasion, pre-2022 invasion, and the dividends it paid when Russia invaded in 2022, for that 8-year period?

General FENTON. I can, Senator, and I will try to make it quick. I will wind it back just a tad. Our contact with Ukrainian military started in 1994 by special operations, maybe when no one else was looking, but special ops was. Our ability to be with the Ukrainian military since 1994, and in particular build SOF, did a couple of things. It built a noncommissioned officer corp. I think you and the Committee here know better than anybody that is the incredible value proposition our whole military brings across the world. They did not have that. We changed them from a Soviet-style anything into a more Western-based approach military, specifically in special ops.

I think all that came together certainly after 2014, but on the second invasion in 2022, when we knew that the Russian Federation understood how important Ukrainian SOF was, when a couple of the first targets during their attacks had Ukrainian SOF implications.

I think that continues, and I think that, in many ways, almost looks like a mutual fund—small investments over time with a high payoff when called upon, that continue to grow, and I think I do not see that just in Ukraine. I have seen that in Colombia, during Plan Colombia, when U.S. SOF was there in support of SOUTHCOM, doing what we did with Colombian SOF and Colombian military. I have seen it many other places.

But I think there high value left of conflict that certainly SOF plays a part of.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Mr. Maier, in the time I have remaining I have got to ask you a question. I am kind of surprised it has not come up, frankly, in the last 2 hours. It is the matter of Ariane Tabatabai, your chief of staff. She was allegedly part of an Iranian foreign ministry information operation. She used to work for Rob Malley, a well-known Iran sympathizer who has had his security clearance revoked by the State Department, is under investigation. That is all we know because the State Department has stonewalled us on this. When we raised concerns about Ms. Tabatabai last fall, the Department of Defense assured us that protocols were followed. We do not have any more information about it. I mean, I am sure protocols were followed for all Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen,

as well. I think it is a basic function of our oversight responsibility for us to have more information about Ms. Tabatabai and how someone with these ties to a well-known Iranian influence operation ended up working for you.

Now, I almost want to express my regret to you personally, because I do not think you hired her. I think she was hired into your office, so I do not think you were the person that made the decisions. But she is working for you in your office, and we have not heard much about it all since we inquired in the fall. So I have to ask you, what is the status of Ms. Tabatabai, and how can we be confident that even if protocols were followed they got the right decision made, given Mr. Malley's status of still being suspended and having his clearance provoked?

Mr. MAIER. Senator Cotton, Ms. Tabatabai still is employed in my office. She is part, like all the other civilians, military, contractors in the Department, subject to continuous vetting that is done by the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency. That is about all that I can provide you in this forum, and that is what I have been provided by the folks that are really responsible for security in our Department, sir.

Senator COTTON. Can you provide us more in another forum, like maybe the closed one we have coming up?

Mr. MAIER. I can provide a bit more, sir, yes.

Senator COTTON. All right. I will see you there.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So we know that firing weapons can expose servicemembers to pressure from blasts that can cause traumatic brain injuries and other harms. The New York Times revealed last year that artillery units fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria suffered from hallucinations, seizures, depression, and suicides after firing more rounds than any artillery units since the Vietnam War.

Special operations forces are one of the communities at greatest risk, and SOCOM is now taking steps to protect special operators, including by regularly testing their cognitive health and requiring instructors to stand further away when troops fire certain weapons. But there are gaps on the ground. The New York Times observed a special operations training and, quote, "none of those safety steps could be seen."

One concern is that we may miss operators suffering injuries because we are only screening their cognitive health every 3 years. General Fenton, would servicemembers benefit from annual cognitive health testing to monitor the potential impacts from blast exposure?

General FENTON. Senator, I think we would all benefit from any increased periodicity on health screening and testing, and we have got many ways to do that.

Senator WARREN. Good. I am glad to hear that. I am also concerned that these operators may be afraid to ask for help or may not even know that they need help, so these regular screenings are critical important to saving lives. I think there is more that we can do. A commander is trained to know how to guide their team through enemy territory, but it is hard for a commander to take

care of their troops if they do not know the risks that the weapons pose to their troops' brain health.

General Fenton, would commanders benefit from having more accurate safety data on weapons systems that their operators use, like the level of blast coming from the weapons?

General FENTON. Senator, absolutely. It hits right at the heart of what we are all charged to do, which is, number one, the health, safety, and welfare of our uniformed servicemembers and everybody in our charge. SOCOM is moving out on that.

Senator WARREN. Good. But we have got to get this information to the people who are in these on-the-ground leadership roles.

You know, I think we also need to make sure that troops who are suffering from blast exposure injuries receive the care that they need. I am proud that Massachusetts is home to a nonprofit organization called Home Base that takes care of the invisible wounds of veterans, servicemembers, military families, and families of the fallen. Home Base's comprehensive brain health and trauma program helps get 95 percent of our servicemembers back into the field and makes it easier for special operators to receive treatment mid-career rather than waiting until they are leaving the service.

General Fenton, would special operators benefit from more access to programs like Home Base?

General FENTON. Senator, absolutely, and if I might, first of all, thank you for the conversation you and I had about this and our desire to get more access to centers like this, and Home Base is incredible. It is a blessing for your special operators, as are some of the other centers as well that are out there. We absolutely would benefit from getting more access to it, because we see the results, the incredible outcomes, where somebody goes in, has a number of musculoskeletal all the way down to just the ability to need a new pair of glasses because of some neuro things, and absolutely, we would love to take more and leverage more.

Senator WARREN. The work they are doing is truly amazing, both to assess and diagnose the problems and successfully to treat them, and that is the part we have to underline about TBI.

This is one of the reasons that I am proud that I, along with Senator Ernst and Senators Tillis and King and Kaine and Scott and Duckworth and Cardin will be introducing the Blast Overpressure Safety Act to require the DOD to take much-needed steps to mitigate servicemember exposure.

There is one more place, I want to say quickly, where we need to close the gap between policy and action. SOCOM said, back in 2019, that it would start issuing blast exposure gauges to all of its operators. Despite knowing about this need for over 5 years, it was not included in your budget and was relegated to your annual unfunded priorities list. When you do not include critical programs like this in the base budget it sends the messages to servicemembers and to their families that it is not a real priority for your command. So I want to work with DOD and with SOCOM on these issues. But you need to clearly State in your budget that you take this issue seriously. Budgets are a statement of our values.

General FENTON. Senator, if I might, thank you for that. We absolutely will. I will say in this case, on this blast sensor system

that we put into our unfunded priority list this year, it came in between two budget cycles. In 2019, as directed by the NDAA, we went after in SOCOM a number of different blast sensor opportunities and options. They did not meet our standard. The majority of them were out in a commercial variant.

Now we have zeroed in on a blast sensor, I will call it system, and that is why in between two budget cycles I absolutely wanted this Congress to see it, understand how committed we are to it. But you have got my commitment. That thing will be in our budget going forward next.

Senator WARREN. Okay.

General FENTON. It just happened to be a timing and fact of life change out in the commercial environment.

Senator WARREN. All right. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator BUDD, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

General Haugh, it was good to see you yesterday and it is good to see you today. From your perspective in CYBERCOM what can you briefly tell us about the nexus between cyber and space and SOF?

General HAUGH. Senator, I think this is an area we continue to explore, that each of us have the responsibility to be able to deliver capabilities in support of the other combatant commands and also to meet our unique mission requirements.

What we are finding is that as we partner there are things that we can do together that we could not do independently, and being driven by things like INDOPACOM requirements we have been able to identify a number of those activities, and we see increasing opportunity for our collaboration to be able to advance all of our missions and really how we think about integrated deterrence as we campaign together.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. You know, I am looking at that as a two-way street, right. I mean, you look at cyber-enabled SOF and the entire joint force and the physical access that SOF requires—that SOF provides, actually, SOF provides the physical access—and that also enables critical cyber operations. Would you agree?

General HAUGH. We do, and I look forward to being able to walk through some examples with you in closed session.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Senator Maier and General Fenton, again, thank you both for being here, as well. In your joint testimony you State that you have, and I quote, you have “seen an increase in the combatant commands’ demand for SOF capabilities and our critical enablers in support of campaigning toward National Defense Strategy priorities,” end quote.

So how would you characterize that increase in demand as it is across all combatant commands? Secretary?

Mr. MAIER. Senator, I would start by saying that as we have already testified we have seen an increase in crisis response requirements because combatant commands are well versed in what SOF brings in protecting American citizens, be those diplomats, be those

private citizens, and the ability to buy down risk that SOF brings, that if there is a crisis, those combatant commanders are going to reach for a SOF tool in the first instance.

Many of our combatant commanders are still very focused on the counterterrorism mission. They have still got ISIS. They have still got al Qaeda. We have seen, in some cases, a resurgence of ISIS in areas, both in Africa and the CENTCOM AOR. So that is another requirement that continues to remain steady, if not increase.

Then I think in the Indo-Pacific and certainly EUCOM we have seen a lot more requirement for SOF to bring more of that low-visibility, more precise capability, often in small, hard to notice formations that combatant commanders have requested.

So I think as the world becomes more complex and there are more requirements it is natural for the combatant commanders to reach for that SOF tool because it brings a lot of different capabilities, sir.

Senator BUDD. General Fenton, I will just add to that question. When I think of SOF, you used to think about just counterterrorism, but now I think about great power competition, regular warfare, something SOCOM has also been doing for the last 20 years, and doing more of today. Would you care to elaborate on that?

General FENTON. Senator, I would absolutely agree with you. I think from our founding back really right in and after World War II, great power competition and a great deterrence was at the heart of all of that, as was strategic raids and rescuing hostages, as we did in the Pacific theater even in World War II. That has come forward. So it is really eight decades of integrated deterrence and crisis response and 20 really hard-earned combat of that 8 of counterterrorism experience, making us an incredible force, and we are tailor made for this era.

Senator BUDD. To both of you again, we have already discussed at length in prior months that the Army proposes to cut almost 3,000 special operations billets over the next 5 years. So now we see, and we talked about it today, the increased demand for SOF, but what is the risk to mission and the risk to force for those cuts? How do you prioritize? What do you do with those requests? Secretary?

Mr. MAIER. So Senator, I think fundamentally we have attempted to remain focused on providing the unique capacity that SOF can bring. So we have, in many instances, looked to cut overall ability to provide those forces but retain aspects of those forces. So said another way, we are keeping capability even as capacity goes down. That is just less to meet some of those requirements. What we remain laser-focused on, though, is that those forces are all prepared to the right levels to go out the door. So we are not going to take any risk in that regard. We are going to make sure that they are prepared for the mission they are going out to do.

Fundamentally, what it means is we have looked, in some places, to reduce numbers of billets that are hard to fill, but at the end of the day if that is in psychological operations or civil affairs or some of our key enablers, intel, logistics, communications, that means when we do hopefully have more forces come in through recruiting and other means we will have less billets to fill, sir.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. General Fenton, anything in closing you would like to add to that?

General FENTON. I would just add that we do it all through a risk-informed approach, as the Secretary mentioned, thinking about modernization, readiness, and operations, and keeping that in equilibrium. Yet at some point we need to win today and win tomorrow, and every opportunity we get we take a look at it through that prism and really work forward from there.

Senator BUDD. Thank you all.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd.

Senator HIRONO, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your patience. I would ask each of you to speak very directly into your mics so that I can more clearly hear you.

General Haugh, we have a growing need to incorporate small businesses and nontraditional vendors to help strengthen our defense industrial base to meet demands in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. Last month, the Department of Defense released its Defense Industrial Base Cybersecurity Strategy to help protect these industry partners from sabotage and theft.

Can you talk about some of the steps you are taking to defend our industry partners from cyberattacks, and specifically, how your actions will encourage and assist the incorporation of small business and other nontraditional vendors to grow the defense industrial base?

General HAUGH. Thank you, Senator. As we think about the cyber defense of the defense industrial base we have been given authorities both by Congress and Department, really through the DOD CIO, to be able to grow our partnership with the defense industrial base. We have done that through both NSA and Cyber Command.

From an NSA perspective, the ability to establish the Cyber Collaboration Center that has direct engagements with over 1,000 companies that make up the key leadership of the defense industrial base and allow us to share information back and forth about cyber threats, provide specific services to the defense industrial base, and now increasingly thinking about small businesses, particularly those that are involved in artificial intelligence. How can we provide them an understanding of threat as it relates to that?

Those are key areas, and then as the Cyber Command, as we increasingly leverage our acquisition authorities, our ability to move agilely with those small businesses is one of the areas that we think will give us advantage as we go forward.

Senator HIRONO. I think this is an area that needs to be constantly attended to because I serve on the Small Business Committee also and I have talked with small businesses who would like to be able to work with DOD, but the DOD has all these, and rightly so, these requirements that need to be updated, where these small businesses need to be certified, they are protected from cyberattacks. So I hope that you are paying the appropriate attention to help the small businesses be able to comply with all of these cybersecurity requirements that do change quite frequently.

General HAUGH. I understand, Senator, and I think this is, from our perspective, why we have such a close partnership with the

DOD CIO in terms of the work that they do to set those standards. We want to be able to reinforce and partner with those small businesses.

Senator HIRONO. Yes. Thank you. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, I was pleased to see you highlight in your testimony and your prepared remarks that diversity in our special forces provide us an asymmetric advantage. Can one or both of you speak more about why diversity is so important to solving operational problems our special operations forces deal with on a daily basis?

Mr. MAIER. Senator Hirono, we think diversity is important because it has an operational imperative and indeed continues to provide outsized effects in the strategic environment as well. One of the things that SOF is known for is, as you said, problem solving. If you have people who come at this problem from a different perspective, different backgrounds, different way of looking at it, we are going to be inherently better across the force in solving these problems.

But even if we put it in the context of the integrated deterrence mission set, whether that is in the Indo-Pacific, whether that is in Europe, having people from different backgrounds, they speak different languages, maybe different genders, can blend in in different ways and be more effective in different societies with different partners, that is something that we are asked to do every day, and so we cannot all look the same and think the same. That fundamentally, I think, is something that has been a tenet of the special operations community for decades, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. I very much agree with you that diversity is not something that should be supported because it is the right thing to do, but there are very pragmatic reasons that we should do that, and it makes our operation forces that much better. Obviously it is also in the corporate arena that there are studies and analyses that show that the more diverse the corporate sector is, in terms of their hierarchy of employees, the better the outcomes for them. So I think that is very much the case in our DOD.

One more question, regarding workforce development. General Haugh, your predecessor, General Nakasone, previously testified that one of his highest priorities was maintaining a skilled cyber workforce. What are some of the things that you are doing to encourage people to get into cyber training? Particularly I am interested if you are doing anything special to encourage women and minorities in contemplating these kinds of jobs.

General HAUGH. Senator, I think from our perspective where it really starts for us is our academic engagement. How do we partner with universities across the country to be able to draw talent that is going to allow us to have the most qualified force that is really representative of our nation? We want to bring them into our force. We want them to come to an environment that allows them to meet their full potential and to develop. So we see those academic partnerships as foundational, and we have grown those across both the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command to take advantage of that.

Once they are in our force, we also want to ensure they are very well trained. So one of the things that the authorities that we have been given in U.S. Cyber Command, as the joint force trainer of the

Department, setting the training standards for anybody that does cyberspace operations in the Department. We really started with those cybersecurity service providers of our weapons systems and of our service networks. So we want to keep raising the bar of the training that we are giving to everybody in the Department that serves in cyberspace.

Senator HIRONO. I hope you are reaching out to women and minorities in your efforts. Yes?

General HAUGH. Yes, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Budd is recognized again.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman, in allowing for the followup question. General Fenton, I think you were starting on this just a moment ago. Would requiring SOF-specific guidance, that be issued as part of OSD's annual defense planning guidance, would that help the services better account for SOF's value proposition as they determine their size, their structure, and their posture? We will start with you, General Fenton, and Secretary Maier, if you have anything to add.

General FENTON. Senator, as you stated I will make a couple of comments and pass this to the Secretary.

I will start by saying we absolutely, as a Department, have to go be focused on sizing for conflict. In my estimation, that is our worst day, when we are at high-end conflict and we have got to absolutely understand the requirements across the services in SOF that we need for that.

I think what I would offer now, since SOCOM is diving into this at our level is that with the changing character and environment of war against the backdrop of primary mission, prevent great power conflict, there is a whole bunch in left-of-conflict before conflict that SOF does, that we, as SOCOM first, along with Secretary Maier, need to really go through an analytical, rigorous process to say we have got to be able to bring that to the Department as part of that construct, as well as what happens when you protract, you go beyond maybe a 30-or 40-day scenario that we recognize has been very rare in this world, that it is 30 or 40 days.

On top of that, I think we are also exploring how that, plus what we do in the crisis response arena and the counterterrorism arena, is all wrapped up into SOF value contribution in support of the Nation.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Mr. MAIER. Senator, I think it would be helpful because I think it would help to continue a process we are already on in the Department which is really twofold. It is looking at a very challenging element of trying to measure elements of conflict and what you are preventing, which is very challenging and I think where SOF plays.

Then I think the second part to your core question is one of the things my office is particularly focused on is being able to articulate to the programs and resourcing side of the Department the value of SOF. We often say we want our SOF operators to be silent professionals, but we do not want them to be not having a voice when we do exercises, when we experiment, when we build a construct for a future fight. That is really important and I think some-

thing that continuing to focus, whether it is defense planning guidance or any of the other guiding documents in the Department, reminding the services, in fact, reminding the entire Department to account for that value proposition. It helps me, it helps SOCOM to have that voice so that we can articulate that value proposition, sir.

Senator BUDD. Thank you all. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd, and gentlemen, thank you for your outstanding testimony.

We will reconvene at approximately 12:20 in SVC-217 for the classified portion of this hearing. I will remind my colleagues there is a vote going on now, and they should vote. But until then I will adjourn the open session of this hearing, and thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:06 p.m., the Committee was recessed, to be continued in closed session.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

DEFENDING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Senator HIRONO. General Haugh, I continue to be concerned about out of date and in many cases crumbling critical DOD infrastructure. One alarming aspect of this is the risk posed by cyberattacks, especially in light of FBI Director Wray's recent warnings about the growing threat of Chinese cyberattacks on the United States' civilian electrical grid and other critical infrastructure. How is CYBERCOM defending against threats to critical DOD infrastructure, and are you collaborating with other Federal agencies like the FBI in this effort?

General HAUGH. USCYBERCOM is leading the Department of Defense's efforts mandated by Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA §1505 to complete mapping of DOD Mission Relevant Terrain in Cyberspace (MRT-C) for Defense Critical Assets (DCAs) and Task Critical Assets (TCAs). This comprehensive and methodical approach to mapping the DOD's MRT-C encompasses operational assets, security controls, and data sets as outlined in USCYBERCOM MRT-C Cyber Warfare Publication Operational Guidance. It establishes a standardized framework for identifying MRT-C by aligning key terrain concepts with joint cyberspace operations concepts, and sets the conditions for DOD components and supporting elements to better plan, protect, operate, and control MRT-C. For the DOD's defense of critical infrastructure and mandate of Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA §1505, the emphasis has been on the 45 DODIN Areas of Operation (DAOs) to identify and map their mission relevant terrain in cyberspace (e.g. defense critical assets and task critical assets) for the Department.

The Cyber National Mission Force (CNMF)'s Hunt Forward Operations are defensive cyber operations where CNMF hunt teams operate on a network of a partner's choosing to detect, monitor and analyze tactics, techniques and procedures of malicious cyber actors. This information improves collective cyber resilience and defenses, and these operations help bolster the security of partner nations and provide the U.S. advanced notice of adversary tools and techniques.¹

USCYBERCOM is entering into CRADA agreements with key critical infrastructure providers in order to: (1) Develop cyber tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for OT/JCS network defense, (2) Conduct joint red/blue exercising, (3) Threat information sharing, and (4) Explore the effectiveness of current USCYBERCOM cyberspace capabilities on OT/JCS networks.

USCYBERCOM is in close collaboration with the FBI to not only defend DOD infrastructure, but to add to the resiliency of key United States civilian critical infrastructure as well. China, other nation states, and criminal actors try to exploit United States critical infrastructure domestically and overseas that are critical to our national security. On a daily basis, FBI and USCYBERCOM coordinate and deconflict efforts so that FBI domestic law enforcement authorities are complemented by USCYBERCOM authorities to act in cyberspace outside the United States. For instance, in fiscal year 2024, the FBI and CNMF partnered to publish

¹ Shared Threats, Shared Understanding: United States, Canada and Latvia Conclude Defensive Hunt Operations; Cyber National Mission Force Public Affairs; IO MAY 2023.

eight cybersecurity advisories that inform the public of nation State malicious cyber activity and mitigate threats to U.S. critical infrastructure and the election information environment.

COUNTERING DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

2. Senator HIRONO. General Fenton, We have heard testimony from several other Geographic Combatant Commanders about how influential misinformation campaigns by adversary nations can be in stoking public distrust—Russia's actions in Ukraine are a prime example. General Fenton, how is Special Operations Command involved in countering disinformation and misinformation operations by our adversaries?

General FENTON. As the Joint Proponent for Military Information Support Operations (MISO), the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) leads the joint capability development for technologies that enable the Department to prevent and counter malign information both on the internet and in traditional information mediums. As the Coordinating Authority for Internet Based MISO, USSOCOM established an organization to centralize all Department of Defense internet-based MISO efforts—the Joint MISO Web Operations Center (JMWC). The JMWC supports Combatant Commands' utilization of internet-based technologies for the purpose of countering adversary misinformation and disinformation. Additionally, our Theater Special Operations Commands work with partners and allies across the globe to ensure local credible voices are enabled to provide enduring solutions to countering the misinformation and disinformation threat.

FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES (E.V.S)

3. Senator HIRONO. General Fenton, our Nation's Special Operations forces are trailblazers in operationalizing new technologies to solve difficult problems. To do this though, members of your team must have the right next generation platforms—including electric and hybrid-electric vehicles. These vehicles are quieter, can accelerate faster, and can have increased onboard power for additional capabilities, such as directed-energy weapons and jammers, along with a reduced thermal and acoustic signature. They also are better for the environment. What place do tactical electric and hybrid vehicles have in enabling your future mission success?

General FENTON. USSOCOM is evaluating hybrid-electric ground mobility vehicles to determine if they can provide extended range, exportable power, lower logistics burdens, and reduce acoustic and thermal signatures. USSOCOM is using a phased approach to characterize improvements over traditional fuel powered solutions with plans for limited user assessments of operational utility in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025. Specifically, USSOCOM is converting a Ground Mobility Vehicle 1.1 from fuel-powered to hybrid-electric to assess how it extends the range and reduces the signature. USSOCOM is monitoring the efforts of the Armed Services for hybrid-electric technologies that could provide base vehicle power export and mobility propulsion for applications, such as autonomous operations, kinetic packages, communication relays, unmanned aerial systems storage and re-charge, and subterranean missions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN

RIDGE RUNNER

4. Senator MANCHIN. General Fenton, you and Assistant Secretary of Defense Maier both spoke during the hearing about the importance of integrated partnerships and the pivotal transition to prioritizing irregular warfare activities. From my understanding, large numbers of SOCOM personnel attend international training exercises focused on irregular warfare. Should we be upscaling our own organic exercises on United States soil to increase international partner participation and provide a cost-effective additional training venue for our special operations forces? As an example, the Ridge Runner exercise in WV is facilitated by West Virginia National Guard Special Forces personnel and sources international and conventional force partners for the U.S. based exercise. Participants and observers include Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, Japan, Taiwan, Georgia, and Croatia. Who on your staff is the best point of contact for our Ridge Runner cadre to discuss additional partner nation participation with? Can this staff followup with us to be put in contact with our cadre?

General FENTON. Our J3 International Division (J3-I) has Special Operations Forces (SOF) representatives from 29 Allied and Partner Nations (A/PNs) and has a strong relationship with the RIDGE RUNNER Committee. The Committee has

been showcasing training opportunities to our A/PNs for the last few years which has generated considerable interest. The J3-I has sent observers from Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Finland to previous events; Lithuanian SOF previously participated in RIDGE HEALER. Hungarian SOF are participating in RIDGE RUNNER 24-2 this year with approximately 50 personnel due to last year's visit. Our J3-I will continue to send A/PNs as observers and will expand State Partnership Program (SPP) opportunities with respective Theater Special Operations Commands' coordination. I will ensure the Exercise and International Divisions continue to coordinate directly with the West Virginia National Guard for RIDGE RUNNER participation by our A/PNs.

JOINT TRAINING IN WEST VIRGINIA

5. Senator MANCHIN. General Fenton, we've spoken multiple times about the need for an East Coast training venue for special forces instead of these units spending more than half their training budgets on transporting themselves West to other training venues where they have to jump through hoops for approval on basic training needed to meet their readiness goals. If an all domain training venue were constructed utilizing labor and funding separate from SOCOM do you believe this facility would be utilized heavily by SOCOM units to meet their training and experimentation goals? What current training limitations exist and what characteristics of an East Coast venue would mitigate such gaps?

General FENTON. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (P&R) is sponsoring a study on East Coast training venues. When complete, the study should highlight transportation cost savings and the recoupment of training time as benefits to East Coast training venues. Since 2019, USSOCOM has leveraged a partnership with the West Virginia National Guard. This collaboration has proven invaluable in enhancing our training and rehearsal capabilities. The unique topography, terrain, and climate of West Virginia provide nearly unparalleled opportunities to conduct SOF full mission profile exercises. We'd refer you to USD P&R for timeline of study completion and their overall assessment. USSOCOM, in constant pursuit of multi-domain training venues, is always available to review such facilities and determine potential utilization.

Senator Rosen

PREVENTING CAPTURED ISIS FIGHTERS FROM RETURNING TO THE BATTLEFIELD

6. Senator MANCHIN. General Fenton, with the threat of a Turkish incursion into northern Syria, or Turkish military operations against our Kurdish partners, we know that SDF personnel guarding ISIS prisons and displaced persons camps will likely need to leave their posts in order to defend their territory, opening the door to the possible escape of captured ISIS fighters and their families—just as we saw play out in 2019. Given our partnership with the SDF in the Defeat-ISIS campaign, including security training, what contingency plans does CENTCOM have to shore up SDF-run prisons and displaced persons camps to ensure that captured ISIS fighters do not return to the battlefield? How does the continued elimination of ISIS leadership—which your forces impressively keep executing—impact ISIS's ability to plan and carry out attacks on U.S. forces and SDF-run prisons and displaced persons camps?

General FENTON. USSOCOM defers to the U.S. Central Command to provide an update on their planning related to SDF support. Against the questions posed, U.S. Special Operations Forces' (USSOF) continual pressure on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leadership and network is vital to disrupting current threats and identifying emerging threats within the region and on the Homeland. USSOF is also postured with CENTCOM in training the guard forces for the ISIS detention facilities and displaced persons camps. It is also important to note the continued work done by our Coalition partners and vetted local partners in fighting ISIS as well. Though USSOF do conduct unilateral operations, we work closely with our partners every day to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. Our presence is a key enabling function of those activities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

7. Senator KELLY. General Fenton, can you talk about the importance of these power projection wings and your insight on the status of the standup of the wing at Davis-Monthan?

General FENTON. The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command's (AFSOC) ongoing and future approach will transform its organizational structure, alignment,

and force posture into Power Projection Wings that present all four AFSOC mission areas: SOF Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, SOF Strike, SOF Mobility, and SOF Air-to-Ground Integration, and are aligned geographically to Geographic Combatant Commands and Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). Aligning Power Projection Wings by Geographic Combatant Commands /TSOCs builds working relationships (both within the Department of Defense and partner relationships), increases familiarization of area of operations, and increases opportunities for AFSOC force development. Currently, the Department of Air Force, USSOCOM, and AFSOC leadership are conducting site visits; validating movement and planning assumptions (information technology, ammunition and magazine requirements, manpower, construction, ramp space, hangers, etc.); and programming funding to support the buildup of Power Projection Wings. Based on current planning and operations, USSOCOM anticipates initial permanent party arriving to Davis-Monthan AFB in fiscal year 2025.

8. Senator KELLY. General Fenton, in this year's budget request SOCOM has taken Armed Overwatch Platform from 75 down to 62 aircraft. What do you think is the right number of airplanes are?

General FENTON. The approved AO program Full Operational Capability (FOC) requirement is for 75 aircraft to support one Air National Guard and three Active-Duty squadrons. This enables a 4-cycle force generation for reconstitution and individual training, unit training, joint training, and deployment with the necessary support to sustain five persistently deployed units of three aircraft and seven crews. This force structure, and the mission requirements driving this fleet size, are regularly reviewed as USSOCOM regularly analyzes force structure and mission requirements to meet the National Defense Strategy, to include the requirements and fleet size for Armed Overwatch. Per the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report No. GAO-24-106283 titled "Special Operations Forces: DOD Should Slow Acquisitions of Armed Overwatch Aircraft Until It Conducts Needed Analysis," USSOCOM will provide the results of this analysis as part of the GAO Corrective Action Plan that will culminate with a report to Congress upon completion. The results will also inform USSOCOM's decision regarding aircraft quantity and phasing and will make any necessary adjustments to future budget requests and/or the fiscal year 2025 Lot buy in April 2025.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

CYBERCOM AUTHORITIES

9. Senator WICKER. General Haugh, are there additional tools, resources, or hiring authorities you need from Congress to help develop the next iteration of the military's cyber forces?

General HAUGH. USCYBERCOM does not currently assess there to be a need for any additional operational authorities. However, while USCYBERCOM has broad hiring authorities, we continue to pursue expansion of authorities that drive competitiveness with the private sector. As an example, we advocate for parity across all Services for hiring under 10 USC § 4092 to maximize our talent pool and tackle hard-to-fill positions created by low inventory and often influenced by pay. Additionally, expanding authorities to grant cash awards to uniformed servicemembers, akin to the novel Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA Sec. 1531(P.L.117-2.63), Cyber Operations Peculiar Award, supports rewarding innovation.

CENTER FOR NARRATIVE INTELLIGENCE

10. Senator WICKER. General Haugh, narrative intelligence refers to the combined use of human intelligence and artificial intelligence to analyze the origins, motivations, intentions, evolution, and outcomes of narratives. How can narrative intelligence help CYBERCOM fulfill its national security mission in cyberspace?

General HAUGH. The exponential growth of online narrative content challenges individuals, organizations, and governments to rapidly consume, comprehend, and engage with narratives circulating on global digital media. Narrative intelligence is predicated on a holistic understanding of the complex web of stories, beliefs, and motivations that drive individual and collective actions. In the realm of national security, narrative intelligence has the potential to inform USCYBERCOM's understanding of the foreign threat environment, including adversaries' attempt to gain an advantage in the information environment.

11. Senator WICKER. General Haugh, as you are aware, the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA directed the Department of Defense to assess and make recommendations on the need to establish a dedicated task force or center for narrative intelligence. The Commander of CYBERCOM is to be consulted as part of this assessment. To date, have you been consulted about the need to establish a dedicated task force or center for narrative intelligence?

General HAUGH. To date, USCYBERCOM is not aware of a request for consultation on establishing a dedicated Task Force or center for Narrative intelligence. However, we are aware of growing interest within Academia, related to narrative intelligence, which aligns well with current USCYBERCOM missions, and previous congressional intent.

Specifically, we understand a small number of academic institutions have combined efforts to partner in a newly established National Center for Narrative Intelligence (NCNI) based at the University of Mississippi. This offers a potential opportunity for government-academia-industry partnership and collaboration related to narrative intelligence, though other opportunities likely exist. The DOD CIO office is aware of the NCNI efforts and is working to expand academic engagement on matters like this.

As part of USCYBERCOM's mission, we seek to understand and counter US adversaries and their actions in cyberspace, including malign influence actors, who use malign narratives against the US, its Allies and Partners. Within USCYBERCOM, the Cyber National Mission Force (CNMF) has focused on countering such adversary organizations, as a routine part of their operations over the past 6 years. USCYBERCOM also partners with NSA, and the IC to tackle adversary cyber activities, including malign influence and narratives.

12. Senator WICKER. General Haugh, how can CYBERCOM leverage expertise in narrative intelligence at U.S. colleges and universities to help the Cyber National Mission Force detect and mitigate malicious influence campaigns aimed at the United States?

General HAUGH. USCYBERCOM values academic partnerships to foster research and innovation on critical mission problems and inspire service in DOD cyber cadre. USCYBERCOM is actively expanding academic partnerships to enhance our technical activities. There are likely other academic partnership opportunities for USCYBERCOM enterprise engagement.

Additionally, USCYBERCOM can leverage the expertise in narrative intelligence at US colleges and universities by entering into Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) with those universities focused around collaboratively researching and developing new algorithms and capabilities to detect and mitigate malicious adversary influence campaigns.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES TRAINING IN THE ARCTIC

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Arctic and Global Resilience Ferguson announced that DOD will release an updated Arctic Strategy this spring. This is timely as SOCOM forces just demonstrated and tested new capabilities during Arctic Edge 2024. Were you consulted in the creation of the updated Arctic Strategy to ensure lessons unique to special operations and low-intensity combat were incorporated?

Secretary MAIER. Yes. U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (OASD(SO/LIC)) were significantly involved in developing the 2024 Department of Defense Arctic Strategy. The Arctic Strategy outlines the Department's approach to the Arctic as the region undergoes rapid geophysical and geopolitical change. The strategy aligns with and nests under the 2022 National Security Strategy, the 2022 National Defense Strategy, and the 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region. It also aligns with and implements the 2023 DOD Homeland Defense Policy Guidance. U.S. Special Operations Command North's Arctic Edge 2024 and other Special Operations Forces (SOF) Arctic exercises are a key facet of the DOD Arctic Strategy's implementation, and the lessons learned from these exercises will inform future operations in the region.

General FENTON. Yes. The latest iteration of the Arctic Strategy is significantly improved over the original version from several months ago. The value of Special Operations Forces to the Joint Force is well expressed in this update, which highlights how collaboration with our Allies can provide the U.S. distinct advantages in

the Arctic, and USSOCOM had a large part in creation of this strategy. Continued exercises in the Arctic will strengthen multilateral resolve, highlight global allied integration, and lead to improved U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) proficiency operating in this austere domain. Ongoing USSOF Arctic efforts include a standing Capability Development Working Group currently focused on high-latitude communications; collaboration with Norway, Sweden, and Finland in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility and via liaison officers at HQUSSOCOM; TSOC (i.e., Special Operations Command North and Special Operations Command Europe) Arctic-related exercises (e.g., Arctic Edge) and support plans; and a HQUSSOCOM-led Arctic Special Operations Capabilities-Based Assessment.

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, what additional resourcing do you require to field arctic-rated equipment for SOCOM forces operating in Alaska and the European Arctic?

Secretary MAIER. New or emerging SOF capabilities and requirements needed to support the Arctic Strategy will be thoroughly considered and vetted through USSOCOM's corporate Program Objective Memorandum process for consideration, and we will work with colleagues throughout the Department to ensure those capabilities are "Arctic rated" against validated standards.

General FENTON. USSOCOM is doing several actions to accelerate and enhance arctic-related equipment for USSOCOM forces to increase size of deployable force/extent of mission durations. The SOF-peculiar Military Alpine Reconnaissance System (MARS) is a newly fielded system of cold weather clothing layers that provide protection to the operator at extreme low temperatures. However, this system was not designed for sustained arctic operations; rather, MARS is intended primarily for limited duration arctic mission sets. To provide true arctic protection, SOF will experiment with and pursue additional layers and extended protection to the extremities without sacrificing mobility and lethality. Improved over-boot and over-glove/mitt solutions are being evaluated for near-term transition to the force to increase the duration SOF can sustain operations in Arctic environments.

Further, USSOCOM is prepared to accelerate efforts to improve our ground mobility fleets for cold-weather mobility operations through purchase of commercial snowmobiles, associated payload expansion sleds, and wheel modifications for Lightweight All-Terrain Vehicles. USSOCOM is monitoring the Army's effort for the purpose-built Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicle, which could represent Service-provided capability for SOF units if the Army supports purchases for USSOCOM. Additional funding details associated with these requirements will be provided to the Committee.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. General Fenton, does SOCNORTH have plans to expand number of operators with cold weather and Arctic training to meet the increased Russian Arctic presence?

General FENTON. Currently, Special Operations Command North (SOCNORTH) continually assesses its requirements for SOF in arctic environments. SOCNORTH supports NORAD and USNORTHCOM's exercise "Arctic Edge," the premiere field training venue to improve combined joint special operations capabilities in extreme cold and high latitude environments. Arctic training presents challenges for USSOF given no assigned forces in the Arctic, coupled with the constrained reliance on USNORTHCOM's exercise budget. However, our Naval Special Warfare (NSW) and U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Components are developing Arctic capability within their formations to improve their ability to compete in cold weather environments.

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, are there plans to increase multi-national training with our Arctic allies and partners in Alaska?

Secretary MAIER. Yes. Partnerships are the cornerstone of SOF contributions toward integrated deterrence. Increasing multinational training with our Arctic allies is critical to bolstering deterrence in the Arctic, and we are seeking more opportunities to train with our Arctic allies and partners. The Department continues to participate in exercises like Arctic Edge that allow SOF to increase its capabilities in the Arctic, and strengthen relationships with Alaskan natives, allies, and partners who share our concerns and interests in the Arctic region.

General FENTON. Yes. Arctic Edge 24 included Special Operations Forces partners from Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the UK with observers from Finland, Sweden and Poland. It also included activities with the U.S. Navy's Arctic Sub Lab, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, United States Coast Guard, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and United States Marshals Service. We regularly offer the venue to A/PNs to improve combined joint special operations capabilities and demonstrate commit-

ment to mutual strategic security interests. We also promote Arctic Edge exercise events in Canada and Greenland (coordinated through Canadian SOF and Special Operations Command Europe) to expand the scope of Arctic Homeland Defense activities along gaps and seams.

SOCOM LESSONS FROM UKRAINE

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, does SOCOM have a formal mechanism to generate lessons learned from how Ukraine is employing its SOF in combat with Russia?

Secretary MAIER. Yes. Our operations research teams (part of the newly established Center for Special Operations Analysis) are leading a formal analytic effort. We believe the wealth of data collected from Ukraine can guide our analysis of potential future conflicts with Russia and China.

General FENTON. Yes. USSOCOM Lessons Learned currently has two Lessons Learned Specialists in the USEUCOM AOR, one at Special Operations Command Europe and one forward deployed to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF)-10. Their primary focus is collecting and analyzing data from Ukrainian Special Operations Forces combat operations, as well as USSOCOM support mechanisms to Ukrainian partners. USSOCOM utilizes the Joint Lessons Learned Information System, available to the entire DOD enterprise. Additionally, HQ USSOCOM Lessons Learned compiles the data from the war in Ukraine into annual reports distributed to the entire SOF enterprise. USSOCOM Lessons Learned is currently finishing the second iteration of the Ukraine Year in Review for publication. Last, USSOCOM was a key part of the DOD lessons learned team focused on Ukraine's employment of multi-domain and open source capabilities in their effort to counter Russian aggression.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, what is the most significant difference between how SOCOM thought about its role in large scale contingency operations in January 2022 and now?

Secretary MAIER. The biggest difference between now and January 2022 is our improved understanding of how SOF can enable the Joint Force to prevail in the conflict phase. We remain focused on SOF activities "left of conflict," both to deter our adversaries and to prepare for conflict should deterrence fail. Now, by working with the Joint Staff on the Joint Warfighting Concept and through USSOCOM and Joint Staff-led wargames and analysis, we have developed a more mature understanding of SOF's key role as part of the "inside force" to fill gaps within the Joint Force to help counter adversary command, control, computing, communications, cyber, electronic warfare, space, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting capabilities; close kill webs; and bolster resilience in conflict. SOF can play an outsized role in the execution phase of conflict by virtue of our access and placement (both physical and virtual) and our innovative concepts and capabilities. Doing this, however, takes persistent operations, activities, and investments that must begin well before conflict. In addition, events such as the Sudan noncombatant evacuation operations, Israel's war in Gaza against Hamas, and ongoing transnational violent extremist organization threats have reinforced SOF's role in preserving strategic focus so that the general purpose forces can maintain their focus on preparing for large-scale combat operations. SOF maintains a global presence, often deployed where conventional forces are not or cannot be deployed and are the Department's eyes and ears, buying down risk by providing indications and warning of, and responding to, emerging crises.

General FENTON. Over the past 2 years, USSOCOM has significantly evolved and matured in understanding the role of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in large-scale contingency operations. Initially, in January 2022, we recognized the importance of SOF capabilities in a potential conflict with a near-peer adversary, primarily focusing on their role in competing with adversaries prior to conflict to prevent a great power war. While SOF remains critical in this space, we have since broadened our perspective on the SOF value prior to conflict in enabling the Joint Force to prevail in conflict, should it occur. We have also done a majority of this thought change in concert with DOD's work on the Joint Warfighting Concept.

SOF provides the Joint Force with access, placement, and preparation prior to conflict, while offering significant advantages as an inside force during conflict. This partnership enables the support of self-defense and resilience for our A/PNs who may be vulnerable to adversary attacks. The integration of SOF capabilities allows the Joint Force to target adversary assets, hold critical adversary systems and resources at risk, and ensure the Joint Force operates from a position of advantage in the information space.

SOCOM MISSIONS AND RECRUITING

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, the 2022 NDS established the People's Republic of China at the pacing threat followed by Russia. These threats require different capabilities than the counter-terrorism fight most SOCOM entities have conducted for the past 20 years. This also means SOCOM will conduct different missions at different scales. Can you explain, with examples, how SOCOM's global force posture has changed to reflect the shift from CT operations to deterring Chinese and Russian aggression?

Secretary MAIER. The Special Operations Forces (SOF) enterprise provides inherent strategic agility for the combatant commands. We have increased SOF deployments to the INDOPACOM AOR to support the objectives outlined in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, and the Department is systemically shifting SOF force posture over time, including creating a Joint Special Operations Task Force and three new Special Operations Task Forces to support integrated deterrence and strategic competition with the People's Republic of China in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility. SOF also retains the agility to surge to respond to crisis, exemplified most recently by the post October 7, 2023, surge in SOF support to USCENTCOM.

General FENTON. Since the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), USSOCOM has been re-indexing back to its roots in Integrated Deterrence. In fiscal year 2022, 60 percent of USSOCOM's force posture was allocated toward countering violent extremist organizations (C-VEO), with 34 percent allocated toward Integrated Deterrence. In fiscal year 2025, more than 60 percent of Special Operations Forces (SOF) will be allocated toward Integrated Deterrence, while allocating 33 percent of SOF to force posture to maintain pressure on VEOs capable of attacking the Homeland. USSOCOM additionally leverages its counter terrorism relationships with NDS priority countries to advance Integrated Deterrence objectives. SOF's commitment to Integrated Deterrence has yielded a 48 percent increase in SOF demand from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2025: specifically, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-10 in EUCOM, and Special Operations Task Forces in the INDOPACOM area of operations.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, has the shift from a CT focus to great power competition impacted retention within SOCOM components?

Secretary MAIER. The Department's focus on great power competition has not impacted retention within USSOCOM Service components. Retention remains high thanks to the tremendous support of Congress in providing authorities and continued funding for programs aimed at improving quality of life and support for our force and their families.

General FENTON. SOF Retention, bolstered by targeted reenlistment and continuation bonus incentives, remains strong within our formations despite changes in mission focus areas. Our first SOF Truth is that Humans are more important than hardware and in making People our #1 priority, USSOCOM attracts, develops, supports, and retains its force thereby maintaining our greatest comparative advantage. One example, our largest SOF Component, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, experienced its strongest retention levels since 2019 and achieved their Army retention goals within the first 4 months of the Fiscal Year. Within the SOF enterprise, we emphasize PEOPLE-centric initiatives and have established the Preservation of the Force and Family program dedicated to serve our forces. Our SOF career fields are closely monitored by our SOF Components who in turn directly and regularly interact with their Service counterparts. Critical skills, and reenlistment bonuses are Service-based and tailored to each career field. The full funding of these programs is critical to maintain current levels of SOF retention.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Maier and General Fenton, have you changed any aspect of your recruiting effort as the SOCOM focus has shifted from CT to great power competition?

Secretary MAIER. While neither ASD(SO/LIC) nor CDRUSSOCOM have recruiting or retention authorities, we are impacted by the recruiting challenges. The SOF enterprise supports the Military Departments' recruiting and retention efforts by providing SOF personnel and SOF-peculiar displays that help generate interest and excitement about military service. While increased retention helps reduce the impact of recruiting challenges, we must ensure recruitment, assessment, selection, and overall production of SOF personnel remains on track to maintain the health of the force. USSOCOM Service components are implementing preparatory courses prior to SOF assessment and selection courses to improve SOF selection rates and maintain quality standards.

General FENTON. USSOCOM does not retain direct recruiting authorities, however, via our SOF Components we remain an engaged partner in Armed Services recruiting efforts providing SOF expertise, personnel, and SOF peculiar displays or equipment at numerous local and national level events. SOF active participation allows us to “tell our story” and generate higher levels of interest and attract more of our Nation’s talent to a career in military service. The mission shift to strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China has coincided with other labor and economic trends in what is widely regarded as the most challenging recruiting environment in recent history. Adapting to this landscape, our SOF Components have become increasingly active with their Service counterparts and have formalized their partnerships via outreach and mentorship Commands and teams that educate, attract, and identify the best talent to assess for our SOF training pathways. The SOF assessment and selection standards remain high across all Components. Services have been successful in expanding the eligibility to serve in SOF career fields with many of our career fields recruiting from both non-prior service and in-service veterans to maintain adequate levels of candidates.

CYBER LESSONS FROM UKRAINE

22. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, what has CYBERCOM learned from Russian operations to shape the cyber battle space prior to the renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine?

General HAUGH. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine provides three key lessons related to Russian operations to shape the cyber battlespace. First, the effects of Russian cyber operations were blunted by Ukraine’s ability to disperse and distribute digital operations and data assets. Soon after the invasion, Ukraine passed new laws permitting Ukrainian data to be migrated to foreign servers. This allowed Ukraine to successfully sustain its civil and military operations, and disperse its digital infrastructure into the public cloud. Second, Ukraine’s cyber defense was enabled by partnerships with private sector entities. After Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014, Ukraine worked with Western cybersecurity companies to improve its cybersecurity practices and harden its cyber infrastructure, making Ukraine much less vulnerable to Russian cyber operations in the current conflict. Third, Ukraine’s ability to adapt to evolving Russian cyber threats has been substantially bolstered by joint and partner information sharing. Sharing by Western partners has provided Ukraine knowledge of Russian operations and capabilities, and of Ukraine’s own vulnerabilities, that it would not have known otherwise.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, how have Russian cyber operations changed after 2 years of conflict in Ukraine?

General HAUGH. Since the start of the conflict in 2022, Russia has increasingly shifted from its initial focus on destructive operations against critical Ukrainian computer networks to a multi-pronged approach, using both State cyber actors and hacktivist groups to conduct cyber espionage supporting Moscow’s military objectives in Ukraine. Russian cyber actors are using sophisticated social engineering techniques to target frontline endpoint devices used by soldiers and gain access to Ukrainian military networks that enable air defense command and control (C2).² Additionally, various hacktivist groups suspected of having ties to Russia’s Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) have disseminated disinformation, performed distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, leaked Ukrainian personally identifiable information, and claimed credit for attacks performed by State actors.³

24. General Haugh, have you seen that cyber adaptation cycle compress in the Ukraine war?

General HAUGH. Currently we do not know if the speed at which Russian actors adapt their cyber operations tactics, techniques, or procedures has measurably increased since the start of the war in 2022.

The increased operations tempo brought about by the Ukraine war may initially have negatively impacted Russian cyber actors’ abilities to perform long-term, labor-intensive operations. A cybersecurity company’s analysis of an October 2022 disruptive event against the Ukrainian energy sector noted that the incident was less disruptive than previous attacks in 2015 and 2016, and lacked many of the previously used disruptive components, possibly due to a lack of resources and time.⁴

²Royal United Services Institute, Russia’s Cyber Campaign Shifts to Ukraine’s Front Lines, 22 JUL 2024.

³Russia Threat Actors Dig in, Prepare to Seize on War Fatigue; Microsoft; 7 DEC 2023.

⁴Sandworm Disrupts Power in Ukraine Using a Novel Attack Against Operational Technology; Mandiant; 9 NOV 2023.

However, it is clear that Russian cyber actors continuously adapt their operations against Ukraine. According to the same cybersecurity company report, as of November 2023, suspected GRU actors were increasingly using tactics which enabled them to increase the speed and scale of their operations. The same report also observed that some of the malware used by Russia had been improved over previous variants, though it is unlikely that all such adaptations are due solely to Russia's experiences in Ukraine.⁵

25. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, there has been a lot said about compliance-based cyber defenses, particularly at the unit level, like an individual navy ship. Compliance-based cyber defenses, however, don't allow rapid fielding of new defenses. It also limits tailored solutions that might fit better than an enterprise-wide solution. Is CYBERCOM changing this approach to compliance-based defense?

General HAUGH. USCYBERCOM is not changing this approach to compliance-based defense. The question highlights the challenges between cyber standardization and cyber innovation.

USCYBERCOM will continue to drive compliance-based defense to ensure unification of the cyber infrastructure for the sake of evaluating variances, highlighting areas that need focus, and to drive the Department to a common lexicon. This compliance-based method is essential for properly monitoring unique behaviors in our Defensive Cyber Operations.

CYBER IN SPACE

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, how has the proliferation of commercial space, specifically satellite constellations providing real time imagery and internet connectivity, changed CYBERCOM's perspective on what needs to be defended and attacked?

General HAUGH. Doctrine, policy, information-sharing structures, and data-processing capabilities, while not always the most visible components of space strategy, can be a driving force for competitive advantage in war. The space enterprise is not confined to satellites in orbit. The ground and link segments that facilitate networked data dissemination methods, along with innovative application of satellite data, arguably have allowed Ukraine, with no satellites of its own, to make better use of space than Russia. Information and services developed by others have enabled Ukraine to close the gap in space capability, while Russian forces have apparently struggled to provide sufficient space-derived information to their warfighters in a timely fashion.⁶ The Ukraine war has demonstrated that operational and strategic impacts can be vastly magnified by properly leveraged terrestrial hardware and software, and by a networked, distributed approach to using and sharing information. Planners, strategists, and analysts should consider how threats have manifested against these ground segments and links, and not just against in-orbit satellite capabilities.^{1A}⁷

CYBER WORKFORCE GENERATION

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, are there any initiatives happening with secondary and post-secondary education to generate a trained cadre of people who have the skills to contribute to CYBERCOM's missions?

General HAUGH. USCYBERCOM believes in the strength and diversity of our workforce. "Winning with People II" is not just a catch phrase, but a philosophy we embrace and live. The cornerstone to this way of thinking is the continued development and training of our workforce. The cyber domain evolves rapidly, and we must operate at the speed of relevance to outpace our adversaries.

To address this, USCYBERCOM partners with the National Defense University's College of Information and Cyberspace (CIC). Through this close partnership, we have developed two continuing education courses that are open to our staff—the Cyber Leader Development Plan (CLDP), and the Chief Information Officer course (CIO). Both courses provide our workforce a challenging and rigorous academic environment that allows them to sharpen their skills and bring that knowledge back to USCYBERCOM where they can put it to use.

⁵Sandworm Disrupts Power in Ukraine Using a Novel Attack Against Operational Technology; Mandiant; 9 NOV 2023.

⁶Michael P. Gleason, Space Power and Security, "Space and War In Ukraine Beyond The Satellites", Vol. 3 NO. 1, Spring 2024.

⁷Michael P. Gleason, Space Power and Security, "Space and War In Ukraine Beyond The Satellites", Vol. 3 NO.1, Spring 2024.

We also offer our staff the opportunity to attend the CIC's year-long Joint Professional Military Education Course (JPME II) where students earn a Master's Degree in Cyber Security.

We do not currently have secondary education initiatives; however, USCYBERCOM has an Academic Engagement Network (AEN) that enables outreach opportunities for US-based Colleges and Universities. Through our AEN, we have partnered with institutions like Purdue University to provide our staff access to their catalog of Cyber Certificates, free of charge to USCYBERCOM staff. We are also partnering with Canisius University, who is developing a new closed loop method of instruction that will be implemented as a Cyber Range, and utilized across numerous academic institutions, to include secondary institutions. This will prepare the next generation of cyber warriors.

USCYBERCOM also enters into Educational Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with targeted Universities to provide: assistance in Cyber Curriculum development, involvement of students in Laboratory research programs, providing career counseling to students, and more. Additionally, we partner with the National Security Agency (NSA) to host summer internship programs for Military Service Academies, and offer a civilian collegiate summer internship program, law student volunteer program, and a recent graduate fellowship program to help prepare future cyber warriors for potential outplacement within the Command or DOD enterprise.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, what gaps are there in the uniformed cyber workforce?

General HAUGH. Recruiting and retaining high demand low density cyber talent is a challenge across the Department, but the Services are investing in significant improvements to the forces presented to USCYBERCOM

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, what is being done by the services to generate a ready uniformed cyber workforce to fill your gaps?

General HAUGH. Recruiting and retaining high demand low density cyber talent is a challenge across the Department, but the Services are investing in significant improvements to the forces presented to USCYBERCOM.

Air Force Readiness

The Air Force has implemented several initiatives to markedly improve their CMF Readiness Rating:

- To maintain high fill rates, Special Duty Assignment Pay (SDAP) has been increased to the maximum (\$450/month) for E-1 to E-9. Furthermore, Cyber Assignment Incentive Pay (CAIP) for CMF work roles and skill levels (\$200 to \$1500/month) is in legal review with the Judge Advocate/General Counsel.
- To increase retention, the Air Force implemented the Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) again in fiscal year 2023. The new SRB multipliers, based on time in service, are fully funded and the highest in the Air Force, equal with Special Warfare AFSCs.
- On 23 February 2024, Headquarters Air Force signed a CMF Consecutive Tour Policy Memo for Regular Air Force Cyberspace Operations Officers (17X), Cyberspace Warfare Enlisted Operators (IB4) and Cyber Intelligence Enlisted Analysts (IN4XIA) in order to cultivate the skill sets of their high-demand, low-density airmen across the CMF.
- Starting in January 2024, the IB4 Initial Skills Training pipeline was revamped for optimal training throughput, aiming for full slot utilization and a higher number of Offensive Cyber Operations (OCO) airmen. Additionally, the IB4 Career Field Management Office has increased its oversight of class rosters. The combination of these efforts yielded a ~30 percent increase in throughput.
- The Air Force changed assignment policies to leave students in training status while completing foundational 2000-level work role specific courses. This change ensures an assignment clock does not start until an airmen is battle-rostered, maximizing the return on investment by getting a full 48 months of battle rostered team time for airmen. We encourage other Services to consider adopting the Air Force "Train Before Report" model.
- The Air Force reinstated its long-dormant Warrant Officer corps to specialize in cyberspace operations with up to 60 candidates to be selected this summer in addition to developing a direct commissioning program. Both of these efforts are significant retention and career development tools.

Marine Corps Readiness

The Marine Corps has implemented several initiatives to increase their CMF readiness:

- The Marine Corps has exceeded CMF assignment standards since January 2021 because of successful alignment of accession and retention policies, incentive pays, and retention bonuses.
- The Marine Corps has instituted Active Duty service obligations (ADSOs) for Operators and Exploitation analysts that will ensure 36-months of operational time within the CMF following advanced training completion and created an 8-year ADSO for cyber officers.
- The Marine Corps is not limited in their ability to schedule, receive or complete courses or deliver a fully 2000-level trained force. The force remains limited in achieving fully trained and qualified standards by a growing critical cadre of CMF Trainers and a reliance on live missions for final certification in Operator and Exploitation Analyst work roles.
- In March of 2024, the Marine Corps initiated the “Marine Corps Talent Acquisition Pilot” program to provide select candidates within the Cyberspace and SJGJNT aligned occupational fields with direct accession opportunities at a rank commensurate with their expertise up E-7.

Army Readiness

The Army has focused on several initiatives:

- Cyber Mission Force units remain at the highest priority fill rates in Army Personnel Manning Guidance. Army Cyber Command is working with The Department of the Army Personnel Directorate and the Human Resources Command to continue to prioritize CMF assignments.
- The Army created the Cyber Operations Specialist (17C) focused occupational specialty and extended its enlistment terms to 6 years.
- The Army has led the way for incentivizing proficiency through both SDAP and CAIP based on proficiency levels to incentivize assignment to CMF units. We encourage other Services to consider adopting the Army proficiency incentive model.
- The Army’s implementation of personnel developmental skill identifiers for select cyber officers, warrant officers, and enlisted servicemembers will enable precise tracking of personnel certified to perform cyber work roles, regardless of military operational specialty. We encourage other Services to consider adopting skill identifiers in their personnel systems of record that allow tracking of trained and qualified former CMF members.
- Army successfully converted approximately 2,500 civilian positions to the DOD’s Title IO Cyber Excepted Service (CES) across five (5) DOD CJO/Army identified CES-eligible Commands and organizations. This has allowed the Army to compete with Federal and private sectors for recruitment and retention of top cyber talent. These flexibilities include Targeted Local Market Supplements (TLMS) and the additional steps 11 and 12 in each grade.

Navy Readiness

The following changes have had a positive effect on the Navy’s cyber forces:

- Navy implemented policy change to designate the CMF as “Critical National Shore” which has an authorized fill rate of 100 percent. Fleet Cyber Command directed realignment of sailors to fill critical CMF billets and work roles in an effort to better retain talent and proficiency.
- For Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA Section 1532, Navy created the Maritime Cyber Warfare Officer (MCWO) designator with 289 billets converted so far and 167 MCWOs selected. MCWOs will have repeat tours in CMF ensuring increased proficiency and skill sustainment.
- For the first time, the Navy is delivering foundational training/or Defensive Cyberspace Operations (DCO) work roles prior to operational assignment.
- Navy created of student training organization on Fort Meade to allow sailors to complete advanced operator training prior to being assigned to a CMF team allowing them to arrive in operational roles fully trained.
- The Navy created a Cyber Warfare Technician (CWT) rating/or sailors and a Maritime Cyber Warfare Officer designator for personnel dedicated to cyber work roles. The Navy is evaluating options to incorporate additional work roles into the CWT rating to ensure better alignment to the consecutive tour requests and training availability.

- The Navy continues to offer very high SRB rates for the CWT rating in an effort to retain cyber talent, as well as SDAP for the Cyberspace Operator work role. SRBs enable concentrating financial incentives at the point of decision for a sailor to reenlist in the Navy. CWT Cyberspace Operator and Cyberspace Capabilities Developer NECs are eligible for \$100,000 and meets the Navy's maximum career SRB cap \$300,000, the highest SRB in the Navy.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Haugh, the same cyber talent pool that DOD is competing for is also being recruited by Silicon Valley tech businesses who can offer more money and quality of life incentives. What initiatives is CYBERCOM or NSA taking to recruit and retain the highest quality cyber warriors for military employment?

General HAUGH. Title 10 U.S.C. 4092 enables the Command to hire scientific and engineering experts and pay them at rates above the GG pay scale. This authority is critical to bringing top talent to the Command and postures us to have a seat at the negotiation table and better compete with industry salaries. Additionally, the Command offers Recruitment, Retention and Relocation incentives (over \$2.5 million spent since Cyber Excepted Service implementation), Target Local Market Supplement (average 28 percent salary increase), situational telework, student loan repayment, and training/developmental education opportunities to our workforce.

31. General Haugh: Given the cyber workforce recruiting challenges, do you think we should shift to a public-private model for some of our defensive cyber operations?

General HAUGH. At this time we do not believe USCYBERCOM would benefit from shifting to a public-private model. Hiring defensive cyberspace operators with unique skills and requirements requires government oversight and access to classified systems and facilities. Therefore, a change to private-public would not decrease recruiting and hiring challenges.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARKWAYNE MULLIN

CHINA

32. Senator MULLIN. General Haugh, recent news articles have uncovered claims that encrypted storage devices built with Chinese chips are available for purchase on GSA catalogs. Are any of these devices in use on DOD networks and what threat do they pose?

General HAUGH. Unfortunately, there is not enough information to answer the question posed. We will followup with the committee to identify the specific encrypted storage devices referenced and provide a more complete answer at the earliest opportunity.

33. Senator MULLIN. General Haugh, each day we see news stories about the rise of AI, as well as stories about our adversaries exploiting the technology for bad. What are you doing in the AI space? How do you assess our capabilities against the PRC?

General HAUGH. We are laying the foundation for our 5-year AI Roadmap and Implementation Plan to accelerate AI adoption and scale capabilities across the Joint Force, which we built with more than a dozen other stakeholders in response to Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA § 1554. The Cyber National Mission Force (CNMF) is the Executive Agent for the Command's AI Task Force, charged with leading our AI efforts under the three roadmap thrusts: deliver AI capabilities for all cyberspace missions; counter AI threats and exploit emerging opportunities; and enable broader AI adoption. The main focus now is immediate employment and operationalization of AI/ML capabilities to the force in order to maintain and ensure superiority in the Cyber Warfighting domain against both peer and near-peer adversaries. Our approach is to conduct multiple operationally relevant focused rapid pilots enhancing the mission while learning lessons to enable full force employment across all aspects of full spectrum Cyber Operations from the data center to the edge. Current AI operational pilots include leveraging Open Source Generative AI models in classified environments, using AI to reveal policy and implementation mis-alignments in network security, rapidly generating tailored content for refinement and use in information operations, filtering and summarizing intelligence to more rapidly guide our ability to defeat malicious cyber actors, and degrading adversary AI models.

The PRC has rapidly adopted AI for domestic surveillance and military applications, and AI has the potential to dramatically expand their malicious cyber activities, posing an increasing threat that is not bound by the rule of law. They have

larger scale government-related use of AI, while the USG has more sophisticated AI and analytic capabilities, we are not positioned to leverage US. innovation to the fullest. The PRC government has invested \$31E in AI since the beginning of 2022, outpacing US. public investment, and is growing their domestic production of AI chips and supporting technologies. Chinese defense experts claim that the PLA is facing barriers to developing and deploying AI and related emerging technologies, in a similar fashion to USG efforts to adopt AI.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

CYBERSECURITY INDUSTRY PARTNERS

34. Senator BUDD. General Haugh, please discuss the work you're doing with industry partners to enhance the cybersecurity of the defense industrial base and how the fiscal year 2025 budget supports that work. How many partners are leveraging these services, and how are you looking to expand those efforts this year?

General HAUGH. USCYEERCOM develops partnerships directly with industry and as part of larger, Department-wide initiatives. Some specific USCYEERCOM efforts to provide services to our DIE partners are through the Cyber National Mission Force's (CNMF) UNDERADVISEMENT program, which is a voluntary, collaborative, and reciprocal information sharing activity designed for partnerships with private sector entities. They partner heavily with NSA's Cybersecurity Directorate (CSD) Cybersecurity Collaboration Center to share information on cyber threats that enable industry defense and pursuit options. NSA CSD also offers free cybersecurity services to DIE partners.

USCYEERCOM is entering into Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) with key critical infrastructure providers in order to: (1) develop cyber tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for OT/JCS network defense, (2) conduct joint red/blue exercising, (3) share threat information, (4) explore the effectiveness of current USCYEERCOM cyberspace capabilities on OT/JCS networks, and (5) jointly research and develop new cybersecurity capabilities. The secondary benefits of these CRADAs are: (1) provide Cyber Protection Team (CPTs) with opportunity to gain familiarization and training with different types of OT/JCS environments, and (2) harden critical infrastructure supporting military installations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

35. Senator SCHMITT. General Haugh, please evaluate whether or not we should have a cyber service?

General HAUGH. With respect to a Cyber Service, that is an option being studied under the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act Sec. 1533, which is an evaluation of all options available for total force generation. Collectively, those options, to include an evaluation on the advisability of separate Cyber Service, and their implementation plan are what we call "CYBERCOM 2.0" and are due to Congress no later than June 1, 2025. Our intent is to work with the newly confirmed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy to assess future needs and ensure the Cyber Mission Force is able to generate the personnel it needs, that is provided with the necessary training to operate at the appropriate speed and scale, and is able to appropriately leverage technology to be decisive in cyberspace. Until those recommendations are finalized, USCYBERCOM will continue to utilize the Service-like authorities provided to us by Congress. Already, we've seen the Services respond positively to readiness initiatives, for example the assignment policies and personnel policies designed to ensure trained individuals stay within the Cyber Mission Force.

IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 7:59 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. We will begin the hearing. Welcome, General Cavoli, General Van Ovost. Senator—I will defer from giving my opening statement and submit it to the record. I believe that the Ranking Member will do so also so we can expedite questioning. With that, General Cavoli, let me recognize you.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL CHRISTOPHER G. CAVOLI, USA COMMANDER, UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE

General CAVOLI. Thank you, Chairman. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the committee, it is my honor to testify before you today on behalf of the brave men and women and families of U.S. European Command.

Before we start, I would like to publicly recognize our servicemembers' shared sacrifice and praise their devotion to the mission, and I would like to thank you for the support you give them every day. They are represented here today by my Command Sergeant Major Rob Abernathy, who I am lucky to serve with.

I am delighted to testify next to my friend Jackie Van Ovost. We are facing challenging times in the European theater, ladies and gentlemen. Russia's brutal, unprovoked war has ravaged Ukraine for over 2 years. Their forces are demolishing cities, destroying in-

nocent lives at a scale we have not seen since the Second World War.

Moreover, Russia is turning to the People's Republic of China, to Iran, and to North Korea to sustain its campaign in Ukraine. Those countries are forming interlocking strategic partnerships in an attempt to challenge the existing order from which we benefit. This is profoundly inimical to U.S. national interests, and it is important to note that Russia shows no signs of stopping, nor does Russia intend to stop with Ukraine.

Russia presents to us a chronic threat. USEUCOM has responded to this threat by enhancing our deterrence posture across Europe. We have strengthened our Eastern flank with rotational force deployments.

We have expanded pre-positioned stocks. We have modernized our infrastructure to enable rapid reception of forces, and we have demonstrated our ability to reinforce in all domains through dozens of multinational training exercises.

So, we are ready to defend, and this allows us to deter, and we have deterred Russia from attacking our alliance. USEUCOM is also proud to lead the international effort in support of Ukraine. We do this, as you know, through the Security Assistance Group Ukraine, SAG-U, which is led by Lieutenant General Tony Agudo.

In the past 26 months of war, the U.S. and our partners have delivered vast amounts of critical munitions and equipment to our Ukrainian colleagues. SAG-U has been in the lead, and they have facilitated a full range of training to promote unit readiness. We have ensured that Ukraine knows how to use their new equipment, and just as important, how to maintain it. Nevertheless, Russia persists in its vicious campaign.

Meanwhile, Ukraine remains almost entirely dependent on external support to stay in the fight. The severity of this moment cannot be overstated. If we do not continue to support Ukraine, Ukraine could lose.

So, our efforts are great, but in all of this, EUCOM is not alone. War in Europe has also given our allies and our partners clear purpose and unity. They have seized this opportunity which has been presented by this catastrophe, and over the past year or two there have been profound changes in NATO.

We have new war plans for the first time in 35 years. We have new force and readiness models. They make 700 percent more European troops available to me as the Supreme Allied Commander than just a couple of years ago. We have streamlined and focused new command structures. We have new authorities that give me, as SACEUR, the ability to respond to crisis in a timely fashion.

European governments are backing these organizational changes with a concrete uptick in investment. In 2024, at least 20 nations are expected to meet the 2 percent of GDP defense spending, compared to only 3 who met it in 2014. Nevertheless, continued U.S. leadership is essential. Our allies are stepping up, but they require our leadership and our example.

By upholding our commitment to Ukraine and by demonstrating steadfast cohesion with the NATO alliance, we provide a clear deterrent to our adversaries. Of course, should deterrence fail, USEUCOM, along with our allies is ready to fight and win.

We thank you for Congress's unwavering support to USEUCOM servicemembers missions, to their safety, and to their well-being. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, on behalf of the entire European Command, thank you for this opportunity today. I very much look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Christopher G. Cavoli follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL CHRISTOPHER G. CAVOLI

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, it is my distinct honor to testify before you again on behalf of our brave servicemembers and their dedicated families in the European Theater. As the Commander, United States European Command (USEUCOM), I have the honor to lead a dedicated group of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, civilians, and defense contractors who work alongside our NATO Allies and partners to secure the peace and advance American interests. My posture statement will: offer my assessment of the threats in the Euro-Atlantic security environment; describe our strategic approach to address these threats; detail USEUCOM's force posture throughout Europe; explain our operations, investments, and activities; and, in all of this, highlight the importance to America of NATO's modernization of its system of collective defense. The Euro-Atlantic Security Environment The United States faces a combination of challenges and threats in the Euro-Atlantic area that we have not seen in more than thirty years. Russia is waging a full-scale war in Europe and shows no signs of stopping. This presents the real potential for escalation into a wider war, and is cause for significant strategic concern to the United States. But when we view Russia's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine together with Russia's rapid military reconstitution; Russia's deepening ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC), Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran), and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK); Russia's continual machinations and malign influence in the Balkans and other sensitive areas; and Russia's persistent efforts to undermine allied cohesion, U.S. global influence, and Western values, we find a chronic and growing threat to American interests and to the security of our NATO Allies and all residents of the Euro-Atlantic area. This Russian threat is exacerbated by China's continued malign influence in the European Theater, continuing regional instability both inside and outside the USEUCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR); the ever-present threat of violent extremist organizations; and climate change. In all, we see a Euro-Atlantic area that faces more threats and dynamic challenges than at any time in the past thirty years. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for the United States in this environment.

RUSSIA

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally altered the Euro-Atlantic security environment. It is clear that we have a long-term "Russia problem," and the war in Ukraine is but one example.

This ongoing conflict is the largest war on the European continent since World War Two. The Ukrainian people are fighting hard, from Kharkiv to Kherson, against a formidable and ruthless Russian adversary. With the help of the United States, and invaluable help from other allies and partners, Ukraine has inflicted significant damage upon the Russian military. However, Russia relies on the mass and quantity available to a large country, and despite its military's evident deficiencies and dysfunctions, continues to pose an existential threat to Ukraine. Ukraine cannot sustain this fight alone. The United States, our allies, and partners must continue to provide Ukraine with munitions, weapons, and materiel.

Russia remains a capable threat beyond Ukraine, and it's necessary to examine what has and has not happened to the Russian military in Ukraine. Russia poses the most stressing nuclear, biological, and chemical threat in the near-term and will continue to retain WMD capabilities in the medium and long term. First and foremost, Russia's nuclear forces have been unaffected by the conflict, and Russia retains the largest arsenal of deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons in the world. These continue to present an existential threat to the U.S. Homeland, our Allies, and our partners. Additionally, Russia continues to modernize its nuclear forces, and continues to pursue efforts to develop nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile systems, nuclear-armed hypersonic boost glide vehicles, nuclear-powered cruise missiles, nuclear-powered underwater drones, anti-satellite weapons, and orbital nuclear weapons.

Moreover, during this conflict Russia's strategic forces, long range aviation, cyber capabilities, space capabilities, and capabilities in the electromagnetic spectrum have lost no capacity at all. The air force has lost some aircraft, but only about 10 percent of their fleet. The navy has suffered significantly in the Black Sea—but nowhere else and Russian naval activity worldwide is at a significant peak. Russian long range precision fires have increased in production, and Russia has also begun to buy ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and long-range drones from third countries who were previously outside this fight. In fact, it is mainly only in the land forces that Russia has suffered, losing over 2,000 tanks and 315,000 soldiers wounded or dead. However, Russia is reconstituting that force far faster than our initial estimates suggested. The army is actually now larger—by 15 percent—than it was when it invaded Ukraine. Over the past year, Russia increased its front line troop strength from 360,000 to 470,000. Russia's army increased the upper age limit for conscription from 27 to 30, which increases the pool of available military conscripts by 2 million for years to come. Russia has announced plans to pursue an ambitious ground forces restructure, increasing to 1.5 million personnel with an expanded footprint. This restructure includes plans to transform seven motorized rifle brigades into divisions and a new army corps. Russia plans to base some of these new formations in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, as well as Karelia in the High North, opposite Finland. Perhaps most concerning, the Russian military in the past year has shown an accelerating ability to learn and adapt to battlefield challenges both tactically and technologically, and has become a learning organization that little resembles the chaotic force that invaded Ukraine 2 years ago.

Russia continues to display a resilient economy and an ability to withstand sanctions and export controls. Last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted a 2.1 percent drop in Russia's 2023 Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, by the end of the year, the IMF revised its estimate that Russia's GDP increased by 3 percent, primarily due to heavy investments in defense. Currently, the IMF outlook predicts Russia's GDP will increase by 2.6 percent in 2024. Russia is on track to spend 6 percent of its GDP on the military, with defense spending exceeding social spending for the first time since the end of the Soviet Union. This defense spending includes new manufacturing plants and factories for weapons production. Russia is on track to produce or refurbish over 1,200 new main battle tanks a year, and to manufacture at least 3 million artillery shells or rockets per year—over triple the amount the U.S. estimated at the beginning of the war—and more ammunition than all 32 NATO Allied combined. Moreover, Russia has responded to international sanctions by adopting evasion and import substitution strategies that have allowed it to overcome challenges in acquiring key components, including microelectronics and machine tools. This has allowed Russia to continue to invest in high-end, exquisite weapon systems to offset United States strategic advantages, several of which were successfully tested this year.

In sum, Russia is on track to command the largest military on the continent and a defense industrial complex capable of generating substantial amounts of ammunition and materiel in support of large scale combat operations. Regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine, Russia will be larger, more lethal, and angrier with the West than when it invaded.

Diplomatically, Russia has used the past 2 years to attempt to alter the global security architecture by creating relationships that challenge the existing order. Russia, the PRC, Iran, and DPRK are forming interlocking strategic partnerships across the world's largest landmass. This block of adversaries is more cohesive and dangerous than any threat the United States has faced in decades. As of March 2024, the DPRK provided Russia with roughly 6,700 containers that could contain up to three million artillery shells. Iran has provided Russia with drones, artillery, and missiles that have enhanced Russia's lethality in Ukraine. Russia and Iran have a billion-dollar weapons deal that includes domestic production of 6,000 drones by the summer of 2025. The PRC provided Russia with nonlethal assistance ranging from drones to computer chips, and increased its imports of Russian goods by 12 percent to \$117.8 billion in the last year. The PRC, Iran, and DPRK are sustaining Russia's economy and enabling it to continue its aggression in Ukraine. This new axis of adversaries will create strategic dilemmas within an increasingly challenging international security environment.

PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Getting China right is critical for European stability. PRC's expanding influence in Europe and its deepening partnership with Russia create complex challenges within this theater. PRC attempts to sow division and exert influence across Europe. China employs media manipulation and disinformation campaigns to subvert

democratic institutions and sway public opinion. It employs trade coercion, boycotts of European goods, and export controls on critical raw materials to coerce policy-makers in European states.

PRC's strategic approach undermines political cohesion in Europe. This includes investments in dual-use infrastructure directly impacting our collective security. China makes economic investments that superficially appear to be benign, but turn out to have pernicious effects on our security. PRC has spent the last decade investing in European ports, airports, utility companies, and telecommunications, putting at risk our collective sustenance and communication systems. For example, PRC's ownership of critical seaport infrastructure could seem purely commercial, but has been used to deny allied navies port calls, and calls into question the reliability of use for military reinforcement of the NATO Alliance. Similarly, the inclusion of Huawei's 5G technology in some NATO members' networks could necessitate their exclusion from vital communication and intelligence networks, decreasing interoperability among Allies and partners.

Certainly, PRC is closely watching the conflict in Ukraine—learning military lessons, political lessons, and trying to project those onto China's own interests. Moreover, PRC's increased support for Russia reveals the depths of the Chinese Communist Party's commitment to partnerships that challenge our collective security. The continued "No-Limits" partnership between PRC and Russia positions PRC as a formidable adversary to European interests. This partnership is not just diplomatic; it extends to informational, economic, and military realms, aiding nations that exhibit hostility and aggression. For example, through its global propaganda machine, PRC directly parrots Russian disinformation narratives on Ukraine. The partnership between Beijing and Moscow raises questions about PRC's broader strategic objectives in the European Theater. As PRC continues to position itself in support of Russia, it is foreshadowing its long-term position as a challenger to Euro-Atlantic security.

THE BALKANS

The situation in the Western Balkans has grown more tense in the past year. Negotiations to resolve internal political and social issues have not made progress. Russian malign influence to incite tension contributes to this regional instability. Violence has worsened—both spontaneous violence and that which is fomented from outside the country. Last autumn, attacks on Kosovo police and a Serbian troop buildup on the border of north Kosovo presented the highest threat of interstate violence since the end of the war in 1999, and illustrated the worrisome level of instability in the region. In response to the escalating tension, NATO sent troops from the United Kingdom (UK) and Romania to reinforce its peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. Additionally, the Alliance is reevaluating its force posture in the Kosovo peacekeeping mission to respond to the new threat environment.

Ethnic tension in Bosnia and Herzegovina also has the potential to escalate and destabilize the Western Balkans region. Russia's activities to foment the tension between ethnic Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats aim to weaken the country and prevent deepened ties with the EU and NATO. Ethno-nationalist politics prevent Bosnia and Herzegovina from adopting much-needed political, legal, and economic reforms that would advance its Euro-Atlantic integration. Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serb-majority entity, Republika Srpska, seeks to weaken State authorities and weaken relationships with the EU and NATO while maintaining close ties to Russia.

Finally, active Russian influence operations in North Macedonia, Montenegro, and other West Balkan countries continues to present challenges to alliance unity, as well as to general stability in the region. The narratives Russia promulgates stoke inter-ethnic tensions, and degrade support for the rule of law and democracy in general. Russia may not be alone; Serbia's role in these influence operations remains open to question, none of which is good for the region.

THE SAHEL

In the Sahel, economic instability, extreme poverty, and climate change are deeply intertwined with rapid population growth, youth unemployment, political and social fragility, corruption, and the pervasive threat of terrorism. These issues are not isolated; they are inextricably linked and have significant repercussions for European and NATO security. A key manifestation of this instability is the rise in irregular migration toward Europe. Large influxes of people entering European countries are straining resources, fueling political debates over immigration, and raising legitimate concerns about border security and the potential for extremist infiltration. The recent withdrawal of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers from Mali marks a significant shift in the regional security dynamic. This development poses serious ques-

tions about the future stability of Mali, the broader Sahel region, and the void left by French and U.N. forces being filled by non-Western actors, notably Russia and PRC. Russia's increasing involvement in the region challenges our counterterrorism efforts and broader security interests. Meanwhile, PRC's expanding role, driven by its economic agenda, includes a growing presence in security affairs, contributions to U.N. missions, and arms trade. Russia and PRC's expanding influence in the Sahel is one example of how they are influencing the global south to seek advantages.

THE LEVANT

The conflict in Gaza introduces complex security challenges for NATO and USEUCOM. The increasing violence in the region and its consequent humanitarian crises raise the specter of mass displacement and broader regional destabilization. Europe has struggled in the past with issues related to mass migration; more would not help right now. Moreover, almost all nations in Europe have significant expatriate populations in the Levant, and would be eager to safeguard them in the event of a wider war. Finally, various NATO nations have diverse current and historical relationships to the nations in the Levant, and a wider war could produce fissures in the Alliance regarding an external issue at a time when unity is of paramount importance.

VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS

Violent Extremist Organizations continue to pose a threat to NATO Allies and U.S. security interests in our AOR. Europe has suffered 18 terrorist attacks since 2018. Groups like ISIS, despite territorial losses in Iraq and Syria, persist with their global agenda. ISIS' sustained network and capacity for high-profile operations make them a resilient and dangerous adversary. Along with the continuing challenge of lone actors and small groups, inspired by foreign terrorist organizations, the threat posed by VEOs continues to challenge our European Allies and even threatens U.S. personnel abroad.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Changes in the climate continue to pose security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic area. The retreat of the Arctic ice cap has been opening waterways in the High North, a phenomenon Russia and China are eager to exploit. Extreme weather events strain resources, disrupt economies, and increase the likelihood of conflicts in states with already fragile governments. Climate change can worsen floods, fires, water shortage, and migration, and challenge regional stability and security. Moreover, climate-related loss of agricultural productivity, shifts in fish stocks, and water variability can lead to heightened geopolitical tensions and potential resource conflicts.

As we look to the future, the security of the region, and by extension, the interests of the United States and NATO, are intricately linked to the health of the environment and the stability of the climate. USEUCOM will continue to engage in a comprehensive approach that includes monitoring climatic changes, assessing the strategic impact climate change has on Euro-Atlantic security, working with NATO on interoperability and energy security, and deterring our adversaries from exploiting the climate crisis. Additionally, USEUCOM continues to develop relationships and work with both United States and European climate change organizations to develop innovative solutions. Through strategic planning, collaborative efforts, and proactive measures, we aim to safeguard our interests, promote regional stability, and contribute to the global effort against climate change.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND INFLUENCE

Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, in many ways, has had the opposite effect of those intended. Indeed, it has actually produced opportunities to expand U.S. influence abroad, both through NATO and through bilateral relations.

It's well known that where Russia wanted to get less NATO, it got more: USEUCOM celebrates the accession of both Finland and Sweden to the Alliance and notes that these nations both increased our collective defense capabilities from Day One.

More opportunities exist in the neighborhood.

Georgia, historically a bridge between East and West and a stalwart NATO partner, raised concerns in 2023 with actions that seemed to indicate a departure from its Euro-Atlantic trajectory. However, today the government is taking steps to reform Georgia's economic and political institutions to meet prerequisites for EU

membership. There is strong evidence that the government of Georgia desires to move closer to the West, just as the overwhelming majority of the Georgian population has desired for three decades. Georgia's defense establishment maintains a close relationship with USEUCOM and is taking steps to modernize its forces. Maintaining this positive relationship underpins U.S. influence in this important region and creates opportunities that extend beyond Georgia.

The situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan remains tense following Azerbaijan's military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh this past September. Azerbaijan's military success and Russia's failed role as a cease-fire guarantor have altered the regional balance of power. Importantly, Russia refused to aid Armenia during Azerbaijan's offensive, creating a significant rift between Armenia and Russia, and giving Armenia a strong impetus to move closer to the West. As a result, USEUCOM is strengthening its military relationship with Armenia, and the command conducted training exercises in Armenia for the first time in many years in 2023. USEUCOM applauds efforts to reach a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We see an opportunity to establish stability in the region while giving nations an opportunity to move out of Russia's coercive orbit.

Finally, Moldova has seized the opportunity to realize its West-leaning ambitions. The nation has intensified its efforts to rid itself of Russian coercive influence, and has embraced closer partnerships with Europe. USEUCOM has redoubled our efforts to help Moldova develop the resiliency and reform necessary to follow their chosen path.

These opportunities, when taken together, represent a chance to diminish malign and coercive Russian influence throughout Europe.

OPPORTUNITY IN NATO

At the 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius, allied Heads of State and Government approved the three Regional Plans and gave NATO Allied Command Operations the approval to proceed with implementing and developing the Alliance's modernized collective defense system.

With approval of those plans, the first formal plans the Alliance has had in more than three decades, the Alliance is finally armed with a comprehensive blueprint for modernizing its system of collective defense. First, the plans have produced a force structure requirement, and NATO now has an objective, reality-based driver for nations' defense planning and procurement. Second, NATO is now able to tie that force to specific geography and tasks, giving focus to the Alliance's operations, activities, and investments. Third, the force is now able to exercise against the requirements of our plans, instead of fictional scenarios. Fourth, the force now has objective readiness requirements that each one will be held to. On top of these enormous changes, Allied Command Operations will also emplace an updated Command and Control design, transforming headquarters once fit for peacetime and out-of-area-operations into warfighting headquarters ready to defend allied territory.

Throughout this fundamental change, the Alliance continues to exhibit unprecedented cohesion, focus, and determination. It is a strong statement of NATO unity that in considering the three Regional Plans—which cover 8 percent of the globe and over one billion people—there were no military or operational disagreements among the 31 Allies. More, the Alliance is backing up its ambition with money. In 2023 NATO saw a real increase of 11 percent in defense spending across European Allies and Canada. In 2024, NATO expects 18 Allies to spend 2 percent gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. In total, European Allies will invest a combined total 280 billion U.S. dollars in defense, which amounts to 2 percent of their combined GDP—a far cry from the three members who met the 2 percent goal in 2014.

This renewed sense of purpose and definitive plan of action give us the opportunity to create a more effective alliance with a more sustainable division of labor and effort, which will in turn give the U.S. opportunity to face all global challenges while still ensuring the deterrence of Russia and security of Europe. We need to be with NATO every step of the way through this transformation, which is so clearly in our interests.

USEUCOM'S STRATEGIC APPROACH

Our strategic approach to these challenges and opportunities centers on assisting Ukraine, deterring Russian aggression, strengthening the NATO Alliance, and responding to crises while actively shaping the operational environment. It ensures the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic region while preserving our shared values and interests with our Allies.

SUPPORTING UKRAINE

United States support for Ukraine demonstrates our commitment to upholding the principles of national sovereignty and international law—principles that underpin global stability and security. Failure to assist Ukraine poses a grave threat to its survival. Inaction will embolden Russia and establish a precedent that threatens the global security environment. The United States and our European Allies lead the global effort to enhance Ukraine's military capabilities through comprehensive training and arming. Continued U.S. leadership is essential for enabling Ukraine to defend its sovereignty and preserving stability, security, and democracy throughout Europe and beyond.

Detering Russia from expanding its aggression into alliance territory is essential to preserve the rules-based international order, safeguard the sovereignty of nations within our AOR, and protect U.S. strategic interests. Russia's aggression poses a direct threat to the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Now is the time to capitalize on Russia's failures in Ukraine by accelerating our modernization of capabilities, posture, and security cooperation to outpace Russia's reconstitution.

A strong and cohesive NATO is the cornerstone of deterrence, and therefore is the basis for peace in the Euro-Atlantic. The Alliance is more unified than at any point since the cold war and is undergoing its most significant transformation in three decades as it modernizes its system of collective defense. In line with the Nuclear Posture Review, the United States is modernizing systems to strengthen strategic deterrence to ensure a strong extended deterrence capability and assurance to European Allies. Positioning the right U.S. forces throughout Europe to support this transformation is a necessary investment in our future security. As the Alliance continues to modernize, U.S. leadership is more important than ever.

While we assist Ukraine and work with NATO to deter Russia, we remain always ready to respond to unexpected crises within and beyond our AOR. Concurrently, through the proactive shaping of the operational environment, we create strategic dilemmas for our adversaries, neutralize potential conflicts, and establish conditions conducive to U.S. interests. These are interconnected, with crisis response delivering immediate security benefits, and shaping the operational environment ensuring long-term stability and deterrence.

We are poised to respond to the Euro-Atlantic's complex security challenges. USEUCOM's force posture is an extension of our strategic approach. It enables us to have the right forces, in the right locations, at the right time, with the right capabilities.

USEUCOM POSTURED ACROSS EUROPE

USEUCOM's posture is the baseline for executing our strategy. It is both a reflection of our commitment and a testament to our ability to respond. Strategically positioned, we spearhead the U.S. Government's efforts in support of NATO, ensuring our forces are not just present, but combat-ready, adaptable, capable of deterring, and if necessary defeat any threat. Our operations span the European Theater, utilizing the capabilities of our seven service components. From the Black Sea, where our efforts bolster Ukraine's defense, to the Baltic Region, where large-scale U.S.-NATO exercises enhance our interoperability, our posture is clear: we stand united with our Allies, ready to face and overcome any challenge.

The key to deterring Russia is having combat-credible forces in the right position. U.S. Force posture in Europe includes 83,000 members of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard, many of whom moved their families across the Atlantic Ocean to become part of communities throughout Europe. The footprint for these forces includes main operating bases, forward operating sites, and cooperative security locations from Spain to Estonia, and from Iceland to Türkiye.

USEUCOM's land force consists of five U.S. Army brigade combat teams and two division headquarters. These forces enhance our deterrence posture along the Eastern Flank. United States Army Europe and Africa and V Corps' Forward Command Post in Poland provide command and control of our ground forces. We have positioned long-range fires, anti-air defense, sustainment, and communications equipment across Europe to support and protect our ground forces. U.S. continued investment in Army Prepositioned Stocks and facilities enable rapid integration of rotational combat units into the USEUCOM AOR.

In the air domain, USEUCOM will complete the stand-up of one U.S. Air Force squadron of fifth generation F-35 fighters at RAF Lakenheath this month and is on track to receive a second squadron by August 2025. The United States Air Forces in Europe and Africa provides command and control for these forces as well as for fourth generation fighters, bombers, tankers, and transport aircraft positioned in

the UK, Italy, Germany, Iceland, Norway, and other European countries. Additionally, USEUCOM is working closely with our Allies and partners to decentralize the physical infrastructure required to generate air power by operationalizing the concept of Agile Combat Employment (ACE). ACE enables the sharing of infrastructure and capabilities necessary to support air platforms with our Allies and partners. Decentralized infrastructure located throughout Europe enables our Air Force to be more dynamic, survivable, and lethal.

USEUCOM's maritime command and control is provided by U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa and the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet from Naples, Italy, which controls Carrier Strike Group and Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Units, guided missile destroyers and other naval assets. Sixth Fleet will also receive one more guided missile destroyer in Spain this summer, with another arriving in 2 years. In addition, United States Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa provides command and control for Marine air and ground forces to conduct exercises, training, and operational support to USEUCOM missions. Finally, the U.S. Second Fleet reinforces NATO's Western Flank in the Atlantic Ocean and into the waters of the High North.

USEUCOM formally added the Department of Defense's fourth Space Force service component, United States Space Forces Europe and Africa (USSPACEFOR-EURAF), this past December. The component stood up at Ramstein Air Base and will serve both the European and African Theaters. USSPACEFOR-EURAF is integral in creating networked, joint-space architecture, and deepening relationships with allies and partners in the space domain. Furthermore, this component enables us to respond to our adversaries as they find innovative ways to threaten our national interest and security from space.

USEUCOM's Cyberspace Operations Division defends our cyber architecture from our adversaries, hackers, and threat actors seeking to undermine our networks. Additionally, each service component has a robust cyber capability to protect its networks from external threats. USEUCOM also coordinates with U.S. Cyber Command to assist in bolstering the offensive and defensive cyber capabilities of our allies and partners and in countering malign influence.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) maintain a persistent presence throughout Europe. Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) continues to train Ukrainian SOF and support joint operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Special Forces stationed at Stuttgart and Baumholder, Germany are focused on USEUCOM-directed tasks designed to counter Russian aggression. Additionally, SOCEUR is expanding its relationships with Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. NATO Special Operations Forces Command and SOCEUR are working closely together and building interoperability that expands the U.S. and NATO Special Operations footprint.

Our posture in Europe is a clear signal of our commitment and readiness to protect U.S. interests, support our Allies, and maintain regional stability. USEUCOM's forces located throughout Europe enable us to execute our strategy. Our success will be defined by our operations, activities, and investments in the European Theater.

USEUCOM'S OPERATIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND INVESTMENTS

USEUCOM's operations, activities and investments (OAIs) are aligned with our strategic approach, and our success will depend on how well we: support Ukraine; deter Russia; strengthen the Alliance; and respond to crises, all while shaping the environment in the Euro-Atlantic area.

USEUCOM SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

USEUCOM's comprehensive support to Ukraine, which comprises military aid, training, and logistics, all of which is coupled with the contributions of our Allies and partners, forms the backbone of Ukraine's defense against Russian aggression. The Ukrainian people are acutely aware their fate as a free and independent nation hinges on our assistance to help them defend their Homeland. Ukraine depends on our effort, and our responsibility to assist them is a driving factor in our daily operations. The security of the Euro-Atlantic area also depends on it, as does the sustainment of a United States-led global order that has produced prosperity and peace for our country for decades.

Since February 2022, the United States has committed more than \$44.2 billion in security assistance to Ukraine through Presidential Drawdown Authorities, the Ukrainian Security Assistance Initiative, and Foreign Military Financing. Our Allies and partners, meanwhile, have also risen to the task: their collective contributions of our Allies are substantially more than those of the United States. In some cases, Allied countries are donating large portions, if not all, of their own military inventory and a disproportionate amount of their budgets. When measured as a percent-

age of GDP, the U.S. ranks 14th in the top 25 nations that have donated to Ukraine. EU institutions provided over \$80 billion in financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Nevertheless, it is the leadership of the United States—our adherence to and defense of our ideals, our strategic perspective, and above all our ability to convene and influence other nations—that makes us the critical nation in this effort. It is the United States that leads all like-minded nations to support Ukraine and to give them a viable chance to defend their sovereignty.

Materiel contributions from the United States enable the Ukrainian Defense Forces to defend their country against the larger Russian force. In 2022, the Department of Defense authorized USEUCOM to activate the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine (SAG-U). SAG-U includes a large non-U.S. component and aggregates Ukrainian requirements, works with the Department of Defense, our allies, and partners to resource them, and then delivers those to our Ukrainian partners. SAG-U also trains Ukrainian Defense Forces to operate and maintain the complex weapons systems we provide, such as the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, F-16s, and HIMARS.

SAG-U's efforts do not end with providing training and materiel. SAG-U also leads a multinational effort to support the maintenance and repair of the donations we have given to Ukraine, so the Nation can continue to prevail in the grueling combat they are engaged in.

Critical to all these efforts is the sustainment and logistics support network established within the borders of our NATO Allies. This network is the lifeline for the flow of equipment, munitions, and material support to the Ukrainian front lines. It would be impossible to sustain this without the mature logistical "footprint" and systems that exist in the USEUCOM AOR. This logistics system is the envy of the Department of Defense, and is a key capability that we must sustain even as we enjoy its benefits.

Our experience supporting Ukraine has shown that a healthy Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and a strong Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program are just as important as ready forces to generate enough combat power to sustain large scale combat operations. For example, aligning the DIB to produce critical munitions and replenish stocks requires buy-in from industry and a clear demand signal these munitions are needed. Vulnerable global supply chains and competition for resources can quickly lead to production delays and, therefore, impair the fielding of equipment at the time of need. We will keep helping the Services work with Congress on streamlining and de-risking these processes as we continue supporting Ukraine and modernizing the DIB and FMS processes to enhance our long-term collective defense capability.

USEUCOM'S DETERRENCE OF RUSSIA

USEUCOM seeks to deter Russian aggression by denying Russia its ability to gain advantage over NATO in geography, readiness, or domain. Our efforts are expressed as OAI's and are virtually always embedded in the context of NATO efforts.

USEUCOM is the Department's coordinating authority for the Russia problem set. Our leadership of the Department's Russia Strategic Initiative is crucial in providing a cohesive understanding of Russia's intentions and shaping our collective strategic response. Congressional appropriations play a vital role here, enabling us to build and maintain a robust force structure, conduct vital training exercises, develop necessary infrastructure, and sustain combat credible force levels required to ensure the U.S. and Alliance defense posture can deter Russian aggression.

The forces within USEUCOM are the essential building blocks for deterring Russia, so investing in these capabilities sends a clear message to Russia about the U.S. resolve to respond to aggression and defend its interests globally. The presence of five brigade combat teams and two division headquarters within the USEUCOM AOR forms a robust defense against the unpredictable Russian threat. The presence of seven fighter squadrons is essential, and the upgrade of our air power to 5th generation technology enhances the ability to deliver precise effects in the complex battle space we face today. The strategic positioning of air and missile defense capabilities to safeguard our forces ensures our combined air, ground, and sea power can withstand an initial attack. Moreover, the readiness of our AOR for the rapid reception and mobilization of forces is essential for conducting large scale operations or sustaining any prolonged conflict. Modernizing and expanding USEUCOM's long-term prepositioned stocks enhances our readiness and positions us to fight and win against any adversary if deterrence fails. We are working with our NATO Allies to create long-term storage facilities and maintenance complexes to host prepositioned equipment. For example when complete in May, the storage facility in Poland will be outfitted with M1 Tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, artillery, and support equip-

ment that contributes to the equipment sets of 2 armored brigade combat teams in Europe. Investment in prepositioned infrastructure and maintenance facilities ensures our equipment will remain in peak war-fighting condition.

The European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has been vital to this posture. EDI allows USEUCOM to maintain combat credibility by supporting rotational force deployments, infrastructure investments, and delivering the right capabilities at key locations throughout Europe. Continued congressional support of EDI is an investment in Euro-Atlantic security and U.S. military capability. The FY24 EDI budget allocation of \$3.6 billion allows USEUCOM to support force presence, training exercises, and infrastructure projects that are enduring investments in U.S. and European security. Activities supported by EDI are clear demonstrations of the United States commitment to NATO and the collective defense of our Allies.

USEUCOM's exercise program demonstrates our war-fighting capabilities to fight anywhere in the AOR alongside our Allies. While USEUCOM conducts dozens of training exercises every year, there are three recent exercises that stand out as demonstrations of our combat credibility.

First, as I testify to you today STEADFAST DEFENDER 24 is on-going; it is the largest live exercise NATO has done since 1988, and is focused completely on building readiness to defend the territory of the Alliance. More than 90,000 servicemembers from all 32 NATO Allies are participating in the exercise to enhance interoperability and strengthen the deterrence posture of the NATO Alliance.

Second, the U.S.-led, multinational maritime exercise in the Baltic Sea, BALTOPS 23 in June 2023 demonstrated the collective power of 17 nations. Over 6,000 servicemembers trained on anti-submarine, anti-surface, mine warfare, and naval coordination and shipping guidance. The exercise strengthened combined response capabilities critical to preserving the freedom of navigation and security in the Baltic Sea.

Third, USEUCOM participated in the annual German-led, air training exercise, AIR DEFENDER 23. This is one of many success stories that show how our NATO Allies are taking larger leadership roles to strengthen the Alliance. AIR DEFENDER 23 was the largest air-training exercise in European history and involved the deployment of the most aircraft into the European Theater since World War Two. USEUCOM participated in AIR DEFENDER 23 along with 16 other nations to demonstrate our collective ability to reinforce the Eastern Flank with air power.

USEUCOM'S SUPPORT TO NATO

USEUCOM's primary reason for being located inside Europe is to enable NATO, and enabling NATO to deter, and if necessary defeat, Russia is the most important thing we do on a daily basis. Our comprehensive commitment to the Alliance—through the deployment of forces, rigorous training programs, and strategic investments—bolsters our collective defense and enhances the interoperability of the Alliance. The more the U.S. invests to strengthen the Alliance now, the less we will need to provide in the future.

Our commitment to NATO's new focus on Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area is evident in both our relation to the Alliance's command structures and our participation in its activities. There are more U.S. Forces assigned, allocated, apportioned or affiliated with NATO structures and plans than at any time in the past four decades. U.S. Forces assigned to Europe can now be tasked directly by USEUCOM to support the NATO's new defense plans. This is a huge win for European and United States security. Rather than waiting for conflict to arise before U.S. forces can be tasked to support NATO, USEUCOM can now provide predictable and consistent forces in support of collective territorial defense. This supports NATO's ability to execute its plans and helps influence Allies to contribute their own forces.

Our commitment to NATO defense plans is also evident in our active participation in allied planning and training exercises, which are transitioning from a focus on deployment to a focus on deterrence and large-scale territorial defense. Last year, USEUCOM participated broadly in NATO's flagship exercise, Steadfast Jupiter 23. Steadfast Jupiter 23 included the largest and most complex computer-assisted, command post exercise conducted in the 21st century. The exercise included more than 7,000 people from 17 NATO countries training on the Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area. Future iterations of the STEADFAST series of exercises will continue to build interoperability as well as train on requirements outlined in the new NATO defense plans.

USEUCOM also leads our own flagship training exercise, Austere Challenge. Last year's event, Austere Challenge 23, included participants from Allied Joint Forces Command Brunssum, along with 15 other allied and partner countries. AUSTERE

CHALLENGE 23 demonstrated our collective ability to project power across the USEUCOM AOR, integrating a diverse array of foreign forces in a multi-week training operation. We have just completed Auster Challenge 24, which included an unprecedented level of allied participation, and tied together U.S. plans with NATO's new Regional Plans for the very first time.

Moreover, USEUCOM's service components actively participate in training exercises organized by the militaries of our NATO Allies. These exercises are smaller in scope, but large in impact. For example, Finland led an asymmetric warfare exercise called Southern Griffin which built special operations capability among NATO Allies. SOCEUR trained alongside Special Forces from Finland, France, the United Kingdom, and NATO's newest Ally Sweden. Other exercises such as Lightning Strike/Spring Storm, Neptune Strike 23-2, and Atlas Guardian present additional opportunities for USEUCOM's service components to train alongside our NATO Allies and strengthen our collective defense and relationships.

Finally, USEUCOM supports the Alliance's effort to collaborate on innovative, modern opportunities that build defensive capabilities. For example, USEUCOM's air component supported the first-ever NATO Weapons and Tactics Conference (WEPTAC), which developed the framework for the first-ever "Ramstein Flag" exercise. This exercise, modeled on U.S. Red Flag exercises, will provide realistic, advanced, aerial combat training. Representatives from 24 NATO Allies attended WEPTAC and the inaugural "Ramstein Flag" exercise is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2024 in Greece.

RESPOND TO CRISES

While we work with allies and partners to prevent crises, USEUCOM maintains the ability and responsibility to respond to any crisis in our AOR. USEUCOM's power projection capability enables U.S. forces to deploy anywhere in the world. In addition to combat forces, we can also project logistical and medical organizations that provide essential resources during times of crisis or instability. USEUCOM works closely with our interagency and international partners to maintain readiness to prevent and respond to crises.

USEUCOM's geographical position enables us to support other Combatant Commands in crisis. For example, during the current conflict in Gaza, USEUCOM supported USCENTCOM with air and maritime forces for operations in the Middle East. Likewise, we routinely support AFRICOM's operations on the African continent. The constant interaction among our three commands allows us to solve "boundary problems," and ensures that in a crisis USEUCOM will be positioned and able to support either command to further U.S. interests.

USEUCOM values our interagency partners and collaborates with our offices located around the European Theater. For example, our work with the Department of State on removal and abatement of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war in Ukraine contributes to the safety of civilians caught in the war's crossfire. USEUCOM also works with the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as the Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center, to enforce sanctions levied against Russia by the United States. Our support to the Department of Energy and U.S. Agency for International Development in Europe provides winterization and infrastructure to areas in Ukraine effected by the damage caused by Russia's war.

USEUCOM SHAPING THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

USEUCOM deliberately engages in an array of activities and investments that shape the operating environment. Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives funded out of the International Security Cooperation Programs (ISCP), military sales, military construction, and key leader engagements (KLEs) inform the activities and attitudes of our Allies and partners. Our goal is to build support for U.S. interests that will have a positive impact on Euro-Atlantic security while simultaneously strengthening relationships with our Allies and partners.

USEUCOM's use of ISCP funding is critical to meeting our security requirements throughout the AOR. Our deliberate use of the \$295.08 million allotted to us by the Office of the Secretary of Defense goes directly to fulfilling critical requirements in the Baltics, Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, and Romania. These funds will improve facilities, enable countries to purchase military equipment, and increase training of host-nation militaries.

Leaders from throughout USEUCOM have conducted over 800 KLEs in the past year. These engagements, and years of similar engagements before them, have been instrumental in fostering deep, enduring, trust-based relationships. One cannot surge trust at the time of need; the investment needs to be made beforehand and

over time. USEUCOM's relationships in this AOR are fundamental in developing common understanding of the security environment; in reassuring our Allies and partners; in demonstrating our commitment to partnerships; and in realigning productive relationships with foreign countries. They are the bedrock of our efforts to maintain security in the Euro-Atlantic region, ultimately contributing to the security of the United States.

IMPROVING NATO'S DETERRENCE AND COLLECTIVE DEFENSE CAPABILITIES

As we continue to implement our strategy through OAI's, our greatest strategic opportunity lies in the Alliance's transformation of its collective defense system. This transformation is not just about responding to current threats. It is a wholesale transformation of the operational forces and procedures of the Alliance, and represents a proactive step toward a future where collective defense of the Euro-Atlantic is more integrated, resilient, adaptable, and resilient to emerging challenges.

CONCLUSION

The bond between the United States and Europe is fundamental to American security. Our shared history, values, and objectives form the bedrock of this relationship. As we approach the 75th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty, we are reminded of the enduring strength of the NATO Alliance and its impact on regional and global security. With the continued support of Congress, our NATO Allies, and our partners, we will ensure European security remains synonymous with American security. Together, we will face the challenges of the future and continue to build a free, prosperous, and secure Euro-Atlantic area.

Thank you, again, for your continued support to our servicemembers stationed throughout Europe and your commitment to protect our shared values and interests. Taking advantage of the opportunity to help Ukraine fight Russia sets the conditions for Ukrainian success on the battlefield and for the United States, our allies, and our partners to outpace Russia's reconstitution, and secure the future of the Euro-Atlantic. With support to deter Russia, continued progress on the development of a resilient defense industrial base, and a more streamlined foreign military sales program, the United States will have every advantage as it supports NATO's transformation and sets the conditions for long-term security in the Euro-Atlantic.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General Cavoli. General Van Ovost, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JACQUELINE D. VAN OVOST, USAF COMMANDER, UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

General VAN OVOST. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished members of the committee, it is my honor to join you today with my Senior Enlisted Leader, Chief Master Sergeant Brian Kruzelnick, to represent the men and women of the United States Transportation Command as we defend the Nation, take care of our people, and succeed through teamwork.

I am extremely proud of our team of logistics professionals who lead the joint deployment and distribution enterprise, continually exceed expectations, and ensure hope, deterrence, and victory are assured as we underwrite our Nation's defense.

From competition to crisis, the entire enterprise proudly deliver for our nations, our allies, and partners. We know our success around the globe would not be possible without the steadfast support of this committee and the whole of Congress. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget request continues to make strides in closing gaps in our mobility areas as we prepare for global operations in a contested environment.

A contested environment is the reality of today. Whether in the Homeland or abroad, we cannot presume freedom of maneuver to execute our operations with full access to our lines of communication.

Our organic fleets, coupled with the vital capacity provided by our commercial transportation partners, must continue to present credible capacity. Meaning, we must modernize our mobility capabilities to include cyber resiliency and digital modernization.

A connected, aware, and survivable mobility fleet and network is needed to maintain our advantage against a capable and determined near peer adversary. My top readiness concerns remain sealift and air refueling. Sealift is the backbone of our ability to deliver a decisive Joint Force.

However, the age of the fleet is dragging readiness to alarming levels. 17 of the 47 organic reserve force ships are 50 years or older. To address readiness and decrease in capacity due to the planned retirement of 27 ships in the next 8 years, we must add younger ships to the fleet.

TRANSCOM supports Navy strategy to acquire used sealift vessels from the commercial market, and further request to provide the Secretary of Defense discretionary authority to purchase foreign built used ships under favorable market conditions without restrictions.

We acknowledge Congress's intent to include domestic newbuild sealift ships to recapitalize the ready Reserve Force, and we are working with the Navy and Maritime Administration to create an acquisition strategy for new construction that will complement the buy used program.

I greatly appreciate your support for timely, predictable, and stabilized funding to meet our sealift requirements. Similarly, our refueling is foundation to our Nation's power projection advantage. It is our most stressed capability.

We must ensure continuous modernization and recapitalization of the aging fleet to meet the operational requirements of the modern battlespace. TRANSCOM supports the Air Force's strategy for the uninterrupted tanker recapitalization and accelerated fielding of the next generation air refueling system.

Over the past year, we have made great strides in synchronizing global fuel management and delivery in collaboration with our key partners in the Joint Petroleum Enterprise, leading to robust planning, posture, operations, and capability development to assure end to end fuel distribution in a contested environment.

This includes diversifying our distribution and delivery posture by having an increased forward presence with fuel afloat in contracted maritime tankers and increasing capacity and access to the U.S. flagged maritime tanker fleet through the Tanker Security Program.

In addition, we fully support the Maritime Security Program, the Jones Act, and cargo preference laws that all work to ensure that we have the necessary U.S. flag capability and U.S. merchant mariners to move sensitive defense materials during a national emergency.

Maritime stakeholders have been experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining qualified mariners, and we support MARAD and industry efforts to identify strategies that address the mariner shortage and ensure their readiness.

To effectively sense adversary threats and activities in our logistics networks, the Nation must utilize all available resources. Sec-

tion 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act provides me insights into adversary intent, capabilities, and activities to contest our logistics flows. The loss of this authority adds risk to my mission.

Additionally, passing a national defense supplemental is vital for the health of the Transportation Working Capital Fund, which preserves essential readiness and ensures response options for the Secretary of Defense. I am honored to join General Cavoli today, where we stand firmly with Ukraine and its fight for democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, that in turn delivers success and stability for our allies and our Nation.

I would like to thank you once again for your leadership and the support you provide our workforce. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Van Ovost follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL JACQUELINE D. VAN OVOST

WHO WE ARE—OUR MISSION

U.S. Transportation Command's (USTRANSCOM) enduring purpose is to project and sustain combat power whenever and wherever the United States chooses. Within the ever-changing strategic and operational landscape, our logistics and mobility enterprise continues to play an integral role in assuring our Nation's defense, as well as aiding leaders at all echelons to preserve time and create better options—a decision advantage. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) envisions a future force as lethal, sustainable, resilient, survivable, agile, and responsive—our logistics and mobility enterprises will meet this call. USTRANSCOM, its components, and its commercial partners are advancing efforts in connectivity, data-driven decision-making, and creating options to support integrated deterrence, campaigning efforts, and an enduring advantage for our joint force.

As one of 11 combatant commands, our warfighting team is a diverse force, composed of our component commands, as well as a subordinate command, interagency, and commercial partners of the broader Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise (JDDE) and the Joint Petroleum Enterprise (JPE). The entire enterprise works together to move the right capabilities to the right place, at the right time. Our assigned Unified Command Plan responsibilities are executed through three component commands (U.S. Army's Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC), U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command, and U.S. Air Force's Air Mobility Command), and one subordinate command, the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC). Our key mobility mission areas include sealift, strategic seaports, airports, air refueling, airlift, patient movement, domestic rail, global bulk fuel management, and motor transport. The JDDE operates as a Total Force, harnessing the unique skills of Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, government civilians, contractors, and commercial industry teammates who are vital to our ability to bolster warfighting readiness.

Annually, USTRANSCOM spends approximately 9.5 billion dollars in organic and commercial transportation services to execute Department of Defense (DOD) mission requirements. The Transportation Working Capital Fund (TWCF) is the lifeblood of USTRANSCOM's mission to deploy and sustain the joint force. TWCF fiscal resources provide the agility necessary to rapidly respond to complex and unplanned operations. We have been below our cash thresholds for several years and are working closely with the Department to return the TWCF to our normal boundaries while not hindering Services' buying power. An essential part of that solvency plan is to receive a supplemental reimbursement for support to Israel. The TWCF has already expensed \$172 million for transportation costs for Israel and projects total costs at \$550 million for fiscal year 2024 as of 4 March 2024. The TWCF cannot absorb this amount and requires reimbursement to ensure our ability to rapidly respond to emerging needs as requested in the Administration's October 2023 supplemental appropriations request.

The DOD's ability to project military forces inextricably is linked to commercial industry, what we like to call our fourth component. Our industry partners provide critical transportation capacity, petroleum infrastructure, global networks, and contracts, to meet day-to-

day and wartime requirements. USTRANSCOM also partners with other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), especially the Maritime Administration (MARAD), who operates and maintains the Government-owned sealift fleet. We also partner with the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Railroad Administration within DOT to evaluate the readiness of key road and rail transportation networks to support defense requirements, and we collaborate closely with other key logistics partners and Defense Transportation System customers, including the Defense Logistics Agency, the General Services Administration, and U.S. Coast Guard, to establish supportive policies and guide our efforts.

WHERE WE ARE—STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Strategic competition is a daily reality, and our Nation's competitors are maneuvering fluidly between conventional and gray-zone activities. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Houthi attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea, and Israel's ongoing conflict in Gaza confirms that this is still a "decisive decade." Mobility obstacles exist at every step in the deployment and distribution process, from the Homeland to the destination. The increasing focus of foreign intelligence entities to map and penetrate the U.S. military/commercial logistics and critical infrastructure systems requires an amplified, coordinated response from all Government counterintelligence agencies. Over 85 percent of the Joint Force is in the Continental United States, and our mission of moving the warfighter to the fight will continue to be threatened by competitors that are on a trajectory to present increasingly challenging threats across multiple domains. We acknowledge that the Homeland is not a sanctuary.

The President's National Security Strategy (NSS) makes clear that the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are working aggressively to undermine democracy and export a model of governance marked by repression at home and coercion abroad. The PRC continues to refine and develop its means to contest American power projection and sustainment operations in the Pacific. The PRC is carefully studying how the United States sustains our Allies and partners in Europe and the Middle East during two of this century's most destabilizing conflicts. Without question, the PRC has identified what they perceive to be our vulnerabilities and will attempt to exploit them in a future crisis with the West.

In Europe, the war in Ukraine remains at the forefront. Moscow seeks to fracture Western unity and diminish our resolve. Our sustainment operations, particularly crucial supplies of artillery and air defenses for Ukraine's military, will remain a vital lifeline for them. Of note, the war strengthened Russia and PRC ties, as well as ties between Russia and the DPRK, and they view their deepened relationship as a strong counterbalance to the United States.

The Middle East is one of our most enduring security and stability challenges. Iran and its threat network pose risk to sustainment operations throughout the region. Recently, we have witnessed numerous attacks on our facilities in Iraq and Syria. The ongoing war between Israel and Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Hamas) is a powerful reminder of the highly unpredictable nature of conflict in the region. The character of this violence and instability guarantees that we must remain prepared to conduct mobility and sustainment operations in this volatile part of the world with almost no warning. We must assure Israel and our other Middle East partners that we can, and will, move decisively and rapidly when and where we are needed to protect our interests in the region.

Furthermore, regional instability in places such as Africa, Central and Latin America, as well as transborder issues like natural disasters and pandemics, will continue to challenge the Joint Force and create formidable hurdles for USTRANSCOM.

The JDDE is accustomed to sustaining forward-deployed forces across largely uncontested environments. Logistics realities are changing and the JDDE cannot presume it will enjoy similar freedom of maneuver to execute operations with full access to our lines of communication on the ground, in the air, and at sea. The PRC has developed a sophisticated cyber capability for collection and attack and expanded its electronic warfare and counter space capabilities to degrade our Command and Control. The PRC has fielded hypersonic missiles like those used by Russia in Ukraine. These long-range weapons threaten our ports, fuel storage sites, stockpiles, warehouses, and marshalling areas throughout the Pacific. Additionally, mass drone attacks can overwhelm the battlefield and have caught the world's attention—from Russia using Iranian Shahed drones against Ukraine, to terrorist groups using one way attack drones in the Middle East as seen in the Bab-el-

Mandeb strait. Air power is now available to any actor who has the means and will to challenge us.

Our Nation's strategic network of Allies and partners provides capacity, logistical capabilities, intelligence, and Access, Basing and Overflight (ABO) agreements that empower the United States to compete successfully against global challenges. Assured access to and through foreign nations is cultivated through sustained engagement and agreements with our Allies, partners, and geographic combatant commands. This network of Allies and partners enables assured force projection and freedom of maneuver, reducing the challenges associated with maintaining operational reach over extended distances. This can be seen in action during OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN, which saw collaboration between United States Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), USTRANSCOM and an international coalition protecting the free flow of commerce through the Red Sea.

The JDDE relies on the diverse and expansive capacity of global infrastructure, both government-owned and commercially owned and operated, to deliver an immediate force tonight and a decisive force when needed. We intend to make our supporting systems more resilient and agile in the face of tomorrow's peer threats to preserve operational capability and protect key systems. The collective influence of our enterprise and Nation to shape the strategic environment can provide competitive advantage, senior leadership decision space, and complicate the decision matrix of any potential adversary.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

In the decades after World War II, most transportation and logistics activities have been conducted in uncontested environments, however, the strategic environment has changed dramatically. We must grow our capabilities to ensure that logistics never becomes the weak link. We will set the conditions for a strategic environment where the JDDE can project and sustain the Joint Force, at the time and place of the Nation's choosing, under persistent, all domain attack.

Our competitors' threats are real and the imperative to change is urgent. This decisive decade demonstrates the importance of the NDS's priorities of defending the United States Homeland; deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners; deterring aggression and being prepared to prevail; and building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem. USTRANSCOM's capabilities will be the engine that propels the NDS, underwriting the Joint Warfighting Concept, ensuring the viability of deterrence operations, and providing our national leadership with strategic flexibility.

The command will enable our national priorities through the NDS's strategic ways of *Integrated Deterrence, Campaigning, and Building Enduring Advantages*. By nesting our strategic priorities and campaign objectives within the NDS framework, USTRANSCOM is focused on ensuring the JDDE is effectively postured to accomplish its mission when called upon.

Integrated Deterrence is predicated on making the adversary doubt they can achieve their objectives. It requires working seamlessly across domains and theaters, and leveraging our unmatched network of Allies and Partners, in order to demonstrate capability and will. USTRANSCOM remains laser-focused on projecting and sustaining the Joint Force by cultivating robust global mobility posture and credible strategic capacity. Strengthening relationships with Allies, partners, and commercial industry continues to expand friendly access, basing, and overflight, thus creating positional advantage across all domains. Maintaining ready, credible capacity through recapitalization, modernization, and a robust multi-national exercise schedule maintains our global power-projection capability while demonstrating collective resolve. When used in concert, posture and capacity provide a true asymmetric and strategic advantage for the Nation.

Campaigning includes the Globally Integrated Exercise, Pacific Pathways, Keen Edge, and other joint exercises that put a premium on closing operational gaps to strengthen deterrence and develop new concepts to prevail. Large-scale exercises, fleet readiness activations, and focused wargames will enhance logistics interoperability and trust across the Joint Force, with Allies, partners, and the commercial industry.

Building Enduring Advantages begins by addressing critical vulnerabilities and accelerating force development. Investing in and hardening a resilient defense ecosystem will strengthen our commercial and military transportation and bulk fuel management networks across multiple domains. These investments will modernize our forces for increased agility, survivability, and battle space awareness in a contested environment. We expect disruption to our operations and are focused on cyber

mission assurance and digital modernization to ensure our ability to conduct globally integrated command and control, and to generate decision advantage. With significant volumes of data and advanced analytics, we expect to posture efficiently, recover quickly, and accelerate our decision advantage.

Finally, our people will make the difference between victory and defeat. We acknowledge the challenges present today and continue to develop our warfighting team with a competitive mindset. By embracing the imperative to be ready now and in the future, our people understand the mission and are continually adapting to maintain our Nation's competitive advantage in power projection.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE—WARFIGHTING FRAMEWORK

USTRANSCOM is focused on shaping and directing the capabilities and concepts necessary to operate in future contested environments, which will include multi modal solutions for transloading cargo, fuel, and personnel, including patients, between commercial and military capacity and delivering the last tactical mile. Our analysis goes beyond the mobility platforms and integrates key warfighting functions, current wartime demands, and future concepts entailing maneuver and distributed operations. We have advanced significantly in our analytic framework to better conduct globally integrated mobility operations, manage global bulk fuel delivery, and synchronize our Global Mobility Posture, Global Mobility Capacity, and Global Command, Control, and Integration. These critical elements create USTRANSCOM's warfighting framework through which we carry out our missions.

Global Mobility Posture

The foundation of USTRANSCOM's power projection mission is our Global Mobility Posture. Domestic agreements and diplomatic alignment with our Allies and partners enable a globally distributed and scalable logistics network capable of the rapidly deploying personnel and equipment at the time and place of our choosing. This requires a whole-of-government approach to solidify and amplify our established nodes and routes. These dense layers of contacts and contracts—both military and commercial—are critical to rapidly advance our national security interests, deter adversaries, and when necessary, win decisively. While this provides the United States a comparative advantage, we must continually strengthen and diversify our global basing, infrastructure, and agreements to maintain this advantage, especially as new concepts and operations drive us to evolve.

Deterrence and our ability to project and sustain the Joint Force begins in the Homeland. Domestically, USTRANSCOM works closely with the DOT on numerous transportation programs including three National Defense Programs: Highways, Railroads, and Ports for National Defense. Although USTRANSCOM assesses that our Nation's infrastructure is currently capable of supporting military transportation requirements, substantial public and private sector investment is needed to sustain the current transportation infrastructure. For sea transportation we rely on a collection of DOD and commercially owned U.S. Strategic Seaports. The Strategic Seaport Program ensures the DOD has access to sufficient seaport infrastructure to meet the Nation's objectives. Military Ocean Terminal Concord (MOTCO), on the West Coast, is the sole strategic ammunition seaport serving the Indo-Pacific region. With our U.S. Army Component, SDDC, we have identified the need for significant investments in MOTCO to facilitate the safe handling of ammunition and to mitigate the effects of climate change. At Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point on the East Coast, major enabling infrastructure components are approaching the end of useful life and must be replaced to allow the terminal to meet ammunition throughput requirements. We continue to work with the Department of the Army to preserve and modernize both seaports to reduce risk and prevent capability gaps.

Assured access to and through foreign nations may be incorporated into virtually any type of agreement, ranging from an exchange of Diplomatic Notes to a comprehensive Mutual Defense Treaty or Defense Cooperation Agreement of indefinite duration. The reciprocal exchange of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services, including airlift, sealift, air refueling, and related services, is usually addressed in Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements (ACSAs) with Allies, partners, and international organizations. USTRANSCOM has the authority to negotiate and conclude function-or event-specific ACSA Implementing Arrangements with Allies, partners, and international organizations. For treaties, protection agreements, services agreements, ABO agreements, diplomatic notes, and implementing arrangements, USTRANSCOM relies on each geographical combatant command to initiate negotiations, working closely with the Department of State, and conclude agreements with host nations within their areas of responsibility (AORs).

USTRANSCOM also participates with geographic combatant commanders in other host nations' and regional alliances' infrastructure planning that could be beneficial

to our command's mobility mission. For instance, the interface between U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) development of theater posture and North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) efforts to provide capabilities necessary for its war planning provides USTRANSCOM visibility on NATO-built or planned infrastructure possibly available for the command's deployment and distribution mission.

Finally, USTRANSCOM engages with Allies and partners through its Security Cooperation program. This program promotes interoperability with partner nations and requires persistent engagement with the Security Cooperation Functional Community. Tools used for engagement include forums, information sharing, exercises and wargames, key leader engagements, participation in lift-sharing consortiums, Mobility Support Advisory Squadrons, and the Aerial Refueling Systems Advisory Group.

Global Mobility Capacity

Our capacity includes sealift, air refueling, airlift, patient movement, rail, motor transport, bulk fuel, and the ability to fully mobilize the Total Force at the time and point of need. Our commercial partners provide significant mobility capacity; however, integrated planning is critical to ensure conditions are set to best enable successful Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF), Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA), and Voluntary Tanker Agreement (VTA) operations. Our available capacity, including emergency preparedness programs, continues to represent a credible option for delivering fuel, munitions, personnel, and materiel or evacuating patients—regardless of the environment.

In August 2023, USTRANSCOM completed the *2023 Mobility White Paper* that assessed the capability and associated risk in meeting warfighting demands as outlined in the *2022 National Defense Strategy*. The study emphasized that ensuring sufficient and credible strategic airlift capacity (C-17 and C-5), continuous modernization of our air refueling aircraft (KC-135 and KC-46), and sustained recapitalization of our mobility lift platforms (RO/ROs, airlift, and air refueling) is critical to ensure USTRANSCOM can continue to project and sustain the Joint Force. The organic sealift fleet is currently sufficient to meet wartime needs at an acceptable level of risk, but an aging fleet makes recapitalization an urgent priority. The air refueling fleet remains increasingly challenged in terms of threat-driven basing, increasing joint force demands, and adversary actions complicating air refueling output. USTRANSCOM has worked with the US Air Force to continue funding over the long term to replace aging aircraft to sustain fleet capacity while pursuing critical modernization efforts. The strategic airlift fleet of 275 aircraft (223 C-17 and 52 C-5M aircraft) remains vital to rapid global mobility. Recent mobility studies validated our current strategic airlift capacity is sufficient at elevated risk but will be stressed to meet wartime requirements. Low readiness is a key concern across the airlift and air refueling fleets; failure to maintain the current fleets or to modernize them to improve survivability in an increasingly contested logistics environment will lead to diminished mobility capacity. The theater airlift fleet of 271 C-130 aircraft is heavily stressed to meet the demand for globally integrated plans, which include transload movement from commercial aircraft, time-sensitive movement of forces and supplies, and battlefield aeromedical evacuation (AE).

Long, contested lines of communications, and the tyranny of distance with a distributed footprint in the Indo-Pacific region, present challenges for the JDDE to project, maneuver, and sustain the Joint Force. Analysis highlights a tight coupling between intra-theater airlift and sea-lift assets required to maneuver and sustain fielded forces given the scarcity of ground lines of communication. Increased investment in theater sealift is needed. Absent sufficient shallow-draft sealift vessels and bulk fuel tankers, mobility requirements shift to intra-theater airlift, exacerbating significant demands already levied on the airlift fleet. The challenges of satisfying competing, simultaneous demands across significant distances at increasing velocity are compounded by an increasingly contested operational environment. This places a premium on the credibility of our capacity: ready, capable mobility forces prepared to scale from campaigning to crisis and ensure global power projection requirements are met.

Connectivity is foundational to the air mobility enterprise's ability to project, maneuver, and sustain the Joint Force. Without it, our air mobility fleets will continue to lack the battlespace awareness necessary to survive in the increasingly complex and contested operational environment projected in conflict against a peer adversary. Connectivity is vital to the credibility of our air mobility capacity, and our ability to meet joint force demands at the time and place of our choosing. After decades of operations in permissive environments, our air mobility fleets lack the ability to leverage current and future Air Force and Joint Battle Networks, leaving them blind to friend and foe alike. Our asymmetric advantage to globally project and sus-

tain power on demand depends on air mobility to demonstrate our readiness and national will—in crisis or conflict—at relevant velocity and mass. Successful prosecution of this mission is a strategic imperative: it relies on the survivability of our air mobility enterprise, for which battlespace awareness is a pre-requisite, and unachievable without connectivity. This is an issue of utmost consequence; I fully support Air Mobility Command's efforts to rapidly connect its fleets.

Global Command, Control, and Integration

Malign actors in cyberspace pose a real and persistent threat to USTRANSCOM systems. Our global enterprise of transportation and logistics services depends on the connectivity these networks provide. Global Command, Control, and Integration is the exercise of authority and direction to plan, coordinate, synchronize and control operations at-echelon. Expanding vulnerabilities due to data saturation, demand fast and informed decisionmaking at an unprecedented scale and scope. Indeed, the rapidly changing character of war means that turning data into decisions more quickly and accurately than our adversaries is our new center of gravity. As USTRANSCOM transforms into a data-centric organization, we have partnered with the DOD Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office to strengthen our ability to treat data as a strategic product, becoming a data-driven organization with the capabilities, tools, and culture to gather and analyze information for better business and operational decisions.

Cyber resiliency and digital modernization enable our ability to conduct globally integrated command and control, generate decision advantage, enhance response actions to threats posed by cyber adversaries, and reduce vulnerabilities across the JDDE.

USTRANSCOM's contribution to daily campaigning and wartime power projection, inherent in integrated deterrence, stems from connecting the three elements in the command's mobility warfighting framework: (1) global mobility posture through a robust network surface infrastructure and nearly 90 key enroute international airfields and seaports in 44 host nations for access, basing, and overflight, (2) credible global mobility capacity leveraging both organic and commercial assets for strategic airlift, sealift, air refueling, theater airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and enablers for end-to-end connectivity, and (3) global command and control and integration of all elements necessary to rapidly align scarce mobility resources to meet the DOD's highest priorities. USTRANSCOM is investing resources and leadership focus to adapt to the operational environment's changing conditions. Our goal is to be able to sustain mission outcomes under attack and recover rapidly from disruptions that adversaries hope will impair our command's role in global logistics. The implementation of Zero Trust principles remains foundational to ensuring we can execute our mission, especially as we drive toward our objective of "TRANSCOM Anywhere" providing operational, reliable, scalable, and secure access on-demand everywhere and at all times.

In addition to our internal initiatives and as is the case with most organizations, USTRANSCOM is dependent upon numerous external capability providers. A key example with profound impact on USTRANSCOM's ability to maintain effective command and control while operating globally are the space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, satellite communications and positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities provided by the Intelligence Community, Services and USSPACECOM. To meet our global operations demands, the DOD must procure Satellite Communications (SATCOM) as an enterprise system—from on-orbit down to the ground segment and warfighter terminals. To win in a multi-domain fight, future SATCOM systems must have improved system resilience, on-orbit endurance through refueling and extended maneuverability, and improved environmental situational awareness. Essentially, the systems need to be able to detect and respond to both natural and adversarial threats. To provide navigation and positioning information central to effective command and control, USTRANSCOM fully recommends that the services are allocated appropriate funding for acquisition of military signal (M-code) enabled receivers to ensure connectivity to the Global Positioning System (GPS) capabilities that are critical to the warfighter's effectiveness. This funding will allow the services to operate in a GPS contested environment and meet congressional directives in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act.

Finally, and continuing the theme of coordination with external capability providers, USTRANSCOM is strengthening partnerships with our transportation service providers to mitigate cyber vulnerabilities and increase resiliency. Last year marked the sixth year of contractually requiring our transportation service providers to conduct annual cybersecurity self-assessments to track compliance with the National Institute of Standards and Technology security guidelines. We are increasing information-sharing and collaboration initiatives with our commercial part-

ners, to include no-cost tools and services available from various government agencies, such as the National Security Agency, and Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Last year, USTRANSCOM continued to demonstrate the positive impact a dedicated logistics combatant command can have on global operations. In fiscal year 2023, USTRANSCOM delivered over 289,000 passengers and over 330,000 short tons (STONS) by airlift, over 13.1 million square feet of cargo by sealift, and conducted 5,518 patient movements, outpacing our fiscal year 2022 operations. USTRANSCOM's logistical prowess remains on full display as we balance the rigors of our global mission.

In 2023, USTRANSCOM delivered more than 325 million pounds of security assistance equipment to Ukraine, resulting in more than 650 million pounds total delivered since the command began this effort in January 2022. USTRANSCOM delivered \$9 million worth of Department of Energy equipment to the embattled nation early in the year to reinforce and reconstitute its critical power grid infrastructure, as well as more than 250 air defense systems and 2,800 missiles in defense of Ukrainian population centers. Eight Armored vehicle bridges, 78 breaching vehicles, 341 personnel-carrying vehicles, 33 tanks, and more than 1.1 million artillery rounds—combined with Allied and partner nation donations—have allowed the Ukrainian Armed Forces to maintain battlefield parity across a wide front. USTRANSCOM continues to expedite high-priority equipment to the point of need while also balancing security assistance requirements within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and USCENTCOM AORs.

The command also supported USINDOPACOM's Operation PACIFIC PATHWAYS 23 (OP23), encompassing 13 exercises in eight countries, by transporting over 660,000 square feet of cargo aboard four Ready Reserve Force (RRF) vessels. In support of OP23, we transported over 2,100 personnel and 800 STONS of cargo via organic and commercial aircraft into the region. Our support to USINDOPACOM highlights our interconnectedness with the command and enhances our relationships with Allies and partners, enabling the United States to counter the PRC influence in the region and exercise our capability to surge sealift.

USTRANSCOM remains postured to surge in the event of crisis in support of all combatant commands. In U.S. Africa Command and USEUCOM, we transported 2,000 passengers and 2,500 STONS in support of multiple crises. In February, we supported our NATO ally the Republic of Türkiye with humanitarian assistance and disaster aid in response to the 7.8 magnitude earthquake. In April, we supported the military assisted departure of our Department of State teammates in Sudan. Finally, following the coup in Niger, USTRANSCOM delivered critical support to counter violent extremist operations in the Sahel region. We project and sustain the Joint Force, and our Allies and partners, at the speed of need.

USTRANSCOM, as directed in the Unified Command Plan, is the sole provider, through the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command, of rapidly deployable Joint enabling capability packages of communications, planning, and public affairs. This force enables combatant commanders to rapidly establish Joint Task Force Headquarters that exercise command and control in crisis and contingency. In fiscal year 2023 the JECC deployed multiple small teams with a total of 47 communicators, planners, and public affairs professionals in support of Security Assistance Group-Ukraine, Joint Task Force-Red Hill defuel operations, DHS Southwest Border Operations, and the crisis in Niger. As we began fiscal year 2024, the JECC rapidly deployed the same capabilities at home and abroad in response to the Israel's war against Hamas. In addition to crisis response, the JECC provided over 21,000 man-days in support to Joint and service exercises, Joint capability development initiatives, and Joint strategic planning efforts primarily focused on the pacing challenge.

Throughout fiscal year 2023, USTRANSCOM conducted extensive global operations, delivering over 86.2 million gallons of fuel during air refueling missions, which resupplied over 49,000 receiver aircraft on over 26,000 missions (31,779 sorties). Furthermore, USTRANSCOM supported 42 bomber task force missions, reassuring our partners across all six theaters, and reminding adversaries how quickly we can project combat power. These missions in the USINDOPACOM and USEUCOM AORs displayed combat credibility and furthered multilateral integration, ABO efforts, and deterrence. USTRANSCOM also supported multiple fighter aircraft movements and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance support missions for USINDOPACOM, USEUCOM, and USCENTCOM solidifying our global campaign plan and signaling support to our Allies and partners.

RISK MITIGATION EFFORTS

Proactive mobility recapitalization efforts are crucial for us to effectively operate in a future contested logistics environment. USTRANSCOM's assessment of mobility sufficiency under the NDS found our current mobility capacity sufficient, but at increased levels of risk due to the focused and persistent efforts of our adversaries. Risk is further heightened by an erosion of readiness and capacity in key mobility areas.

National Maritime Strategy

We appreciate and encourage the efforts to develop a national maritime strategy. Our pacing challenge, the PRC, has not only developed a robust maritime strategy, but their strategy also seeks to dominate the maritime industry worldwide enhancing both economic and national security advantages. It is estimated that the PRC has controlling stakes in 96 foreign ports in 53 countries; the PRC builds 100 times the number of ocean-going vessels as compared to the United States, makes 80 percent of ship-to-shore cranes used in the United States and produces 85 percent of the world's shipping containers. Additionally, the PRC invests \$132 billion in subsidies for shipping and shipbuilding. The PRC is militarizing its merchant marine force, not only to compete with Western powers, but also to dominate maritime activity in the Pacific. I echo the sentiments of Secretary of the Navy Del Toro where he argues, "no great naval power has ever existed without also being a dominant commercial maritime power, encompassing both shipbuilding and global shipping . . . It is imperative that we take decisive action to reclaim America's position as a leading maritime power."

USTRANSCOM is collaborating with the Center for Naval Analysis and MARAD on a study that will inform a U.S. National Maritime Strategy. This is a whole of government strategy that should be coordinated, staffed, and issued from the highest level of government and endorsed by the National Security Council.

Sealift

One of my highest concerns is the reduction in capacity and readiness in the organic RRF. Our organic sealift fleet and commercial transportation partners must continue to present credible deterrence and require proactive efforts to recapitalize and modernize. Seventeen of the 47 ships are 50 years old or older, with the oldest being 56 years old. Therefore, USTRANSCOM supports the Navy's strategy to recapitalize the government-owned fleet by acquiring foreign-built used sealift vessels from the commercial market and further requests to provide the Secretary of Defense discretionary authority to purchase foreign built ships to expeditiously replace the aging ships under more favorable market conditions. This includes removing the overall limit on the number of used sealift vessels DOD can procure, currently authorized at nine ships. We acknowledge Congress' intent to include domestic new build sealift ships to recapitalize the RRF and look forward to plans from the Navy and MARAD that will complement the Buy Used program and expeditiously renew the fleet. We are already a generation late in recapitalizing a ready sealift fleet to meet our national objectives.

Working with MARAD, we have purchased two used RO/RO vessels and three used roll-on/container ships with over one million useful square feet capacity. However, the process must be accelerated to keep pace with the retirement schedule. To maintain sealift capacity and preserve sealift readiness, we are advocating to accelerate used vessel purchases and to continually refine the current retirement plan to manage risk within program resources.

Furthermore, we will remain a strong advocate for continued funding for secure communications capabilities to support the organic RRF. Continued Navy and MARAD investment in secure data and voice communications capabilities will enhance our ability to Command and Control our organic sealift in the most challenging environments. Additional investment is required to field and sustain comparable secure communications capabilities to support our commercial partners in sufficient quantities to meet the demands of contested operations, and to ensure the entire logistics enterprise remains fully capable into the future.

The VISA and the VTA, together with their complementary peacetime programs the Maritime Security Program (MSP) and Tanker Security Program (TSP) provide assured access to a fleet of U.S. flagged sustainment sealift vessels and product tankers for use during armed conflict or national emergency. The recently implemented TSP ensures we have access to industry fuel distribution capabilities for defense needs. Together with MARAD, we successfully awarded the initial ten operating agreements with a primary focus on support to underway refueling of the U.S. Navy's combat fleet. Though not yet appropriated, the fiscal year 2023 NDAA au-

thorized the expansion of TSP from 10 to 20 vessels. We are working with MARAD and industry partners and intend to target shallow draft tanker vessels to address intra-theater bulk fuel distribution in the Indo-Pacific.

In addition to the TSP, we fully support the MSP which provides the DOD with assured access to 60 U.S. flag sealift vessels. The RRF, the TSP and the MSP are pivotal to enhancing global readiness and safeguarding our Nation's supply chains. These sealift programs underscore our Nation's steadfast commitment to national security and economic stability and exemplify the indispensable partnership between MARAD and USTRANSCOM, and industry.

The Merchant Marines

The U.S. maritime industry is confronting manpower shortages that create a national security risk. Merchant Mariner readiness requires continued assessment to ensure an adequately trained supply of merchant mariners to crew our surge fleet while minimizing impacts to commercial industry. USTRANSCOM and Military Sealift Command depend on the U.S.-flag merchant marine fleet, with the security benefits of American crews, to move sensitive defense materials. Unfortunately, due to a confluence of factors including complications from the COVID-19 pandemic, the workforce is shrinking. We look forward to the outcomes of the recently started, congressionally mandated, Merchant Mariner Workforce Working Group to find means to mitigate and possibly reverse trends.

We are encouraged by MARAD's efforts to collaboratively identify issues, potential solutions, and support a whole-of-government approach to address this national security matter. We will employ Navy Reserve tactical advisors on commercial vessels when appropriate and expand our consolidated cargo capability. This will include providing regular training opportunities to expand mariner proficiency in consolidated cargo operations and utilize multi-modal solutions to deliver across dispersed locations in compressed timelines.

Air Refueling

The air refueling fleet remains our most stressed fleet under wartime conditions. It is critical to rapid global mobility and is the lifeblood of the Joint Force's ability to deploy and employ the immediate and surge forces across all NDS mission areas including the Department's top priorities—defense of the Homeland and strategic deterrence. Credible air refueling capacity must simultaneously cover multiple high priority global demands, which causes daily and wartime concerns within the current air refueling fleet. With the last of the KC-10 aircraft being retired, the programmed air refueling fleet of 466 total aircraft will consist of the KC-135 and the KC-46.

When the last KC-46 on contract is accepted into the Air Force, the average age of the remaining KC-135s will be 67 years old, emphasizing the need for continued recapitalization and investment in the Next Generation Air-Refueling System (NGAS). While USTRANSCOM is solution-agnostic, the nature of global demand continues to emphasize the time and space aspect of the problem, requiring sufficient booms and drogues in the air at any given time to meet the significant number of simultaneous requirements.

It is critical that the Air Force continues to modernize the KC-135 and invest in the NGAS to maintain credible capacity and provide the persistent connectivity, improved survivability, and increased agility necessary to operate in future contested environments.

Strategic Airlift

The combined output of both the C-17 and C-5M fleets is necessary and consequential with no replacement capability on the horizon. Fiscal reality indicates that constraints on availability of the significant resources necessary to develop a Next Generation Airlift aircraft, or C-X, will limit our ability to replace the C-5M until at least the 2040's; therefore, sustaining these platforms into the 2040's is a national security imperative. Strategic airlift is a unique U.S. capability, necessary to implement our NDS requirement to rapidly execute and sustain power projection globally. The distances required to face our pacing challenge in the Pacific warrant velocity at scale and our strategic airlift fleet provides that advantage. Our capacity is significant, with 275 C-17 and C-5M aircraft producing only approximately 10 percent less output than the Desert Storm fully mobilized fleets, despite a 30 percent decrement in aircraft over that same period.

The C-5M fleet is challenged by maintenance issues that makes its availability constrained to confront the scale and tempo required for near-peer combat operations in the Pacific. USTRANSCOM applauds efforts by the Air Force to enhance this critical asset's reliability which will enhance availability for wartime requirements.

Modernizing the airlift enterprise to deliver, maneuver, and sustain the Joint Force against a peer adversary at relevant velocity and location means prioritizing connectivity, which directly enhances battlespace awareness and thus survivability. Improving threat-agnostic self-defense will reduce the potential for attrition while enhancing our ability to dynamically apply appropriate airlift capabilities to emergent demands across a spectrum of increasingly contested operational environments. For example, when supporting Israel in their ongoing war with Hamas that started last Fall, C-17s were prominent in the movement of critical materials and humanitarian support as the C-17 was the most suitable platform for those missions. What was unseen was the increased use of C-5Ms at the same time. When put to the test under these surge conditions in 2023, the C-5M fleet doubled the number of normal daily missions and the operational reliability improved. Nevertheless, had the US been in direct conflict with a peer adversary during that time, mission accomplishment would be severely challenged without secure connectivity and battlespace awareness.

Underpinned by national policy, our ability to leverage commercial partnerships to rapidly expand capacity by hundreds of aircraft for both cargo and passenger airlift is a necessary and cost-effective way to meet national defense needs. Our commercial partners remain a critical element of our strategic airlift capacity. While both cargo and passenger carriers continue to fully subscribe to the CRAF program, sufficient organic capacity remains paramount based on an inability to utilize civil assets in projected contested environments.

Intra-Theater Airlift

Intra-Theater airlift is critical to sustaining and supporting the force to meet time-sensitive and mission critical requirements for cargo and passengers. Consistent with previous budget cycles and the fiscal year 2023 NDAA, the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 maintains a fleet of 271 C-130 aircraft across the Future Years Defense Program, which USTRANSCOM supports with elevated risk. C-130's provide airlift support necessary to operate within any theater to support a sizable, deployed force engaged in combat operations. Future Joint and Service operating concepts entail the maneuvering of forces across long distances and sustaining of forces across broadly distributed operating locations, which elevates demands for Intra-Theater lift. Lack of theater sealift shifts demand to theater airlift, which in turn increases demand on strategic airlift. The interconnectedness of multimodal theater and strategic lift is foundational to global force projection, maneuver, and sustainment.

USTRANSCOM's ability to command and control mobility forces, to include C-130's, is contingent on secure networks and continuous IT and platform modernization efforts to retain the advantages needed in the cyber and space domains.

Patient Movement

With constrained resources and the contested logistics environment, we are at risk meeting Global Patient Movement (PM) requirements in conflict. Innovation and mitigation efforts can only reduce this risk so much. Fundamentally, our forces are not ready, postured, or scaled to optimize these limited strategic assets. PM is an integral function of the JDDE and provides essential support to the geographic combatant commanders. The ability to move wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers to lifesaving care emboldens our Commanders, reduces negative outcomes, and decreases risk to force and mission. The casualty evacuation estimates in current planning scenarios demonstrate the volume of patients requiring evacuation every week during a future peer or near-peer conflict will exceed the total of patients moved in fiscal year 2023. In fiscal year 2023, USTRANSCOM conducted 5,518 patient movements, comprised of 3,809 individual patients and eight battle injured patients. The foundation of PM remains the AE system. With our strong partnership with the Air Force, we have increased qualified AE crews and critical care air transport teams. While doctrinally, the Air Force executes "care in the air," the PM enterprise should not be mistaken as an Air Force-only mission. A Joint Force effort is required to increase capacity through the en-route care system. The continuum of patient care must be emphasized to increase survivability, to include initial medical response, forward medical resuscitation and stabilization, integrated theater casualty movement, and prolonged casualty care capacity. In addition, we must leverage our Allies and partners for large scale combat operations and continue development of a joint, multimodal approach to PM. The entirety of the Military Health System must make an exhaustive effort to eliminate traditional Military Service and functional boundaries and utilize all available resources to preserve American lives and our fighting force. We will continue to broadcast the risk to conduct end to end PM for expediency in funding decisions.

Global Bulk Fuel Management and Delivery

The appointment of USTRANSCOM as the Single Manager for Global Bulk Fuel Management and Delivery (GBFMD) has already resulted in positive progress toward closing acknowledged strategic gaps in the DOD bulk fuel supply chain since the command achieved Initial Operational Capability on 1 February 2023. Over the past year, in collaboration with our key partners in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, DLA Energy, and the Joint Staff, we have led the Department to synchronize bulk fuel planning, posture, operations, and capabilities development to ensure assured end-to-end distribution of bulk fuel to project and sustain the Joint Force in a near-peer fight.

USTRANSCOM is utilizing a holistic approach across the Joint Petroleum Enterprise to close strategic gaps. Some of these cross-agency initiatives include increasing maritime tanker capacity and establishing fuel afloat storage in the Indo-Pacific, as well as operationalizing the Tanker Security Program. Additionally, our command developed new wartime fuel modeling and assessments to better understand the fuel requirements behind the toughest strategic problem sets facing our Nation. Furthermore, we implemented new command and control concepts and structures across our combatant commands to facilitate decision advantage and global prioritization. These are just a few examples of how USTRANSCOM is leading the Joint Petroleum Enterprise to deliver positive change today and ensure the Department is postured to win a contested environment.

Over the next 12 months our focus will continue to align the Department toward closure of identified gaps in assured access to shallow draft maritime tanker capacity, increased integration of allied and partner nation capabilities, enhanced collaboration with industry, and an enterprise-level resilient and integrated bulk fuel data architecture to ensure the Department can provide increased options at the pace and tempo required in a high-end fight. USTRANSCOM is postured to leverage every opportunity available to continue closing strategic gaps and ensure we have the capacity and distribution capabilities needed to ensure our national objectives are met.

Joint Communications Support Element Modernization Program

As a subordinate element of USTRANSCOM's JECC, the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) is the only joint communications organization in DOD that supports the conventional force. Its Modernization Program executes tri-service procurement funding for lifecycle recapitalization of JCSE's equipment to meet emergent combatant commander's operational mission requirements and the joint force's evolving tactical mission communication demands. Current initiatives include modernizing tactical high frequency radio systems, commercial cloud services, supporting Allies and partner interoperability, and developing communications diversity and resilience by incorporating cellular, terrestrial Internet, and high throughput commercial satellite terminals. JCSE, through the JECC, is working closely with Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office's Global Information Dominance Experiment to operationalize the tactical edge aspects of Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control Concept and is heavily involved in Mission Partner Environment development. For a relatively small investment, this Modernization Program provides the DOD tremendous value as it enables JCSE to rapidly prove concepts and technologies in support of joint warfighters, assist in the resolution of service capability gaps, and to be effective at the point of crisis.

Defense Personal Property Program (DP3)

Our Defense Personal Property Program team continues to move forward in transforming how DOD provides moving services to customers. Servicemembers, DOD civilians, and their families are our most critical asset, and we continually seek to improve DP3 processes through all venues possible. The Global Household Goods Contract (GHC) is our flagship DP3 transformation effort. In the past year, we have been working closely with the military departments and the contract awardee, HomeSafe Alliance (HSA), to bring GHC online.

As I described in our report to the Committees submitted in January, a deliberate, conditions-based phase approach of GHC services will allow us to control the volume of shipments to assure continued quality customer service, which remains our top priority during the phase-in period. We remain committed to driving the transition at the appropriate pace ahead of the upcoming peak moving season, continuing Government and HomeSafe Alliance integration with a focus on positive outcomes for customers and their families.

Addressing the information technology challenges we've identified is critical to ensuring an improved experience for servicemembers and their families. Limited IT integration testing conducted in July and August of last year identified issues with

HomeSafe's software (HomeSafe Connect), on top of known government IT system (MilMove) limited initial operating capabilities. Integration must be addressed before we can consider deploying the systems to government personnel and customers. In the Fall of 2023, we replaced our lead MilMove IT developer, and continue to build on the government's systems initial operating capability.

In mid-January, we brought together personal property representatives from all branches of service to conduct end-to-end testing between DOD's MilMove and HomeSafe Alliance's HomeSafe Connect systems. The users validated the functionality of both systems and confirmed resolution of previously identified issues. The locations where we plan to begin issuing GHC task orders have been selected and finalized in coordination with the military departments. These locations are designated by selected zip codes in the Camp Lejeune, Camp Pendleton, Norfolk, San Diego, and Seattle metro areas. We plan to start with a small number of local shipments later this spring and continue through the summer at limited locations, before expanding the program this fall once peak season is complete. I would like to reiterate that a quality customer experience is our top priority during this transition and will inform the pace determined by USTRANSCOM and the military services.

Joint Transportation Management System (JTMS)

In an ever-changing threat environment, cutting edge logistics information technology solutions are critical to supporting our Global Mobility Posture, Global Mobility Capacity, and Global Command, Control, and Integration. The JTMS will provide the JDDE one primary system to integrate end-to-end transportation operations to deliver and sustain the Joint Force. Through the JTMS, USTRANSCOM will connect to the Service and agency logistics systems and provide a common platform to integrate global combatant command operations into the JDDE for a warfighter competitive advantage—while providing auditability, transparency, and optimized resource allocation. Decision advantage will be strengthened by providing warfighters timely, costed options for transportation, effectively matching requirements to available commercial and military capacity. Near real-time visibility of Total Force movements, to include last tactical mile delivery, will instill operational confidence and maintain competitive advantage for combatant commanders as they complete their missions. JTMS will also enable improved logistics network resiliency through integrated capability to react to changing logistics environments, allowing maximized diversion and challenge mitigations. Implementation of a commercial Enterprise Resource Planning solution will position USTRANSCOM and the Department to strategically address the decades-old challenge of transportation auditability. Integrated internal controls and transaction level transparency will support mitigation of existing material weaknesses and lead to an unmodified audit opinion. USTRANSCOM is collaborating with OUSD(A&S) for the procurement and implementation of the JTMS solution.

CONCLUSION

To remain successful, USTRANSCOM must be ready to project power today and tomorrow, and we will only achieve this together. Continued success in the delivery of substantial aid to Ukraine as well as the rapid deployment of forces and equipment to the Middle East have validated our reputation and generated momentum. While we have achieved success over our 35-year history as a combatant command, we know we must continue to innovate and accelerate the changes necessary to remain ready now and into the future. We cannot rest on our laurels—the risks are too great. Our competitors are watching our every move and quickly digesting lessons learned to improve their own power projection capabilities while also enhancing their ability to disrupt, degrade, or deny our capabilities. Contested environments highlight that our actions to deliberately recapitalize organic mobility capabilities, and to modernize the JDDE, must continue for the DOD to maintain asymmetric advantages and deliver on our national security requirements.

Our command has always met challenges and delivered success with innovation, determination, and professionalism. Time after time, when the United States called, we delivered. To deliver in the future requires focused attention today. Powered by dedicated men and women, USTRANSCOM underwrites the lethality of the Joint Force, advances American interests around the globe, and provides our Nation's leaders with strategic flexibility to select from multiple options, while creating multiple dilemmas for our adversaries. I thank Congress for your continued support to the men, women, and mission of USTRANSCOM. We remain dedicated to fight, deliver, and win!

Together, We Deliver!

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Van Ovost. Before we begin, let me remind everyone that we must stop at 10 a.m. for the Joint Session. So, please limit your questioning to 5 minutes, and the closed session will begin at noon after the Joint Session in SVC-217.

Thank you. General Cavoli, you indicated the severe consequences of a failure to support Ukraine, and those consequences, I presume, are not localized, but global. Could you elaborate?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. So, the—if Ukraine fails in this fight, I think problems radiate outwards, beginning with Europe. So, there will be the possibility, the probability that Russia will continue aggressive behavior that will certainly be emboldened. They are certainly building a military that is going to be capable of it.

They are replenishing what they have lost so far, and they are working very hard to build a larger army. They have announced their plans for it, and they are on track to do that. There are other nations in the neighborhood that Russia publicly covets—has publicly stated that they are not really nations.

The same sort of rhetoric that led up to the invasion of Ukraine. Beyond Europe, which is critical to our security, beyond Europe, there are other places and people are watching all over the world, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, the People's Republic of China we know is watching very closely, and all other nations are watching very closely.

First, to gauge what is the value of a partnership with the United States. Second, to see what happens if it fails, and the those who would be our friends would be made nervous by a loss in Ukraine, and those who would be our adversaries would be emboldened by it, sir.

Chairman REED. I had the opportunity to stop in Grafenwoehr, Ramstein, and several other places, and we are teaching the Ukrainians, but we are also learning a lot. So, this effort has allowed us really to significantly increase our insights into the way Russia particularly conducts operations, and also others who are aiding Russia—

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. First of all, thank you and all members for your visits to Grafenwoehr and elsewhere. They help us a great deal and we appreciate them. Yes, absolutely, we are learning from the Ukrainians every day. We learn in a variety of different ways.

First of all, just talking to them, we get their experiences. This is very valuable for our younger troops especially because it keeps them galvanized. It keeps them focused on the mission. They understand the import of it.

But in a more practical way, we practice tactics and techniques with them and refine them, things that they have developed under fire. We bring them out and we work on those things. These can be technical specific things about electromagnetic interference and things like that. They can be tactical.

The how to negotiate new forms of Russian obstacles and defensive fortifications. We have both the incidental benefit of working with them, but we also have very specific, focused, structured programs to call out that information. We also have a couple of other

programs, Mr. Chairman, that would be delighted to talk about on closed session that are also extremely useful.

But overall, yes, we benefit significantly from this. We are watching them adapt to Russia's adaptations. So it is, you know, warfare as it goes on is a series of moves and counter moves, and Russia's military has evolved significantly during this conflict, and this is helping us to keep up with that as well.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you. General Van Ovost, you have already been delivering a substantial amount of materiel to our forces in Europe, which is transshipped to the Ukrainians. So, you have got a lot of money tied up in the supplemental. Is that accurate?

General VAN OVOST. Senator, thanks for asking that question. Indeed, about \$550 million of the supplemental is earmarked for U.S. Transportation Command, mainly in response to unreimbursed work for the Middle East after the events of October 7th.

However, we work very closely with EUCOM and the Secretary of Defense to deal with transportation costs associated with Ukraine.

Chairman REED. So, if the supplemental doesn't pass, you have to find ways to pay for that internally, which would be very disruptive, I assume.

General VAN OVOST. Senator, that is absolutely correct. Not just TRANSCOM, but all the services and Combatant Commands of it have costs that are unreimbursed at this point.

The issue with Transportation Command is it comes out of our Working Capital Fund, and our Working Capital Fund is there in case we have an emergency where we have to go somewhere around the globe.

Not having funds in there would slow down any response and certainly reduce the options for the Secretary.

Chairman REED. I will yield that my 6 seconds to the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, and I will take it. General Cavoli, you just said, if we don't come forward with assistance from the United States, Ukraine could actually lose this war. That implies that Ukraine could also actually win this war.

I would remind you, and you don't need to be reminded but anyone listening, that there were voices in the United States, well-intentioned Americans, in the late 30's and early on in watching the European war that said there was no way that the United Kingdom could win the war against Germany, against Hitler's Germany.

Respected, well intentioned Americans like Charles Lindbergh, who I still hold in high regard, said that there was no way we should help because the war was already lost. Can Ukraine win this war?

General CAVOLI. Yes, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator WICKER. Is it also true that while we are being asked and our allies are being asked to help Ukraine, Russia is seeking help also from other countries on their side, is that correct?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Those countries include countries that have a malign intent toward the United States. Who are those countries?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely. First in line is the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Iran, sir.

Senator WICKER. Now, we have the Japanese, Prime Minister, in this capital city today, and I will be attending, along with most of my colleagues, his joint address to the Congress. What do the Japanese leadership have to say, and what tangible indication have they given as to the importance of the Ukraine, Russia conflict?

General CAVOLI. Senator, in my role as the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, I recently traveled to Japan about a month ago, sir, and met with their Chief of Defense and a number of high—highly placed officials there. It is a part of NATO's burgeoning relationship with key Indo-Pacific allies. They are focused on the Ukraine question. They are watching it very closely. They understand that the stakes are high.

Senator WICKER. Are they helping in a tangible way?

General CAVOLI. They are helping in intangible ways and some tangible ways. Yes, sir.

Senator WICKER. What about South Korea? What about Australia?

General CAVOLI. Sir, they are all focused on this question, and all of them are rendering intangible help and some tangible help, and some of it like—

Senator WICKER. They are rendering help in terms of dollars and cents, are they not?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely.

Senator WICKER. Yes. Well, Ukraine seems to have a lot of fight in them. Is it true that they have retaken over half the territory seized by Russia 2 years ago?

General CAVOLI. Yes, sir.

Senator WICKER. How is it that they have been so successful in the Black Sea? How is it that Ukraine has been so successful against one of the most powerful countries in the world in the Black Sea, and how so?

General CAVOLI. It starts with their determination to have access to the Black Sea. So, they are determined. Second, they have extremely talented engineers and extremely talented scientists who have devoted this portion of their lives—

Senator WICKER. Some people in the audience may not be aware to what extent they have been successful. So, what has their success in the Black Sea been?

General CAVOLI. They have sunk more than 20 percent of the Black Sea Fleet. But more to the point, they have damaged critical infrastructure associated with its sustenance and its maintenance, and the net effect has been we do not see Russian surface ships West of Crimea ever anymore.

Senator WICKER. Okay, well, let's talk about burden sharing. Are we being asked to do more than anybody else in terms of our capacity?

General CAVOLI. No, sir. We are doing a fair share. If you measure by percentage of GDP how much assistance we are giving, we actually rank well below 15—

Senator WICKER. We are down around 14, 15.

General CAVOLI. Yes—

Senator WICKER. Of our economy as compared to all of the other allies who see the importance there. What do our friends and people we want to be more friendly with, what do they think about the likelihood of America keeping its word long term?

General CAVOLI. Sir, they believe in America. They believe in America's leadership. They believe in America's consistent dedication to global security and to European security, because they understand it is in our interest. However, when they hear things or see things from our country, they can get nervous sometimes.

Senator WICKER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. General Cavoli, General Van Ovost, thank you both for your service and for being here this morning. Senators Reed and Wicker have been very broad and expansive in covering Ukraine, which I appreciate their comments and your responses to that.

So, I want to focus on the Western Balkans, where we are seeing tensions rise. I appreciate your attention to that, General Cavoli. A persistent problem is ensuring that EUFOR and KFOR missions are adequately prepared to respond to those security concerns.

I think so far we have been—the missions have been relying on each other as reserve forces. I think this dual heading is concerning, and especially as we see tensions increase in both Kosovo and Bosnia.

So, can you talk about how EUCOM is engaging with our European partners to emphasize the need to establish separate reserve forces for EUFOR and KFOR?

General CAVOLI. Yes, ma'am. Absolutely, because it is an extremely important question, and as you know, NATO is not a one problem an alliance. We are not a one problem country. So, it is important to recognize that there are other things going on in Europe that are not good for US national interests.

They are also not unrelated to the conflict in Ukraine, as you well know, Senator. The first thing USEUCOM did was get the EUCOM Commander to persuade the Supreme Allied Commander to do something about this inside of NATO with regard to the reserve forces and everything. So, we have done a complete O plan review for KFOR specifically, and it is revealed that we need not just more forces, but we need heavier forces.

We are in the process of sourcing that right now. Nations are being quite generous, but we will put heavier equipment on the ground as well as more people. The second thing we are doing is we are untying the relationship between the reserve forces for the EU mission Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the KFOR mission, because as you pointed out and I agree, that was an economy that we can no longer afford to share the strategic reserve force there.

I would like to call out France for being especially generous. As you know, the Commander of the Althea mission is a French Lieutenant General, Hubert Cottureau. He is also my Vice Chief of Staff at the Supreme Headquarters, and so, in that dual hatted role, just like I can dual hat his benefits from his relationship with France.

France has put the Charles de Gaulle offshore in the Adriatic and has recently deployed a battalion on an operational deploy-

ment for a medium term. So, they have up their forces. Especially important right now, as you understand, because this week in particular, the tensions are significantly higher.

So, I am satisfied that we are in a good position right now, Senator, but it is always necessary to keep a very close eye on it. We have run at least two focused collection missions to increase our intelligence collection and understanding of what is going on in both of those countries, and I have supported that from USEUCOM with aerial ISR and other things we could talk about in closed session, ma'am.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great. I have several other questions, specifically about the situation there, but I will save those for closed session so I can ask General Van Ovost a question about the National Guard Bureau's decision to level Air National Guard units and the impact that that is going to have across the country.

We are concerned about that impact on the 157th Air Refueling Wing in New Hampshire, where we have the KC-46s. So, can you—have you been briefed by the Guard Bureau on what they are planning, and are you concerned about the impact that will have on TRANSCOM?

General VAN OVOST. Thanks, Senator. You know, as you know, two-thirds of our area fueling force are in the Guard and Reserve. They bring such a great capability and absolutely required. We could not do our mission without them.

So, this is an issue that is emerging that I am tracking. I have not been briefed by the Air National Guard. However, we have looked at—I have no immediate concerns. But as we look into the out years as how this is going to be leveled out and where the capabilities are going, we are going to track that very carefully for the Guard.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, again, we are concerned that the 157th is going to be affected and they have major responsibility for refueling over the North Atlantic, and they have been called in the past to help with missions in Europe. So, I hope you will track that closely and that we can make sure that doesn't affect their ability to do their jobs.

General VAN OVOST. Yes, ma'am. The 157th has led the way for the Guard for integration of the KC-46, which is absolutely the future of air refueling.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for being here today and thank you for your service. General Van Ovost, the California Air Resources Board has a proposal that would significantly impact the ability of the National Rail Network to support the movement of Department of Defense equipment and materiel deployment to the West Coast.

This proposal would impose unrealistic emission standards and require zero emission locomotives, which do not exist because that technology is not even commercially available at this point in time.

This means that about 65 percent of the Nation's locomotives would be prohibited from operating in California starting in 2030. What would the operational impact be if railroads could not service

routes in California, or had to divert cargo to other areas to meet the DOD logistics requirements?

General VAN OVOST. Senator, we rely every day on this Nation's transportation network, whether its seaports, its rail, or its roads.

So, and I think about the reduction in capacity across California and think about—I have 15 nodes in California that we use different—from two different railroad lines. We have five ports, one of which is our only West Coast ammunition port for containerized ammunition, which is critical to our operational plans.

Of course, we have close relationships with the railroad industry, and so we are working with them as this is a merging and they are understanding what the implications are. Initially, I believe that any increased costs will be passed directly on to the customer, but I am concerned about the technology and their ability to recapitalize between now, the readiness of now, and the readiness of future if they have to transition.

Senator FISCHER. Have you expressed these concerns to the Administration?

General VAN OVOST. I have not.

Senator FISCHER. Do you plan to?

General VAN OVOST. In my normal course of action through the Secretary of Defense, if this is going to impact national security, I absolutely will.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. When we look at the requirements that you have in the plans that you have, if we are seeing conflict take place in the Indo-Pacific, how would a surge of forces be impacted?

General VAN OVOST. When we think about options every day, and we rerun several planning events in several simulations that occur around the globe, these globally integrated plans, should we have to surge for an event like the events after October 7th—and so we think about it, and we run these simulations, and we ensure that we have readiness for the fleet.

The most important thing is to ensure not only do we have the capacity, but it is a credible capacity to operate in the environment we expect to be in. We expect it to be contested, and an example right there is the Red sea.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. General Cavoli, I am concerned about the increasing cooperation between Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, which we are seeing the impact of in real time, with Russia's war against Ukraine. How is EUCOM altering its posture to address the strategic dilemmas created by these partnerships?

General CAVOLI. Thank you, Senator. The first thing we have done is we have responded to the Russian aggression by bolstering our presence along with NATO's presence on the Eastern flank. We did that over the last 2 years.

NATO moved very quickly after the invasion to establish new battle groups and to increase the size of the existing battle groups on the Eastern flank, and to thicken the air policing—that is the air defense efforts that we were doing. USEUCOM was a part of that.

In fact, USEUCOM led some of that with U.S. unilateral deployments to that sort of seed corn to get things going. We have continued that, and we have actually regularized the procedures, and

those are going to become long term deployments that our allies have out there.

The second thing we have been doing is tightening our air and missile defenses. I am under instruction from the 32 heads of State and government to tighten our air and missile defense. With regard to the connections among the countries, we worked very closely with the—that is these adversarial countries who have formed this network that is, you know, profoundly against our interests.

We are working very closely with the interagency across all the instruments of national power to try to interrupt that and to hinder their ability to cooperate. We have, based on my intelligence section, my J2 section, something called Task Force Champion, which focuses on this question, those relationships, and feeds information to the interagency to take action through a variety of different means.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses. To General Van Ovost, in your written statement you say, the DOD's ability to project military forces is inextricably linked to the commercial industry, what we like to call our fourth component. TRANCOM's relationship with the commercial sector is pretty unique.

Talk about the importance of our commercial sector and challenges you have with—in working with commercial companies.

General VAN OVOST. Thank you, Senator. We cannot do our job every day without our strong commercial partnerships. In fact, 90 percent of our passengers flow through commercial operations, and day to day, 97 percent of our sustainment goes through commercial sealift. So, it is absolutely significant.

When—while that is—the opportunity to use them and use their networks is significant and provides us an asymmetric advantage, the top vulnerability concern I have with them is through cyber, frankly.

We have heard even from the CIA Director that the PRC has infiltrated some of the logistics networks of our commercial partners. So, we have been working with them on how to secure their systems through the no cost cybersecurity collaboration center and the defense industrial base work that we have been doing, and they are paying attention at the CEO level.

Senator KAINE. That is great. In your written statement, you also mention the joint communication support element, which is part of the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command in Norfolk. Why do you mention them specifically, and how important is it that they be recapitalized?

General VAN OVOST. A joint communication support element provides deployable communications on air, land, and sea in support of standing up joint task forces. So, if we go into a crisis mode, they need to have the modernized equipment to be able to support the joint task force commander around the world—and we have done that multiple times here, I would say, in the past couple of years. So, we need to make sure that our equipment is modernized.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that. General Cavoli, talk to us a little bit about how Sweden and Finland are integrating into the existing NATO military structure.

General CAVOLI. Absolutely. Thanks, Senator. So, first, I think it is important to note that Finland and Sweden have been cooperating for years with NATO, not just in training, but in operations.

They have also been very close—closely tied to the United States and bilateral agreements. They are also closely tied among the Nordic countries through multilateral arrangements that they have among themselves.

All of those things made it extremely easy to integrate those two nations militarily into the alliance, sir. They—Supreme Allied Command Transformation is formally responsible for the integration effort and the integration documentation. That was completed in record time for Finland and will be for Sweden as well. They have already been incorporated into the regional plans that NATO has approved in the past year.

In fact, it took less than 5 days for us to bring the inclusion of Sweden forward to the North Atlantic Council and register that as an amendment to the plans. So overall, it has all been extremely easy because we have such a long history with them and because they have invested in defense over the years.

So, you know, defense investment has not been the strong suit of many nations in Europe over the last 40 years, but it has been in Finland in particular, and Sweden has radically stepped up defense budget right now.

So, both of them have maintained high capabilities and good capacity, and they are really welcomed in the alliance, sir.

Senator KAINE. Well, I know everyone on this committee understands this, but for the public, if you are going back 5 years and polled in Sweden or Finland about whether they wanted to join NATO, you would have been lucky to get to 25 percent yes.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused the scales to fall from folks eyes about what the likely threat scenario is, and the deep desire of Sweden and Finland to join NATO demonstrates a reality we have to be aware of, and also demonstrates the vitality of NATO and other organizations of like-minded democracies.

Let me ask you one other question. The Radford Arsenal in Virginia produces munitions that are critical to the battle in Ukraine, but I think it is also important that munitions be produced closer to theaters of war. Talk about your discussions with our NATO allies about munitions production ramping up in Europe.

General CAVOLI. This is something we talk about a lot, Senator, as you might imagine. Right now, Ukraine for 155 millimeter shells is mainly dependent on U.S. production. European production has just not gotten up and running yet. It is increasing.

It is increasing, and there are certainly plans and investments to make it go faster, but they are still ramping it up. Some countries have converted former factories very rapidly. Slovakia, I would point to here, is producing a significant amount of 155 NATO standard ammunition right now.

But really, there is a lot of work left to be done. The EU and NATO are cooperating closely on lifting production, and I believe they are going to break down some barriers and get that going. I

do think it is going to be a few months before we see U.S. levels of production though. Related to that, Senator, is the——

Senator Kaine. Okay, I am over time, so——

General CAVOLI. I am sorry. Sure, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Kaine. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, General Van Ovost, and thank you, General Cavoli for being here today. I want to thank both of you for your continued service and commitment to Ukraine.

It has been a very difficult time. General Cavoli, I will start with you because I did just return from a trip to Poland, Ukraine, where I spent 3 days with a delegation traveling across the country and to many different areas, and then onto—into Moldova, which is one of those other areas that is pretty tenuous right now.

It is pretty darn clear that the American political system has been very ineffective in providing the needed support to a fellow democracy there in Ukraine. So, as we await the House's finalized decision on a supplemental package, what more can you do in your role to leverage assistance from friends and allied nations in Europe or other areas to provide support for Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. We work that very, very hard, Senator, as you know.

First of all, I would point out that the principal coordinating mechanism for aggregating Ukrainian demand and presenting it to allies and partners, and soliciting their help and their contributions has been led by Secretary Austin since the very beginning with the UDCG, the Ukraine Donors Coordination Group, sometimes known as the Ramstein Group because it sometimes meets there. 50 nations, just over 50 nations come together about every 6 weeks, and we coordinate at a ministerial level.

That is preceded by weeks of hard work between our policy staffs and their policy staffs. USEUCOM with the SAG-U works very hard to get the specifics of the Ukrainian demand and their needs and consult with them about what they need to bring that forward. However, it is difficult.

A lot of this is dependent on production levels at this point. How much ammunition we can produce, how many missiles we can produce, and so, in that regard, I spent a lot of time working with the Secretary General and the Secretariat at NATO to increase—to work with national armaments directors to increase the amount of production we can do.

Senator ERNST. Well, thank you. I appreciate that, and I am glad that we do have partners that are stepping up and assisting. They understand how significant this is and what could happen to all of us if Ukraine falls.

Oftentimes Americans are very short sighted. You know, what is our immediate need today? What is our immediate want? But I think there are very long term repercussions to our country should Ukraine fall.

I think we need to keep our eyes open as we are looking to the future and what will happen if we continue to allow countries like Russia, like China, like Iran, like North Korea, to continue to

spread around this globe and the pressures it puts on our own nation. So, I—thank you for being such a great leader in this fight.

I know that in the lead up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the intelligence community did declassify a number of reports which shed light on Russia's true intentions. It was a very proactive approach, and I am I am really thankful for that. It helped us counter a lot of that Russian disinformation that was being pushed out there.

We still see a lot of Russian propaganda. Can you speak to how various information sharing programs are assisting us in pushing back against some of the common security challenges that are faced by Europe and our friends?

General CAVOLI. Yes, ma'am. Absolutely. First of all, in terms of collection, you know, the variety of ways we collect, we have to—we rely on access and geographical access to—other countries in order to be able to collect information.

Nations have been very generous with us, and not just allies but partners as well, in allowing us to operate with and from their countries. That has been invaluable. Frequently that leads to very high level and detailed information sharing programs. We have allies who have accesses that we do not, and we have accesses that they do not.

It is very much mutually beneficial. The last thing I would say, ma'am, is that the interaction with Ukraine and their security services has provided us a vast amount of information as well.

Senator ERNST. Well, and I will yield back my 5 seconds, Mr. Chair. But thank you both for being here today.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before beginning my questions, I would like to ask unanimous consent to submit to the Committee a graph which represents the contribution by GDP of the various countries that has been updated by the Kiel Institute.

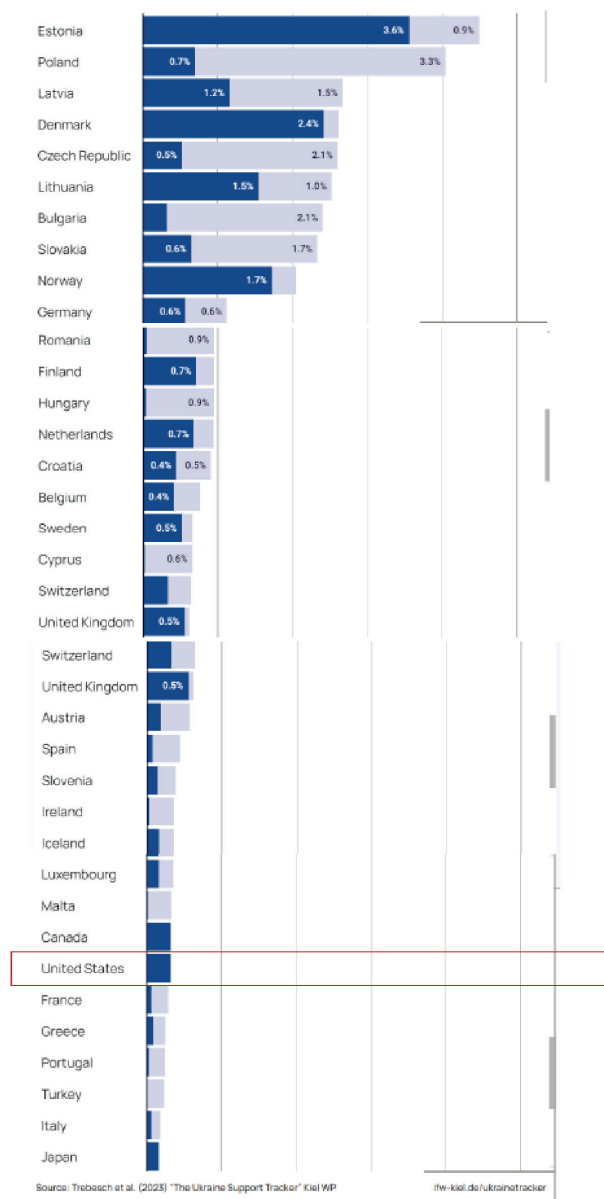
[The information referred to follows:]

Government support to Ukraine: by donor GDP, incl. refugee costs



Commitments Jan. 24, 2022 to Jan. 15, 2024. Data on 41 donor countries; scroll to see more countries

■ Bilateral aid (percent of GDP) ■ Refugee costs (percent of GDP, rough baseline estimate)



Chairman REED. Without objection.

Senator KING. Thank you. What this graph shows is that, in fact, Senator Wicker made the point, we were 15th in the in the world in terms of contribution as a percentage of GDP.

It is actually more like 29th now in according to updated data from this past January, and it is interesting to look the countries, the contribution.

The number one is Estonia, then Poland, then Latvia. I don't think it is any coincidence that the two out of the first three are countries that border Russia, and they understand what the risk is. I commonly hear on the street in Maine, why are we doing this?

Putin isn't really going to keep going, and my response is, ask the Finns. General Cavoli, what is the level of anxiety in Eastern Europe about Putin's intentions beyond Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. Very high, Senator. Very high. You are correct, I agree, it is reflected in the number of donations they have given. So Eastern European countries have emptied their pockets for Ukraine.

Many countries in Europe share that, and the contributions from nations in Europe are very significant. Some of them have given 100 percent of what they have in a given category. One nation has given 100 percent of its mobile artillery.

Another nation has given all of its jet fighters and all of its tanks. Another nation has given 40 percent of its high end air defense systems. So, these are significant contributions.

Senator KING. So, the idea that the United States is the only person carrying the burden here is just absolute nonsense.

General CAVOLI. That is correct.

Senator KING. It is—you know, when Switzerland is giving more to the cause than the United States in terms of percentage of GDP, I think that makes a statement. Cyprus, countries, just going down the list, Sweden, Croatia, Hungary, Finland, Romania. These are the countries that know Russia and that is why they are in so deeply in this conflict. Is that correct?

General CAVOLI. Yes.

Senator KING. Going down some of the other arguments that I hear, Ukraine can't win. It really appears to me that this is a battle between industrial capacity and being able to supply weapons. Russia has vastly increased its capacity to generate, for example, artillery ammunition. Can the Ukrainians win if they have sufficient material to carry this fight?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Senator. They have the skill, but most importantly, they have the determination to accomplish their goals. They need external support until they are able to generate their own industrial production.

I agree with you that in a long war like this, it is in large part a matter of industrial production, of output. Once that output is achieved, the side with the greater determination will win, and that would be Ukraine.

Senator KING. If we fail to pass the supplemental and essentially walk away from our commitment to Ukraine, that is exactly what Putin wants. Is that not correct?

General CAVOLI. Oh, absolutely, Senator. Because we are now in critical areas, munitions especially, their main provider—without our help right now, they will not be able to stay in the fight.

Senator KING. The Russians are—have an active disinformation campaign to convince our political system to essentially support Putin's war, isn't that correct?

General CAVOLI. Senator, the Russians maintain extremely active disinformation programs. They always have and they always do, but they are in overdrive right now and we know that definitively.

Senator KING. Thank you very much, General. Your testimony is very important. General Van Ovost, I am afraid I don't have a lot of time, but one thing you—as you were testifying, I was writing, do we have adequate logistics for conflict in the Pacific?

You said we are at alarming levels. Perhaps, for the record, you could give us more detail on the dangerous level if there is conflict in Pacific, because it is all going to be all about logistics, and I am very concerned about the decline of the sealift capacity. So, I am out of time, but if you could give us that on the record, I appreciate it.

General VAN OVOST. Yes, certainly. I take it for the record.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. Well, first of all, thanks to both of you for being here. Thank you for your service. It is a tough time in the world. Scary time. So, General Cavoli, can you just talk about our troop posture in Europe?

When I first came up here, the—I was at the Munich security conference, and Germany basically said they are not going to meet their 2 percent. They don't have any interest in meeting the 2 percent. They are not going to ever meet their 2 percent. They didn't care about meeting their 2 percent.

We still have a lot of our allies in Europe, they are not willing to meet their 2 percent, and so, they are completely dependent on our troops. So, do you think we have troops in the right places, or do you—how do you deal with the fact that you supposedly have these allies that say they care about their own defense, and they wouldn't actually in theory come to our defense, but they are not even willing to invest even the 2 percent that they are investing.

General CAVOLI. Thanks, Senator. Obviously, an extremely important question. So, there is, there remains a gap between say and do in parts of the alliance. However, that gap has been closing over the last couple of years.

In 2014, there were three nations that met 2 percent. Last year there were 11 nations that met 2 percent. This year there are 20 as of today, who meet 2 percent. Norway just dropped a letter declaring its intention to close that gap by June.

I believe there will be three or four more before June of this year who meet 2 percent. That is not everybody, though. That is not everybody.

Senator SCOTT. Not the biggest ones.

General CAVOLI. Some of the biggest ones, and they should meet 2 percent, and we encourage them every day to meet 2 percent. The Secretary General is extremely active in that regard, and I believe they will, but they need to.

Senator SCOTT. When you look at the map and you look at where, you know, the Soviet Union is located, and then you look

at where our troops are, does it make sense where our troops are? I mean, should they—should we have troops closer to maybe in Latvia and Lithuania or Estonia rather than so many troops that we have in Germany?

General CAVOLI. Sure. So, we have troops in Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania and Romania and Bulgaria and Hungary and Slovakia and Poland, sir.

So, we do have troops and those. Specifically, the troops that we surged for after the invasion, they all went to the front, as did large parts of the organizations that are already located in Europe.

The ones that are already assigned to Europe, I believe, is the ones you are asking me about, though. Guys like the Second Cavalry Regiment, 31st Fighter Wing and people like that. Those organizations routinely get deployed from their home station to other places to include to Central Command.

They are advantageous where they are right now because they are sitting on excellent infrastructure for training, readiness, and deployment. So those are the forces that I can move to unpredictable points of trouble, and they are centrally located on really good deployability infrastructure, so it makes sense to me.

However, the center of gravity of where our combat force in Europe is, net has moved significantly Eastward, and that goes not just for USEUCOM, but that is true for the alliance as well.

Senator SCOTT. What about Poland? Are you going to get more troops in Poland?

General CAVOLI. Sir, we got a ton of troops in Poland right now. They are someplace just shy of 10,000, which is up. As you know, we have a defense cooperation agreement with them. They will build us infrastructure.

They are in the process of building it right now. As it comes on-line, we will push forces in there, up to a brigade combat team.

Senator SCOTT. So, the Air Force and Marines have done a good job planning and recapitalizing their reserve C-130 fleet, yet the Navy has even started to recapitalize their C-130 fleet. So, what do you think about that? Do you think it is a mistake? Is that—are we—we are not positioned properly with that?

General CAVOLI. Sir, I am not really familiar with the topic, and I think maybe the service could answer that a little bit better. If you would like, I could take it for the record or defer to them, sir.

Senator SCOTT. I will ask them. Thank you. Thanks, both of you, for your service.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Scott. Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Good morning, General—Generals. Thank you very much for your service, and thanks for being here today.

I know that you have talked a bit about the impact of the failure to pass the supplemental on the prospects for Ukraine and the likelihood of failure if the supplemental isn't passed. I wonder if you could look ahead a little bit beyond this supplemental, and perhaps tell us in the longer range whether you think additional aid is necessary and what form it would take.

General CAVOLI. Thank you, Senator. It will depend on production rates inside Ukraine and in other allies. So, as this hearing

is—has evolved, sir, I think it has become clear that really that level of industrial production is the key thing right now.

Nations have given a lot from existing stocks, but as those go down, production becomes more and more important, not just in terms of capital items like large end items like tanks and things, but also more importantly consumables like ammunition and missiles and things like that.

So, the rate of industrial production is going to be the real answer to that question. How much more will be required to win, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. My understanding is that the attack last night, or maybe it was—I guess it was last night in Ukraine, showed again the real dearth of air defense and the impact of the ongoing reign of terror from the skies. Is there not any possibility of right away providing more Patriot missiles, more air defense?

Since as I traveled around Europe and in Poland, there were a lot of Patriot missiles guarding sites, and obviously they need to be there, but I am just wondering whether, you know, three, four, or five of those Patriot missiles facilities would make a big difference.

General CAVOLI. Certainly. You know, three parts to the air defense question, radars, launchers, and the missiles to shoot out of the launchers. We approach all of those sometimes together and sometimes in part.

Right now, the Ukrainians could use—their launchers aren't the most important thing, the missiles are the most important thing, and we are soliciting those around—the Office of the Secretary of Defense is extremely actively looking for Patriots right now. You are correct, the attack last night did—was an illustration of why it is so important for us to keep funding.

Right now, the main source of high end interceptors against ballistic missiles on high end cruise missiles is the United States, because we have the inventory and the production capability.

Therefore, that supplemental is so important. Without it, the attack last night, which included at least TU-10, TU-95 heavy bombers launching everything they had simultaneously—an attack like that last night would go totally, almost totally undefended until machine guns tried to shoot down the cruise missiles. So, this is vital, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Separately, I am, chairman of a subcommittee of the Homeland Security committee called the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is conducting an investigation of American chips, semiconductors, parts and components that are commonly found in Russian missiles, drones, and I am sure you are familiar with this issue.

President Zelensky on my last trip, the chairman was with me, literally handed me a folder of photographs and charts showing the different components in Russian ballistics, drones, and missiles. We had a hearing yesterday in the Homeland Security Committee showing how porous our export controls are.

We have had a hearing and that has come to our attention showing how American companies, four or five in particular, are selling goods with these parts and components that then find their way into Russian munitions.

Is that your experience, and do you have any suggestions for us as to what can be done about it?

General CAVOLI. So, we work that very hard in the interagency, sir. I don't have specific suggestions for how to do it better, but I can tell you that it is absolutely critical.

If the current war is a competition of production, our ability to handle the Russian threat in the future is going to depend on us being able to constitute forces faster than they can. Part of that is preventing them from constituting forces quickly, and to the extent that they are using components that should be sanctioned and banned, it is regrettable, and we need to fix it, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Really appreciate your answers to my questions, and to my colleagues, and your very excellent service to our Nation. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. Good morning to both of you. General, since the Crocus massacre—I guess that was in Moscow. Somewhere around there. They have picked up—Russia has picked up their pace in Ukraine. Is that correct?

General CAVOLI. Yes. I am not sure it is a consequence of that though, but yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. With Secretary Blinken coming up a couple of weeks ago basically saying that Ukraine will be in NATO, I am sure that didn't fly too well in Russia.

So, it is obvious to me, just being in all these meetings and hearings, not just you, other people, we are getting ready to go to war with Russia.

Have we got a game plan for that, for how many people we are going to need on the ground, young men and women from United States when this war starts?

General CAVOLI. Sir, we have standing operational plans around the globe for a variety of problems and I—

Senator TUBERVILLE. How many do you think it is going to take for us to beat Russia, because Ukraine can't beat Russia—

General CAVOLI. Can I take that in closed session, please, sir?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Okay.

General CAVOLI. Thank.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What about the budget? \$60 billion is going to be a drop in the bucket to the American taxpayer. We are \$35 trillion debt. What is this going to cost us? I know you all have surely put the numbers to that, of our conflict versus Russia when this all starts. Have we done that?

General CAVOLI. Sir, the number I would have to talk in closed session about also. But I agree, if we were to go to war with Russia, it would—the money we are spending in Ukraine would be a drop in the bucket.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Where are we going to get our energy from when this starts? Because they don't have any in Europe. The Saudis, I don't know whether they are going to help us out. We are going to back to Ukraine, I guess.

I mean, Iran, because we are not pumping the oil and gas that we need. Where are we going to get our fuel for a war like this?

General CAVOLI. Sir, that is outside of my area of expertise, but I am sure I can get you the—

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do we have enough right now, you know, to get a war started on the ground there for our troops?

General CAVOLI. Yes, we do, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. Who is Turkey going to fight with when this war starts between the United States and Russia?

General CAVOLI. Turkey will fight with the alliance is my prediction. But all nations have their sovereign right to make that decision when the time comes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Hungary?

General CAVOLI. The same.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You think most everybody else will stick with us in this fight?

General CAVOLI. I do.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Everything that I read over the past few months is most of the militaries in the—in NATO are boutique militaries. Do you agree with that?

General CAVOLI. I am not sure what a boutique military is, sir—

Senator TUBERVILLE. All a shadow of what it used to be. Haven't been preparing.

General CAVOLI. Yes—

Senator TUBERVILLE. In terms of—

General CAVOLI. Sure, I would agree with that. For instance, the U.S. Army is now 450,000. When I joined it, it was 785.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. So, with Ukraine fighting right now as they are, do we have any count of numbers of how many soldiers that they have actually fighting, that they have in their military against Russia?

General CAVOLI. Yes, absolutely, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do you have a number of that?

General CAVOLI. Yes, it is between 900,000 and 1 million right now.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. How about Russia? How many do they have deployed within Ukraine? Not on the borders, but how many do they have deployed in Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. Inside the country, 470. Outside the country, more, and then they have the rest of their military.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. My understanding is after the massacre, that they have been growing at 40,000, soldiers a month that are volunteering for the military. Is that pretty good Intel or not?

General CAVOLI. I am tracking 30,000, but yes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. 30,000. So, growing more than it was—more than it was before the massacre. Is that correct?

General CAVOLI. The size of the Russian military is bigger today than it was when the war started, and it is bigger today than when the massacre started, yes.

In fact, I think what you are pointing to is they have initiated their annual spring conscription, Senator. That is—they do that every spring. This year they did 150,000, they announced that they intend to take in under the draft. That is right about average for a spring conscription.

The difference is, this year they are offering those conscripts after 1 month of service, the option to sign a contract, get paid, in exchange for being able to be sent to Ukraine to fight.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Do you feel a sense of urgency in our supply chain now, of building the munitions that we need? Because they have not been there. I know in my State of Alabama, there has not been a lot of sense of urgency of building javelins and things like that. I mean we are building them as fast as we can, but there is no sense of urgency.

General CAVOLI. Sir, I sense an increased urgency in demand. I can't speak to whether there is an increased urgency in the base itself to produce.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, General.

General CAVOLI. Thank you sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Tuberville. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with Senator Tuberville's remarks about building the munitions that we need. I mean, it is critical that we restock our supplies of the munitions that we have shared with our Ukrainian allies.

We have depleted stockpiles and the—by passing the emergency supplemental, we have an opportunity to resupply our forces with new munitions, some of which could be made in Alabama. I think what I don't agree with is the definitive language about, we are getting ready to go to war with Russia.

I don't feel that is the case, and using language about when this war starts. My view is that we should do everything we possibly can to avoid going to war with a near peer adversary like Russia or China. It is not in our best interest to do that.

So, General Cavoli, first of all, thank you for your service. I am interested to hear just a little bit more about what you feel the best way in Europe right now is for us to avoid a conflict with Russia.

General CAVOLI. Thank you, Senator, and yes, I agree. My job is to deter, both in my NATO role and in my U.S. role, my primary job is to deter aggression and to avert a war, not to fight one. Now, there is the paradox, of course, that historically we deter by preparing, you know, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*.

We are certainly prepared militarily to fight whoever we need to. How to do it? First of all, by training. But second, I think inside the alliance, the most important way to deter is by doing it together.

So, the comments from members of the committee about the lamentable fact that some very wealthy nations inside the alliance are not yet spending what they should be is an important fact and we have to close that, because we have to have a capable alliance that will fight together.

The alliance fighting together is far greater than the sum of its parts, because of the political unity and the representation of such a mass of humanity and its will. So, it is—the most important thing is for us to deter as part of an alliance, and that alliance has to be fit in order to do that.

I have been charged by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to make the operational force of the Alliance fit, fit for the purpose of collective defense, of large scale defense of Europe. We are well

along on that. We have produced the plans necessary, the requirements necessary, and we are going through the process of getting nations to fulfill those requirements.

I believe that that process is one of the things that has stimulated at least 10 additional countries to meet 2 percent this year compared to last year, because they have a list now, they have a blueprint. This is how to get ready.

This is the things we need to do to get ready, and they can bring tangible things back home to the political leadership and say, these are the things we need to go by. So that is what we are doing to get ready and that is, I think, the best way to do this, sir.

Senator KELLY. What is the best thing, the most appropriate thing that we can do here as Members of Congress right now to deter—to continue to possibly deter Russian aggression into another country?

General CAVOLI. I think the first thing is to continue the discussion about the malign intent of Russia, sir. I think it is important for the members of the U.S. Congress to recognize the malign intent of Russia and to talk about the malign intent of Russia.

That is the principal thing to do. After that, funding the various different programs that we have and authorizing us to do certain things will be necessary, but I think the primary thing is to help us all recognize and keep our eye on the real threat.

Senator KELLY. How significant is the emergency supplemental in the list of things that we could do to deter Russia?

General CAVOLI. It is vital. I think, if Ukraine fails, and Russia succeeds, it will be a big setback for deterrence. Russia will be emboldened. They will be geographically in a better position from a military perspective.

So, there are many things that will be damaged in our ability to deter. One of the things that would be damaged in our ability to deter is, it is likely that the number of nations who want to side with us could shrink, and so, I think it is absolutely imperative for all of those reasons.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General, and Mr. Chairman, I have a question to submit for General Van Ovost on maritime security. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you both again for being here. General Van Ovost, the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, horrible, but it highlights the larger issue I think that we need to address, and that is how a single piece of destroyed infrastructure can shut down multiple modes of transportation.

If I am not mistaken, a number of critical military supply ships are stuck in Baltimore harbor, in addition to road traffic that has been diverted. So how resilient are our ports of embarkation, and for instance like in North Carolina, military ocean terminal Sunny Point, in the event of a conflict, and if our adversaries should decide to conduct cyber-attacks or sabotage infrastructure?

Then, if you would follow that up with how we can be helpful here, securing these critical nodes.

General VAN OVOST. Yes. Thanks for your question. As I mentioned, we cannot do without the substantial private infrastructure

here in the United States, roads, rails, and seaports. With respect to the Francis Scott Key Bridge, a tragic event, and but we think about how do we recover very quickly and the fact that we had a few ships that were essentially blocked in. But that is why we have so many ports.

We can afford to lose a port and some capacity. We can't afford to lose them all. So we do many efforts to ensure the resiliency of the ports. We work directly with the port managers on all of our strategic ports, on our alternative plan should there be problems there, as well as in a State of emergency, how would we use their resources.

But it also comes to the fact that those—some of the ships that were behind the lines that couldn't get out, actually, we wouldn't use them anyway because they are in such a State of disrepair, that we wouldn't call upon those ships.

It goes back to how old these ships are and how we need to continue with the recapitalization program, which is one of the number one things we can do here, is to assure the readiness of the force, not just the capacity, the credible capacity to fight in the contested environment.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. Slightly different topic. In your opening statement, you argued for the need for a supplemental, correct. General Van Oost?

General VAN OOST. Correct.

Senator BUDD. Here is what I am trying to reconcile. For the third year in a row, I see that you didn't submit a single unfunded requirement. Why was, even though it is required by 10 U.S.C. 222(a), why are you asking for supplemental and then yet didn't submit unfunded requests?

General VAN OOST. Certainly. Supplemental is critical for the Department of Defense, and for U.S. Transportation Command, it is critical because we have not been reimbursed for funding associated with the events after October 7th in the Middle East, and that is eating away in our reserves.

Those reserves are there, our working capital fund is there to be able to respond at a moment's notice to meet our Nation's most critical priorities. So that is—that is associated with authorization to spend transportation funding in that area.

With respect to the unfunded list, we worked very hard with the Department of Defense to balance the resources to meet today's rigorous requirements and to be able to transition into the future, and this budget directly addresses our recapitalization requirements, it begins to address our contested logistics requirements, to include posture forward and cybersecurity needs.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General. General Cavoli, last week, Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, he said that Russia had almost completely reconstituted its military. Do you agree with that assessment, and what can you tell the committee about the current State of Russia's conventional and industrial capacity? If you speak broadly here in as many details. Also, in the closed session, if you could add to that.

General CAVOLI. Yes, absolutely, Senator. I will add to it in the closed session, first of all, but Generally speaking, Russia has been

working extremely hard on reconstituting its forces. They are being quite successful, especially in the ground forces.

So, the attrition that they have suffered so far has been very significant, but it has been localized. It has been mainly in the ground forces. They lost a couple thousand tanks in the ground forces. They lost as many as 75,000 killed from the ground forces. But they have replenished those. They have got tank production going on.

They have got tank refurbishment going on, and they have got tank repair going on, and they have managed—they still have as many tanks functioning inside Ukraine as they introduced at the beginning of the war.

Senator BUDD. So, if you look at Generally their capacity in February 2022, as a percentage 0 to 100, where would you say they are today? If there were 100 in February 2022 and it has been diminished, and then they have reconstituted according to Kurt Campbell, where are they now?

General CAVOLI. Numbers of soldiers have——

Senator BUDD. Just in total capacity.

General CAVOLI. Well, that is a really hard thing to do because——

Senator BUDD. Are they back where they started, or are they more, are they less?

General CAVOLI. They are little bit behind where they started, but not by too much, sir. But it is really hard to give a numerical answer to something like that. I could go, you know, function by function, or I could go arm of the service by arm of the service and give you a good, rich answer that gave you a good feeling.

But the overall message I would give you is, they have grown back to what they were before. They have got some gaps that have been produced by this war, but their overall capacity is very significant still, and they intend to make it go higher, Senator.

Senator BUDD. Thank you both. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Mike issue there, so. Over here. Well, welcome, both of you. Thank you for your service. General Cavoli, the State Partnership Program has an incredible history of building trust and capability with important allies over the past 30 years. I know you are well aware of that.

Two key Arctic allies, Finland and Sweden, will soon join the State Partnership Program to be paired with National Guard units. These State partners will certainly play a critical role in integrating these countries into NATO, and in particular, I would argue that pairing Sweden with an experienced EUCOM partner like the State of Michigan National Guard would facilitate a seamless transition into NATO.

But my question for you, sir, is with us in mind, how is EUCOM planning to take advantage of the expansion of the State Partnership Program into both Sweden and Finland? Are there certain capabilities that would be particularly helpful to you as you think about this expansion?

General CAVOLI. Thank you, Senator, for the great opportunity to talk about the State Partnership Program. You would have to

look pretty far and wide to find somebody who is a bigger fan of State Partnership than I am.

In fact, Rob Abernathy, my Command Sergeant Major here, routinely visits those troops and goes back to the States to talk to their senior leadership about this program. It is vital. It is expanding, as you point out, but not just among our allies.

As you know, the State Partnership Program has been vital to our ability to bring partners into the alliance, and to take countries that didn't consider themselves to be partners and make them partners. This has been especially valuable lately. Austria has become a State partner this year, a nation that has had a post-World War II tradition of neutrality.

So, it is a big step forward in terms of their understanding of their responsibilities for collective defense. You can't just sit in the middle of a bunch of safe countries. You have to be part of that. Switzerland also.

In fact, this morning I received an email from Ambassador Miller telling me that Switzerland had sent its letter to me asking me to endorse their State Partnership request, and I have talked to Dan Hokanson about that, and I think we are going to go forward with that.

Specifically with regard to Finland and Sweden, Michigan and the various other States have very broad based capabilities, and we would just like them to continue to pull Sweden and Finland toward the alliance.

As you know, both of those militaries are quite capable and, you know, they don't need coaching on this or that. They just need continued partnership, Senator.

Senator PETERS. Yes. Great. Thank you, General. General Van Ovost, as you know, contested logistics and sustainment during a potential conflict is clearly a significant challenge for our forces in the Indo-Pacific.

Despite our forward position units, pre-positioned stocks and regional allies and partners, our ability to refuel, rearm, and repair under fire will be severely tested in any conflict. In preparation,

I believe that we would argue we need to do more exercises like Talisman and Saber with large scale sustainment rehearsals and major fuel offloads to test our contested logistics. So, my question for you, General, is what role does TRANSCOM play in rehearsing contested logistics as part of large exercises?

Is it your intent to make sure that logistics plays a central role in all future major exercises, particularly in the Indo-Pacific area?

General VAN OVOST. Yes, thanks for that question, Senator. Across the entire joint deployment distribution enterprise, we have seen how everyone has mobilized to support our partners, like Ukraine, with fuel, ammunition, equipment, supplies.

So, when I think about the lessons we have learned in the Middle East and in Europe, we are absolutely translating them out into the Indo-Pacific. With respect to posture, you see multiple posture initiatives in the Indo-Pacific.

Forward stationing of equipment. More resilient bases that we are using and seaports, as well as more fuel forward, and an ability to distribute that fuel forward. So again, this is not merely about moving supplies forward like we have done with unfettered access.

We work very closely with our allies and partners to ensure that we have multiple resilient ways to come at the problem to ensure that our geographic Combatant Commands will be successful in any future fight.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Mullin, please.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the both of you all, thank you so much for taking the time to come visit with us. I know it is important to us, and I know we give you an important mission to carry out every day. I don't take it lightly that you take the time to come up here and visit with us. General Van Ovost, is that how you say it?

General VAN OVOST. Van Ovost.

Senator MULLIN. Okay. I am sorry. We don't pronounce it that often. I am from Oklahoma. I understand you are familiar with Altus Air Force Base, and we really appreciate that. They speak very highly of you.

You know, as someone who has commanded various aspects of manning, training, equipping, and mission of air mobility, I just want to know, are you getting what you need from the Air Force to carry out that mission still?

General VAN OVOST. Thank you. First of all, Altus is a really important base for us. It is the home of mobility of all of our training. Of course, you have our assets there to include our new KC-46, which is really critical when I think about transitioning and the future of air refueling in that type of airplane.

So, I support the Air Force. We are on a journey to try to ensure that our assets are able to communicate, they have battlespace awareness, and they are survivable in the environment where we are expected to go into, and so, as we as we embark upon that journey, we are providing the requirements to the Air Force to ensure that we can continue to maintain credible capacity.

Senator MULLIN. Is there anything we need to be doing on our behalf from Congress to help with that?

General VAN OVOST. Certainly, supporting the Air Force's budget with respect to modernization and recapitalization. It is just not of air refueling, but also of the airlift fleet. We have 275 strategic airlift aircraft, and we will consume all of that, should we have to go into a large scale combat operation.

So, the work done there to modernize those, and frankly, to think about the future and where we are going with that. So, we are supporting the Air Force as they look into the future of strategic airlift.

Senator MULLIN. So, specifically dialing down on that, when we are looking toward possible conflicts—and God forbid that actually happens, but, you know, we are doing what we can to prevent it. However, we need to be strengthened and preparing for it.

What is the biggest hold back. Is it the DOD defense contractors? Is it requirements? Is it regulations? Is it the slow flow of money? What is it that is the biggest hiccup?

General VAN OVOST. I think the biggest thing, when you think about it, is the aging fleet that we have, and we have to modernize

them to ensure that they can survive out into the future. So, you know, just looking at the capacity, ensuring that it remains credible.

That is—it is an ability to fund it and have a stable funding that we know that we can count on to lay in those contracts to gain the capability.

Senator MULLIN. Moving forward, if something comes up that we can be of assistance, please, holler at us and let us know how we can help. So, looking toward, you know, some of our biggest adversaries, especially in geopolitics, you know, China is obviously playing a big role in that, and ever strengthening their relationships with Russia and obviously Iran, how are we seeing that play out in Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. Thank you very much, Senator. Yes, so we see direct military support from some of those countries that goes to Russia, and then the Russians employ that material in combat. A great example is the Shahed 136 drone.

It is a one way attack drone. It was created by Iran. It was developed by Iran. It was produced by Iran. It was given to Russia. It was used with great effect. Iran helped Russia build a factory for them in Russia, and Russia now produces them, and they call them the Geran-10.

Those are used. They were used early this morning to strike Ukraine. That is just one example. So, I could go into dozens of examples like this in closed session with you. Some of what we know about this is classified. But some of it is very visible right out there, just like the 136s.

Senator MULLIN. Are you able to talk about the cost of what—in this session, of what it costs them to produce one of those drones?

General CAVOLI. Sir, I could probably talk about it in this session, but I don't have the money figure right off the top of my head. I can take that for the record gladly. But Generally speaking, the cost of the drones is far less than the cost of defending them, which might be your deeper question.

Senator MULLIN. It is. The defense that we are using, and then plus, looking at what we are producing in the United States and the cost of what it cost us. Because obviously what they have is being, you know, fairly effective, and the cost ratio to me, I see that Russia is—they are adapting.

We have got sanctions on Russia. I don't see that they are being effective. I would love to hear your comment on that. It seems like their economies growing. It said that their company is going to maybe grow by 2.4 percent, which is a full percentage higher than it was last year.

It seems like they have actually adapted to their techniques, and as you are saying, they are almost back to full capacity. So, the sanctions we are having that we put on—or not we are having—that we put on Russia, are they—do they seem to be effective?

General CAVOLI. So, obviously this is outside my field of expertise, Senator, the sanctions, how they work, and how effective they are. In some things, as noted previously during the discussion today, there have been instances where clearly sanctioned components have still gotten into Russia weapons systems.

With regard to the overall cost ratios between, you know, the sorts of drones we produce and the sorts of drones that we see there, it is a complicated question. I am not the expert on it, but I can certainly talk to you about it.

Senator MULLIN. Yes, sir. Absolutely. Thank you so much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Mullin. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed, for holding this hearing, and, of course, I would like to thank and welcome General Cavoli and General Van Ovost, of course, for your commitment, your passion, your service to our country, and for being here to testify this morning.

So, General Cavoli, we are working to provide Ukraine with critical air and missile defense capabilities, and my concern is that defense alone is not going to solve this conflict—or win this conflict.

So can you speak to how the integration of additional long range systems would impact the operational effectiveness of Ukraine forces, and what strategic advances could these—that these capabilities might provide them.

General CAVOLI. Sure, Senator. The additional long range capabilities for Ukraine would clearly allow them to reach farther back and to hit and destroy systems that are shooting at them. Of course, you know, the Russians carefully measure the ranges of the things they believe are available to the Ukrainians, and then move their important stuff outside of that range.

The ability to move in and out of the farther range would be an important addition to Ukraine's capabilities. When we think about long range fires though, you know, there are really three components to effectiveness. The first is the range itself. The second is the precision with which it can strike. The third is the survivability of the munitions so that you know it gets to the target.

So, as Ukraine goes around trying to work on its longer range capabilities, they have a lot of drones, for instance, that they are using, longer range. They try to balance those things and get the sweet spot for the given target that they are looking at.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I just think offense is as important as defense.

General CAVOLI. It is ma'am.

Senator ROSEN. Speaking of offense, General, we are going to talk a little bit more about—General Cavoli. We have multiple Generals here, excuse me. How are you working with CYBERCOM, because cybersecurity so important to provide that cybersecurity support to our NATO allies.

Particularly there are some nations with lesser capabilities, and we have—they are vulnerable from these cyber-attacks from Russia, China, and Iran. Can you share to us the real value to the United States of the multilateral cyber exercises with our European allies, such as Locked Shields?

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Senator. You know, it raises an ancillary question, by the way. So, Tim Hawk at CYBERCOM runs a lot of that. I field all the Russia questions, it seems like, but there are so many people working on this problem.

Jackie—I mean, I wouldn't be giving anything to the Ukrainians if it weren't for Jackie's splendid ability to deliver. Tim is the same

with CYBECOM. He sponsors and co-sponsors with us these multi-lateral exercises that allow us primarily to illuminate vulnerabilities in networks, in our allies and our partners, and for the alliance's own proper—you know, the networks we own as an alliance proper.

They are very, very valuable. But then we followup with cyber protection teams that go forward and do what Tim calls hunt forward operations, and we help them defend their networks forward. It has been tremendously successful, not just with allies, but with partners as well, and with commercial enterprises.

As you know, a lot of our transportation works on unclassified systems, and they can be vulnerable. So, it is a very valuable thing, ma'am. Offensive stuff we could talk about in closed session, if you desire.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, and I fully support the idea that Jackies can deliver. So, General Jackie Van Ovost, welcome.

I want to ask you about logistic operations in the Pacific. Because from the Berlin airlift in 1948 to the chaotic evacuation of Afghanistan by air, history really has shown us the extensive resources that we really need to undertake a complex airlift operation, even in a relatively permissive environment.

So how is TRANSCOM, are you actively testing the forces to conduct a long scale—a large scale, prolonged, logistical operation? Should there be a blockade of Taiwan in the future, especially given the threats, we know regional threats in the Indo-Pacific?

General VAN OVOST. Well, thanks. That is one of the key things we do in exercises around the globe, as well as in an Indo-Pacific. Scenario agnostic, our ability to deliver at a time and place of our Nation's choosing is a strategic advantage.

I think about the differences between the Middle East and Europe and Indo-Pacific is we are going to rely more upon the airlift because of the, you know, the dearth of ground lines of communication.

As we do analysis on the intra-theater movement necessary to get those supplies that will last tactical thousand miles, we are exercising sealift capacity, which is shallow draft sealift running essentially a network or below the network of airplanes, because it will fully consume our airlift fleet if we fly everything. So that is an important part of what we are exercising.

Things like Talisman and Saber, where we are moving around with ships and moving pre-positioned around is very important. Pre-positioning capability to include fuel forward is important, as well as ensuring resilient ports and airports for defense and our ability to survive, essentially to aggregate to fight and disaggregate to survive and regenerate.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. General Cavoli, General Van Ovost, thank you both for your appearance. General Cavoli, you have been asked on occasion, to include by the chairman's very first question, about the lessons that other nations might learn from Ukraine, like China in particular, if America falters.

I agree with that because we underpin global stability and security if American will falters anywhere, the adversaries everywhere will take lessons from it. The one thing you haven't gotten asked about is what is happening right now in the Red Sea.

An outlaw gang of brigands and rebels is shooting at U.S. Navy vessels on a routine basis, dozens of times now. Now, fortunately, our air defenses have intercepted those, but that is the only thing that stopped our sailors from being killed.

Yet all we are doing is shooting down those drones and missiles in the air, or maybe when they are on the launchpad. What lessons do countries like China, or for that matter, Russia, learn when we just let our sailors sit in the Red Sea and become sitting ducks for an outlaw band of rebels?

General CAVOLI. Thanks, Senator. So, just to be clear, that is not my area of responsibility—

Senator COTTON. Not your area, but your comment is to Chairman Reed that people outside your area take lessons from what is happening there. So what lessons are people in your area take from the fact that, again, we are doing nothing—

General CAVOLI. Sure. The lessons that European nations are taking from this—

Senator COTTON. That Vladimir Putin is taking from it.

General CAVOLI. Well, I don't know what Vladimir Putin is taking from it, sir, because he has got his hands pretty full right now inside Ukraine, where he is learning some of the same lessons, right.

Senator COTTON. The lesson is that President Biden can be deterred from taking decisive action to protect our interest. For 2 years, he pussy footed around and didn't provide Ukraine what it needed to stop the invasion earlier and to roll it back, and now we are at this unsatisfactory moment in time.

Okay, let me come to that. So, Ukraine is a pretty big country compared to some countries. It is small compared to Russia. Some people say like, well, Russia is always going to win, Russia always wins because Russia is a big country. Is it the case in history that smaller nations always lose to bigger nations?

General CAVOLI. No, it is not the case, especially if the smaller nation can make sure that they accomplish their objectives in the fight quickly. I think over time, as we see in history, as we see conflicts get protracted, typically that favors the larger nation.

Senator COTTON. I agree, that is why it was such a terrible mistake for President Biden to pussyfoot around for 2 years and not provide Ukraine the weapons it needed, when it could have had a decisive advantage. But it is not even case in Russia's history, right? Russia lost the Russo-Japanese War.

Russia lost the war in Afghanistan. I guess you could say Russia won the Winter War against Finland in 1939 and 1940, but it got very little for an extraordinarily high cost. So, it is not the case that just because you are a bigger nation, you are fated to win a war against a smaller nation. But as you say, you have got—the smaller nation has to be more nimble and aggressive, maybe take risks that it otherwise wouldn't.

One thing that Ukraine needs to do, therefore, in my opinion, is conduct more strikes against the facilities and the sites and the re-

sources that Russia is using to wage this unprovoked war of aggression.

So, for instance, General Cavoli, what is the military value of striking refineries on Russian territory for Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. The military value of that is producing a deficit in fuel available for the fielded force, that is for the combat force, someplace downstream of the strike, right. So, there is a time lag in its effect, Senator, as you well know.

Senator COTTON. The military value of, say, of striking drone factories on Russian soil.

General CAVOLI. The same. It has an affect—it is a downstream effect, but of course, it has an effect.

Senator COTTON. The military value of striking the Kerch Strait bridge.

General CAVOLI. That would have a downstream effect that took effect sooner.

Senator COTTON. Okay. The Administration has urged Ukraine not to launch these kind of strikes though. In your professional military judgment, would Ukraine be more likely to win or at least get a satisfactory outcome in this war if it was striking those sites and other sites that right now are safe haven for Russia's military?

General CAVOLI. So, I think Ukraine would be very well advised to strike the operational level targets that are supporting the fielded force. They have some urgent challenges right now on the front line, as we have spoken about.

The fighting is active along the forward line of troops, and so, those things that contribute most directly that have the shortest downstream effect right now, I think should be struck. Kind of feeding the wolf closest to the sled, I think is what they need to do right now.

Senator COTTON. Is it your military judgment that we should provide Ukraine with more and more variants of the ATACMS missiles than we have already?

General CAVOLI. It is.

Senator COTTON. Okay. One final question on this small and large point, it has been reported that Russia has about a 3 to 1 advantage in artillery production right now over Ukraine. Is that accurate?

General CAVOLI. No, sir. They have a 3 to 1 production advantage over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Senator COTTON. Ukraine and the good guys, let's put it that way. Okay. So, but isn't it also the case that Ukraine is destroying four Russian Howitzers for every one that Russia destroys?

General CAVOLI. Something about like that.

Senator COTTON. A pretty big mismatch. If you Russia can make three times as many big rounds that we all can make collectively, yet Ukraine is able to kill four times as many guns as Russia has, what explains that?

General CAVOLI. What explains their ability to kill more? Because the Russians are not as precise in their targeting.

Senator COTTON. So, it is not just a matter of having a lot more stuff, although it is nice to have more stuff and we should certainly have more stuff and be able to make it faster. It is also that you

got to be able to use it. Or to put it in simple terms, you have got to be able to hit the targets that you shoot at in a timely fashion.

General CAVOLI. Of course.

Senator COTTON. Ukraine is doing that much more effectively than Russia is doing that.

General CAVOLI. Typically, but not uniformly.

Senator COTTON. So, while the a 3 to 1 production advantage is unsatisfactory, it needs to be reversed. It is also not a sign that Russian victory is inevitable.

General CAVOLI. There is no such thing as, you know, of inevitable victory, sir. If your question is, can Ukraine win this war? They can win this war. Can they win it without achieving Russian levels of production? Sure, they can. But right now, they are in a very critical moment.

Senator COTTON. Well, what would be best is if we achieve Russian levels of production and we maintain the 4 to 1 advantage on targeting. So, let's try to get there.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Cavoli, thank you for being here. A couple of questions about NATO, and then I do want to ask about the Gaza pier. There was a lot of discussion today about lessons learned from the Ukraine war.

One of the lessons, I suppose that we could all learn is that our European allies in NATO have come very accustomed to us subsidizing their social welfare programs in Europe because they refuse to meet their 2 percent obligations.

There is only 11 countries that do it, and I think, you know, we represent American taxpayers, the United States, and that is who we represent. I want to ask about that. So, what in—so 2 percent is the target—why is 2 percent the target. Why not 3 percent?

General CAVOLI. Sir, because that is what was agreed to at Wales some years ago. Is it an appropriate target? Is it an arbitrary target? I leave those questions to somebody else.

What I can tell you is that I know what the alliance needs to do to modernize and to get fit for its collective defense, its new purpose, its reestablished purpose in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine, and it is at least 2 percent.

That is why the alliance at the last summit adopted the phrase floor, not a ceiling. I think over time, we will see our allies realize that it is—at 2 percent it is inadequate for the cost, at least in the near and mid-term.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, I am glad that they make these pronouncements. But—our allies and NATO allies. But they don't seem to ever meet the obligations.

So, I guess, at what point, you know, when you only have 11 countries doing it—and by the way, many of them fudge these numbers. They are not dollars related to military readiness.

Here we are now, the taxpayers are again being asked to spend another \$60 billion on top of the \$112 billion. We have been told there could be another \$100 billion request, although that is not reflected in this budget.

So, we don't really know. This is an ongoing war and a blank check. I believe my job is to try to find out what does victory look

like and what is the cost going to be, because I feel like we are in this mode now where this dominates discussion but there aren't really a whole lot of details.

So again, I question whether 2 percent is even enough for our European allies. I don't think that it is. I think I hear you saying that, but we also only have 11 of them meeting those obligations, and again, I think those numbers are being fudged. I also, have come to learn that, is it your understanding that Hawaii is actually not included in Article V obligations under NATO?

General CAVOLI. Sure. So, the number right now is 20 are meeting—20 allies are meeting 2 percent as of June, they will be projected. Norway just sent the Secretary General a letter on Monday saying that and there are a couple more coming up.

But the point, Senator, your point that the rich countries of Western Europe that are not at 2 percent are in the wrong place, I agree with absolutely and fundamentally. But I would point out that the trajectory is moving very rapidly in the right direction, and it is doing that because our allies have learned the lesson of the invasion of Ukraine as well.

We still do need to close to say, do gap, however. Yes, so, with regard to—

Senator SCHMITT. Hawaii, if Hawaii is attacked by China.

General CAVOLI. Article VI defines—of the Washington Treaty, defines what the territory covered in the treaty is. South of the Tropic of Cancer is not included. So, French Polynesia is not in there. The UK's Pitcairn Islands are not in there.

Senator SCHMITT. Hawaii is not in there—

General CAVOLI. Hawaii and are not in there. However, Article IV gives any nation that has been attacked the right to call consultations with other nations and to say, I want you to do something about this, and Article V gives them all the same sovereign right to decide on that. It is just not automatic. But Article VI can—

Senator SCHMITT. One would believe that our European allies would have no objection to Hawaii being included, correct?

General CAVOLI. I would expect not. Article VI can—

Senator SCHMITT. What about Guam?

General CAVOLI. Article VI can be amended. The United States has never asked to amend it.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. I am deeply troubled by Macron's comments, I guess about a year ago, that Europe doesn't need to be dragged into a war in the Pacific and follow the United States—something to that effect. In America's strategic interest, China is by far and away our biggest threat. Do you believe that our NATO allies, if Taiwan is attacked, would join us in that cause?

General CAVOLI. I believe that many of them would. I do not believe that NATO as an alliance has that purpose right now. It could adopt that purpose, but that is not part of the purpose.

Senator SCHMITT. Is anyone in this Administration talking to them about that?

General CAVOLI. Oh, this Administration talks a great deal to—

Senator SCHMITT. About that specific issue?

General CAVOLI.—to our allies about being active in the Pacific. Are you asking is—?

Senator SCHMITT. Well, I guess I will just close with this because I am out of time. I am very concerned that our NATO allies don't meet their obligations, depend on the generosity of the American taxpayer to a degree that—it is very concerning to me.

When you hear comments from the leader of France that they don't want to follow the United States into potentially a war in the Pacific, potentially with our chief adversary, China, that raises a lot of concern.

So, anyway, I appreciate your service and what you do, but again, I just don't think that our European allies have stepped up. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt. Senator King requested additional time.

Senator KING. One brief question. We talk a lot about air defense. Are there—and perhaps this has to go to the closed session, are there directed energy air defense facilities in Ukraine? Because the bullet on a bullet is a very expensive way to defend.

Directed energy is a lot cheaper and I know there are systems now that are in development or actually in testing. Is that an option that we should be pursuing in terms of our support for air defense in Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. It is an option that we could pursue, Senator. Your points about the cost ratios and the reload speed of directed energy is very—you know, very important. It is obviously a big part of the future of missile defense specifically, and counter drone defense specifically.

There are some systems that we are working with out there. There are a lot of power problems, as you know, associated with still. We haven't fully realized its potential. With regard to Ukraine, it would be great to speak to you just a moment about that in closed session.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King, and Senator Schmitt, for additional questions.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I did not get to the Gaza pier, so I apologize. General Van Ovost, I do want to ask you, I know there has been discussion about this effort to—this Gaza pier for humanitarian aid.

I have concerns, and I don't think they are alone—I don't think I am alone in concerns about what that means for our American troops or personnel that would be engaged in this activity. What is your understanding of what this looks like?

What could be done—if this is happening, what can be done to ensure that American lives are protected?

General VAN OVOST. Yes, thanks. I think about what we do at Transportation Command, we provide transportation for these capabilities around the globe. We have exercised them. We do it almost every year.

As we bring all of the elements together to do joint logistics over the shore or even airdrop through humanitarian aid, we put processes, and we exercise these things. So, we have a great understanding of what it takes to build a pier and a discharge facility,

and to offload and to move monitoring goods, because we have done this actively for the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

So, when we think about the new, you know, what is the strategic environment associated with doing this in Gaza? Obviously, I forward that to the geographic Combatant Commander, to CENTCOM. So, we are working diligently with them on the planning. I can tell you that force protection is our number one concern.

General CAVOLI. If I could add to that, Senator. So, obviously, with the transfer of Israel from the EUCOM area of responsibility to the CENTCOM area of responsibility, we get a combined effort there now.

So, the protection is combined between USEUCOM and CENTCOM, depending on which exact part of the operation we are talking about. Eric and I, about Eric Kurilla and I have been in very intense conversation about this.

More importantly, in our maritime components, we have been in very close planning on this. It is not without danger, but we know how to handle it, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, and I guess just to color in a little bit of detail to the extent. I know it has just been—the Gaza pier has been certainly talked about, but what is your understanding of who is receiving the aid.

I guess we have vaguely heard of NGO's, but again, this is in a very dangerous part of the world right now with a lot of people who don't like the United States of America. So, I guess, what is your understanding of more the details as it stands today?

General CAVOLI. Sir, so that part is inside General Kurilla's AOR, inside CENTCOM. I know that this is a fast moving story as we go forward and I hesitate to give you a name.

Senator SCHMITT. That is fine.

General CAVOLI. I can refer to him for you.

Senator SCHMITT. We will followup on that. Thank you. Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt. I am informed that Senator Sullivan is on his way, but I have an additional question.

There has been discussion back and forth and a very I think useful one about what happens if the Ukraine Government fails. My sense, and I just ask for your opinion, General Cavoli, is that if we fail in Ukraine, Russia is more likely to conduct operations against other countries.

So, if we really want to diminish a potential conflict between NATO, United States, and Russia, succeeding Ukraine is a fundamental obligation, or—

General CAVOLI. Sir, I agree. I think the biggest single change we can make in our deterrent posture for the better is for Ukraine to win.

Chairman REED. There has been comments about the contribution of our allies, but the reality is that in many other ways, which are absolutely critical to the success of Ukraine, our allies are far outpacing us in humanitarian assistance and absorption of immigrants, very costly programs.

But without those programs, essentially, Ukraine would not be able to concentrate on the battle. Is that accurate?

General CAVOLI. Yes, absolutely, Chairman. The amount of humanitarian assistance, the amount of support for the electrical grid, which is under constant attack, and on and on.

The not inconsequential act of taking on board at least 4 million refugees for 2 years without a bump, these are important contributions. Some of them are less tangible, sir, but they are contributions.

Inside the military sphere, I really have to point out, there are some things that we provide a lot of, and in the aggregate, we are certainly providing an awful lot. But there are some things that are 100 percent provided by people other than the United States. Petroleum products for the use, the fuel for the force, 100 percent from allies, all of it.

Tanks, more than 90 percent of the tanks that we have given to the Ukrainians came from allies, not from us. Fighter jets, 100 percent of them have not come from us, and I could go on and on.

So, it is really important for us to recognize the value of our contribution and to justify—it is important for me to be able to justify to members and constituents the value proposition for America in these contributions, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that our allies are contributing as well.

Chairman REED. In fact, just my impression it might be yours, is that the European allies and NATO and other countries in Europe have far exceeded any expectations we had when this fight began. I am impressed, I think, in the terms of—and it is for their own self-interest and self-protection, but it is—

General CAVOLI. I agree with that, not just in terms of what they are giving to Ukraine and the support they are giving to Ukraine, but in terms of what they expect of themselves to contribute to the alliance. So, both of those tracks. It is—I would never have guessed this in 2021, Chairman.

Chairman REED. I was in the same sense of disbelief as you were. So, let me recognize Senator Sullivan. We are trying to keep to 5 minutes. We have to adjourn at 10 a.m..

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Generals, good to see both of you. Thanks for your great work. General Cavoli, I want to dig into a little bit more about a couple issues. One is the extent to which the authoritarian regimes in the world who are all on the march, China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, are cooperating.

I am sure you are seeing this, but can you spell that out a little bit more? I mean, one of the things that I talk about with this national security supplement—I don't even like calling it the Ukraine supplemental or the Ukraine aid bill, because it is actually not accurate.

The more accurate way to pick that bill is we have authoritarians all working together, clearly aimed at us. They hate us, and we need to be strategic in our response.

We also need to recognize that our own industrial base has atrophied dramatically. It has, and so, I like to call this national security bill the Revitalizing America's Industrial Base Act, because 60 percent of it, 60 percent of it goes directly into our ability, America's ability to produce weapons for us.

Everything from nuclear subs, which Xi Jinping is scared of death of, to one 55 millimeter Howitzer round. So, can you talk a

little bit more about how these dictatorships who don't like us now, we don't like them, are all working together, and what that means in terms of strategy.

General CAVOLI. Absolutely, Senator. First of all, I think the way you have characterized this is spot on. These are not our friends. These are countries, these are regimes that wish us ill and are taking active measures to deliver us ill.

So, there is practical cooperation. There is practical cooperation on an economic level that. That is, China becomes Russia's salvation economically, right, by absorbing its gas output. Other countries——

Senator SULLIVAN. And oil—and oil.

General CAVOLI. Other countries do the same. There is direct military support, right. DPRK loads up train loads of artillery shells and sends in them, and those artillery shells are exploding over Ukrainian heads every day.

On the earlier we discussed the creation of an Iranian based drone factory to reproduce the Shahed 136 inside Russia. Those were exploding over Ukraine this morning early. So, it is very practical.

More distressing, though, is the fact that these countries seem to be forming an intensifying bond that they intend to use geopolitically to weaken our position in the world, which will inevitably hurt our own interests and our own citizens.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask a related question. You know, you read about it in some commentators, actually, some of my colleagues have kind of come up with this new theory about deterrence being divisible.

Let me unpack that a little bit more. So again, with these authoritarians working together, you could have a situation where Putin rolls over Ukraine eventually, but if we don't provide any more military aid—by the way, do you think that will happen?

I mean, if at the end of the day, the U.S. is pretty much right now, like, hey, sorry, we are going to build out our industrial base, which we need to do, but we are not we are not sending anything else to you. Good luck. What do you think happens?

General CAVOLI. If we don't continue to support Ukraine?

Senator SULLIVAN. Let's say we stop—a couple of my colleagues just want to stop everything right now. Nothing. What will happen?

General CAVOLI. Sure. That is easy. They run out of 155. They run out of air defense interceptors, and you know, as I said yesterday in the House, the side that can't shoot back loses.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. So, but there is this notion out there—I don't think it really works with the facts on the ground. I don't think it works with history. If you read it, I don't think it works at all.

But that deterrence is divisible. You can let Putin roll over Ukraine, but we are going to—we are going to send that signal to Xi Jinping in the Taiwan Strait. We are going to be really strong with Taiwan. You think deterrence is divisible like that? Now, look, I don't think it—no offense to President Biden, but I think it is not divisible at all.

His Afghanistan withdrawal signaled to the world that, hey, game on, let the authoritarian regimes role. What do you think about this idea that somehow deterrence is divisible? You can be weak in Ukraine, but still strong in the Taiwan Strait, particularly when all these authoritarians are working together?

General CAVOLI. Senator, I think that every action or every inaction we take sends a message, and I think that people all over the world listen for that message, and those messages are always global. They cannot be sent to one audience at a time. So, I agree.

Senator SULLIVAN. My final question, General. You are an undisputed Russian expert. One thing that always kind of—and I pressed the DNI on this. I don't understand why we don't do this. These are authoritarian regimes, one of the things that they are starting to do is messing with our most precious institution and that is elections. We are a Republic—a democracy. We elect our leaders.

These dictators would never stand for fair elections because they probably wouldn't win. Certainly, Xi Jinping, Putin, one of their biggest vulnerabilities—the Ayatollahs in Iran—is they fear their own people, but they come after us on elections with, you know, cyber and things like that.

Don't you think that if Putin is coming after our elections, trying to disrupt our elections, when he won't stand for election, we should do everything we can to counter by getting out all the information we have on this guy? I mean, he is one of the richest people in the world. Literally, he stole \$80 billion from the Russians.

We probably have the Swiss bank account numbers to where he has stashed all the money. These poor Russians, you know, are starving and drinking vodka for breakfast, and Putin steals from them. Shouldn't we get that out to the world the way Navalny did and say, you want to mess with our elections, we are going to let the people—same with Xi Jinping, these guys are all corrupt.

Should we do that when they are messing with the most precious thing we have in America, our elections?

General CAVOLI. Senator, if you don't mind, I will leave that sort of strategy to civilian policymakers. But I would like to agree with you strongly that Putin fears open elections. He fears them in his own country, and he fears them elsewhere. He fears them, and he therefore seeks to undermine them.

I also agree with your opinion that the—that our elections, our ability to choose who governs us, our Government, by the consent of the governed, is the most precious thing we have in this country.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Thank you, General Cavoli and General Van Ovost for your excellent testimony. This will conclude the open session. We will reconvene at 12 noon in SVC-217 for the closed session and thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 9:57 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

PROPOSED NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU LEVELING INITIATIVE

1. Senator SHAHEEN. General Van Ovost, the 157th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) Maintenance Group conducted an analysis based on its fiscal year 2023 aircraft availability of how the National Guard Bureau's proposed leveling initiative would impact its future operations. In 2023, the New Hampshire Air National Guard's 12 KC-46 experienced a 48 percent aircraft availability rate. With a loss of 12 maintainers, they expect that to drop by 5.75 percent. How will a reduction in the 157th ARW aircraft ability affect TRANSCOM's requirements?

General VAN OVOST. While USTRANSCOM is closely monitoring the maintenance availability of the KC-46 fleet, the potential for aircraft availability at Pease Air National Guard Base to drop from 48 percent to 42 percent will not significantly impact the USTRANSCOM mission. The 157 ARW and its associated Active Duty squadron support USTRANSCOM with 3 to 4 aircraft on a daily basis. The 157th is on track to fulfill all requirements for its planned mobilization in fiscal year 2025.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

SEALIFT RECAPITALIZATION

2. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, as we have seen from the conflict in Ukraine, our ability to execute logistics maneuver is without equal and an asymmetric advantage. However, we risk our capability in the priority theatre at the most critical moment due to the aging ships of the Ready Reserve Fleet. As the end-user of the capabilities these ships provide, what do you see as the best way forward for maintaining our lift abilities in the Pacific?

General VAN OVOST. The best way forward to maintain our critical sealift capability is to expeditiously replace aging ships with newer and more reliable technology. Currently, 17 of the 47 Roll-on/Roll-off ships in the Ready Reserve Force are 50 years of age or older. USTRANSCOM supports the Navy's strategy to acquire used sealift vessels from the commercial market, and acknowledges Congress's intent to include domestic newbuild sealift ships in the recapitalization plan. Timely, predictable, and stabilized authorities and funding are critical to the recapitalization effort.

REFUELING

3. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, we know that China's plans emphasize targeting logistics enablers, such as airfields, refueling aircraft, and Military Sealift Command ships. To enable contested logistics, we must find ways to improve the tanker fleet's efficiency and survivability both in the air and at sea. What investments in fuel distribution capacity and capability do you see as most critical this decade and what future platforms will ensure our success in the long terms?

General VAN OVOST. USTRANSCOM's focus is on this Nation's unique capability to project power. We are dedicated to enhancing the strategic readiness of mobility forces and modernizing mobility assets, including our strategic Aerial Refueling tanker fleets and fuel distribution enablers. In terms of our future air refueling platforms, the most important focus should be on continued and uninterrupted recapitalization of our aging fleet of KC-135 aircraft. Each new tanker aircraft delivered, whether it be a KC-46 or one of the alternatives from the Next Generation Air Refueling Systems program, must be fully capable of refueling current and future receiver aircraft as well as being securely connected to battlefield command and control systems.

Leveraging newly developed tools and processes such as Bulk Fuel Feasibility Assessments and Petroleum War Reserve Requirement generation, we have begun to significantly refine the Department's understanding of the bulk fuel supply chain's risk and capacity, while driving toward fuel distribution gaps and needed capabilities for the Joint Petroleum Enterprise in contested environment operations.

For maritime tanker vessels, we now have a clearer understanding of the wartime requirement due to these new tools and processes. Current planning assumptions are that the Department will need to leverage commercial vessels for nearly all inter-theater and much intra-theater movement of fuel, and we have dramatically improved our understanding of the commercial tanker sector's ability to meet these requirements. The Tanker Security Program (TSP) is, and will continue to be, crucial as the baseline to meet a portion of these demands and we continue to refine requirements for the planned expansion of the program beyond the initial tankers

currently enrolled. Assured tanker access is the primary goal, and we are currently working on several initiatives to close gaps for both capacity and access.

4. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, what role does posture play in creating resiliency and how is the Department of Defense expanding investments in dual use facilities in places like the Compact States?

General VAN OVOST. The Department's Global Posture is the foundation of power projection and includes both domestic and international installations, seaports, railways, and airfields that connect us to the fight. Global mobility depends on access, basing, and overflight (ABO) and strong relationships and agreements with Allies and partners to facilitate flexible and resilient options. We must expand and strengthen our global transportation networks to facilitate our ability to aggregate force packages to initiate the fight, and then disaggregate to survive during brief periods of domain superiority by a near peer competitor. Expanding investments in dual-use facilities (military and civilian/commercial) not only provides options in time of need, but also creates opportunities for enhanced security cooperation with partner nations and expands usable capacity for host nations. USTRANSCOM remains actively involved with USINDOPACOM on developing infrastructure investment requirements throughout the Indo-Pacific, including in the Compact States, with a key focus on dual-use facilities outside of established military bases.

PATIENT MOVEMENT

5. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, during a meeting last month, I was happy you raised the issue of patient movement. Can you talk more about your command's efforts to overcome the difficulties you would face related to patient movement, especially during a potential conflict in the Indo-Pacific?

General VAN OVOST. [Deleted.]

CYBER RESILIENCY OF COMMERCIAL PARTNERS

6. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, many of our ports, airports, rail networks, and shipping companies are more vulnerable to cyberattack than Department of Defense owned systems, yet they are integral to your ability to move and sustain the Joint Force. How are you working with your commercial partners to ensure cyber resiliency?

General VAN OVOST. USTRANSCOM continues to strengthen partnerships with commercial Transportation Service Providers (TSPs) to mitigate cybersecurity vulnerabilities and increase resiliency by increasing information sharing and collaboration each year, to include briefing our TSPs on no-cost tools and services available from various government agencies, such as the National Security Agency, Department of Defense Cyber Crime Center, and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Additionally, we have voluntary one-on-one collaboration sessions with TSPs to discuss their annual self-assessments and offer expertise and advice on implementing the National Institute of Standards and Technology Special Publication 800-171 security controls. These meetings are held with TSP government business leads, but they are often also attended by the TSPs' Chief Information Officer and/or Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).

Our Cybersecurity Service Provider also provides technical exchanges with our industry partners to share best practices in technical innovations, creating a more collaborative relationship. This effort also provides our TSPs with real-time reach back to the USTRANSCOM cybersecurity team to answer questions and receive feedback regarding the security of their networks and systems.

USTRANSCOM has taken a lead role in sharing best practices with industry through recurring CISO newsletters with cyber relevant open-source intelligence, as well as participating in the Department of Homeland Security's Aviation Cyber Initiative, National Defense Transportation Association meetings, and engagements across various events and conferences (for example, regularly scheduled executive working groups) throughout the year.

Last, our acquisition experts review all contracts, ensuring cybersecurity language is included during Performance Work Statement or Statement of Work reviews prior to Request for Information or Request for Proposal. All USTRANSCOM contracts include DFARS clause 252.204-7012, Safeguarding Covered Defense Information and Cyber Incident Reporting, which mandates baseline protections for contractor information systems and establishes reporting requirements for cybersecurity incidents. As well, USTRANSCOM incorporates additional, enhanced cybersecurity requirements into transportation contracts by expanding the scope of incidents to be reported and adding a direct notification requirement to USTRANSCOM.

Overall, cybersecurity compliance continues to improve each year, highlighting our partners' understanding of the importance of implementing sound cybersecurity practices.

7. Senator HIRONO. General Van Ovost, I want to make sure small businesses are also able to work with the Department of Defense. How you and the rest of the Department of Defense ensuring smaller companies are have access to the same resources as larger companies?

General VAN OVOST. USTRANSCOM ensures fair and equal opportunity for all small business concerns by providing notice of our upcoming acquisitions. The USTRANSCOM Small Business Office maintains the acquisition page on the Command's "Doing Business with U.S. Transportation Command" website and publishes the Procurement Forecast twice a year. Dissemination as required by the Small Business Act about the publications is made to Industry through the Systems for Award Management website. Our website also includes an Industry Resource tab which contains information about the USTRANSCOM Acquisition Directorate, the Small Business Office, the DOD Approval Process for air and surface carriers, Government agency and training links, Cyber Security resources, and other information. The DOD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) maintains its own website, <https://business.defense.gov>, which serves as DOD common point of entry for small business and includes a guide to working with DOD and links to all DOD Small Business offices to help small business concerns understand each agency's mission and requirements. Across the country, OSBP provides roughly 100 APEX Accelerators to counsel and train small businesses to become capable of participating in DOD contracts. OSBP also establishes Small Business prime and subcontracting goals and ensures the small business professional workforce is engaged in acquisition planning to enable more small business set asides in DOD contracting. OSBP also provides no-cost cybersecurity resources, tools, and training. Through strategic communication, events, and activities, OSBP engages and informs small businesses. The Mentor Protégé Program pairs small businesses with industry mentors. The Indian Incentive Program promotes DOD contract opportunities for Native American-owned businesses. OSBP also has programs to mitigate cybersecurity and Foreign Ownership, Control, or Influence (FOCI) risks for small businesses through educational resources and tools.

UKRAINIAN CIVILIAN PROTECTIONS

8. Senator HIRONO. General Cavoli, as we have seen around the world, in war it is often the most vulnerable who pay the highest costs—the elderly, women, girls. As the conflict between Russia and Ukraine enters its third year, our support of the civilian population also speaks to our country's values and stands in stark contrast with Russia and other malign actors. General Cavoli, how is EUCOM continuing to support and protect the people of Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. We are deeply concerned with how the war in Ukraine harms the civilian population, and strive to provide the maximum support possible. USEUCOM, in a unified effort with other U.S. Government Agencies, has provided various forms of support, from physical hardening of critical national infrastructure and reconstructing schools, to designing additional levels of infrastructure protection and training. The USEUCOM Humanitarian Assistance program, along with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has provided equipment to protect power plants and other critical national infrastructure, rebuilt schools and orphanages, provided food, safe drinking water, medical supplies, and related materiel. The Department of Energy (DoE) and the Army Corps of Engineers are designing plans for passive protection equipment to better protect Ukrainian energy-related critical national infrastructure, and USEUCOM supports various DOE technical advising programs for Ukrainian grid operators.

9. Senator HIRONO. General Cavoli, how is EUCOM working with Ukraine and other U.S. Government agencies to the monitor human rights abuses of Russia?

General CAVOLI. The Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and USAID are the U.S. Government Agencies that have primacy in the effort to track and monitor human rights violations by the Russian military. USAID partners with Ukrainian civil society groups to track crimes of the Russian government, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) works with DHS to investigate human rights violations. USEUCOM assists these departments and agency through information sharing and battlefield awareness and has shared intelligence with the FBI and DHS to support investigations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

IMPROVING THE CONTESTED LOGISTICS ENTERPRISE

10. Senator DUCKWORTH. General Van Ovost, thank you for your leadership in ensuring TRANSCOM is ready to project and sustain the joint force at a time and place of our Nation's choosing. This ability is key to our strategic deterrence. The work TRANSCOM is doing in Illinois at Scott Air Force Base in support of operations around the globe including in Ukraine, the Middle East and in the Indo-Pacific region is second to none. The United States has unmatched power-projection capabilities, with an unequalled number of cargo aircraft, aerial tankers and support ships, but the tyranny of distance in the Indo-Pacific will require us to make significant investments to maintain our advantage. How are you informed about investments the services are making in improving our contested logistics enterprise, including in RDT&E, procurement and military construction?

General VAN OVOST. Requirements for Military Construction (MILCON) projects are initially informed by annual Posture Plan submissions from the Regional and Functional Combatant Commands (CCMD) for projects within their theater or functional area, respectively, or directly from our component and subordinate commands. As projects move through the programming cycle, we are engaged with and receive updates from the Global Posture Executive Council (GPEC), Service MILCON prioritization efforts and Program Objective Memorandum (POM) updates, Program Budget Reviews (PBR), and National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) reviews.

Per the Unified Command Plan (UCP), USTRANSCOM is responsible for the Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise (JDDE) operations across all domains. Established in 2006, the USTRANSCOM research program is dedicated to enhancing the Department's ability to globally project and sustain our Nation's forces into contested/austere environments at a time and place of our Nation's choosing. It allows the command to effectively collaborate with Service labs, Combatant Commands, select Defense Agencies (e.g., DLA, DARPA), the Defense Innovation Unit, multiple OUSD(R&E) (e.g., Defense Innovation Accelerator, Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve) and OUSD(A&S) programs (e.g., Coalition Warfare Program and Operational Energy & Innovation) programs, as well as the Joint Staff, in partnership with industry and academia, to pursue contested logistics innovation in support of the National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, the Joint Warfighting Concept, and the Joint Concept for Contested Logistics. Sample innovations currently being explored include ability to deliver and autonomously deliver fully mission capable vehicles, reducing exposure of traditional airlift assets by extending the range of aerial delivery systems to deliver from outside the threat bubble, a low-cost kit to support aerial delivery from manned and unmanned platforms in a GPS-denied environment, a lightweight deployable system for the at sea transfer of vehicles/equipment, provide a submersible conduit to support over-the-shore fuel delivery from vessels of opportunity, etc. Since inception, USTRANSCOM's program has transitioned over 90 percent of all research projects. USTRANSCOM informs DOD innovation investment decisions through our participation in various programs/forums such as the Defense Innovation Working Group, Chief Technology Officer Council Working Group, Joint Test & Evaluation, Accelerated Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT), National Defense Industrial Association, National Defense Transportation Association.

Additionally, the command leverages the Department's Integrated Priority List (IPL), Joint Emergent Operational Needs (JEONs) and Joint Capabilities Integrated Development System (JCIDS) processes to address JDDE challenges.

11. Senator DUCKWORTH. General Von Ovost, how much influence and input does TRANSCOM have in these decisions?

General VAN OVOST. As an active participant in multiple processes (e.g., Joint Requirements Oversight Council, Functional Capability Boards, Defense Management Action Group, Defense Innovation Steering Group, Chief Technology Officer Council, Program Budget Review, Global Posture Executive Council, etc.), USTRANSCOM, in partnership with fellow Combatant Commands, can influence Department of Defense investment decisions.

Regarding MILCON, USTRANSCOM influences project funding through a process of prioritizing Regional CCMD MILCON projects with USTRANSCOM equities and through project submission to the annual MILCON GPEC hosted by OSD. The GPEC performs its own prioritization of CCMD MILCON projects, informed in part by CCMD priorities, and submits those projects to the Services for potential inclu-

sion in their annual POM submission. The more CCMD advocacy a project has, the more likelihood the project has of receiving Service funding.

MEDICAL READINESS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

12. Senator DUCKWORTH. General Van Ovost, I recently announced a proposal that I am pushing to include in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. The proposal would improve the Department of Defense's medical readiness in the Indo-Pacific. TRANSCOM is the Department of Defense's single manager for patient movement. How can working with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific to gain access to foreign medical facilities provide life-saving care during a conflict for servicemembers needing to be medically evacuated?

General VAN OVOST. [Deleted.]

UKRAINE SECURITY ASSISTANCE

13. Senator DUCKWORTH. General Van Ovost and General Cavoli, TRANSCOM's vital contribution to national security is evident in the command's ongoing support to Ukraine and EUCOM's efforts in support of our NATO allies. The ability to rapidly deliver security assistance to Ukraine is crucial to Ukraine's effort to defend itself against unprovoked Russian aggression. I will continue to reiterate the importance of additional U.S. support for Ukraine and emphasize that supporting our Ukrainian partner does not only help them but is in American's own national security and strengthens the U.S. defense industrial base. As Russia has demonstrated in their invasion of Ukraine, failing to maintain sound logistics and maintenance systems can easily lead to consequential strategic failures. What lessons in logistics have we learned from Russia's failures and how can we avoid repeating them?

General VAN OVOST. At the strategic level, Russia made three major mistakes that we can learn from. The first was to assume it could accomplish its goals regarding Ukraine in a few days. Russia allocated resources to its "special military operation" accordingly, which left its forces grossly under-resourced when success was not achieved as anticipated. To compensate, Russia had to convert its economy for wartime production and has made gains on the battlefield because of it, especially when U.S. military aid to Ukraine temporarily decreased. The lesson we take from this situation is the same that the Russians have learned the hard way: Production, sustainment, and logistics capabilities must be set up and executed in a way that provides advantages even when situations and outcomes do not occur as anticipated. Congress must pay careful attention to the balance of economic and industrial power between the U.S. and any potential adversaries to ensure the U.S. does not fall short.

Second, Russia failed to isolate Ukraine politically, or secure strong support from its own allies or partners before attacking Ukraine. While Russian allies like China, North Korea, and Iran have provided economic support in evading sanctions, Russia finds itself increasingly reliant on them for materiel support as the war goes on. The United States must maintain and enhance our relationships, strategic alignment, and supporting agreements with allies and partners that enable and ensure crucial access to key nodes, infrastructure, and transportation in crisis or conflict. Our ability to project power will depend on our allies and partners.

Third, Russia failed to set conditions for its logistical flow, which allowed Ukraine to intercept and disrupt Russia's logistics flow and commandeer Russian materiel especially in the early days of the war. In the world of constant surveillance, drones, and precision guided munitions, logistical lines need more protection and redundancy than ever to be robust enough to support combat operations. Redundancy of routes, modes, nodes, and the materiel itself is one of the most effective ways to produce resiliency in a logistical system. Redundancy is extremely effective, but it is often the opposite of efficiency and is expensive.

General CAVOLI. Russian failures highlight the necessity of a logistics capability that is postured and ready to sustain prolonged combat operations into and through a contested environment. This includes a force structure that is organized, trained, equipped, and ready to move, refuel, and rearm forces under fire, provide medical care to wounded troops, and protect logistics forces, sustainment networks, and lines of communication. We are reminded that modern war is also a contest of industrial production, so it is vital that we have forward-positioned stockpiles of equipment, munitions, and supplies, backed by a robust and interoperable transatlantic defense industrial base that can support the U.S. warfighter and our NATO Allies.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

COMMERCIAL MARITIME CAPACITY

14. Senator KELLY. General Van Ovost, being the only U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduate in Congress, I pay close attention to our maritime strength. China is the world's largest shipbuilder and controls the most merchant ships in the world with over 5,500 vessels. There are just 80 merchant ships flying under the American flag in international commerce. I am concerned that the size and status of the U.S. merchant fleet is a danger to our national security. That's why I am working to develop legislation to rebuild our commercial maritime industry and U.S.-flagged international fleet. I know that there is an acute need for more U.S.-flagged tankers, which is why Congress created the Tanker Security Fleet program. Right now, there are 10 vessels in the program—is that the right size for the program? What is the ideal size of the program?

General VAN OVOST. The Tanker Security Program (TSP) was established to provide an active, commercially viable, militarily useful fleet of privately owned U.S.-flag tanker vessels engaged in international trade. This program ensures the Department of Defense's assured access to U.S.-owned, U.S.-flagged, and U.S.-crewed commercial product tankers. With the inception of the TSP, the Department gained an expanded pool of U.S.-flagged tankers operating globally, facilitating dependable and committed fuel transportation during times of crisis.

However, a gap remains between the capacity that the U.S.-flagged tanker fleet can bring to bear, and the capacity required in our most strenuous plans. The size of the U.S.-flagged tanker fleet is inadequate to meet domestic requirements and concurrently and unilaterally respond to needs in a contingency. The issue is especially acute for intra-theater tankers necessary to operate in shallow waters. A larger and more diverse fleet will help mitigate the risks associated with over-reliance on foreign-flagged vessels and improve our ability to mobilize strategic resources in times of crisis. USTRANSCOM outlined the issues and residual risks in the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA Fuel Tanker Study delivered to Congress in June 2021.

15. Senator KELLY. General Van Ovost, what is your assessment of the Maritime Security Program?

General VAN OVOST. The Maritime Security Program (MSP) provides a fleet of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately owned vessels to help meet national defense and other security requirements. MSP is a critical component of our strategic sealift portfolio, enabling the command to project and sustain forces globally. MSP is fully subscribed at 60 dry cargo ships including 20 Roll-On/Roll-Off ships, 34 Container ships, and 6 multipurpose ships. The current U.S.-flagged commercial fleet, and in particular the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA), which includes MSP vessels, when combined with the capacity of the Ready Reserve Force (RRF), has sufficient capacity to meet initial sealift requirements to project forces into the Indo-Pacific.

16. Senator KELLY. General Van Ovost, are there programmatic changes which Congress could consider to make the program more attractive—such as raising the annual payment or increasing the number of vessels enrolled?

General VAN OVOST. The Maritime Administration, as the administrator of the Maritime Security Program, is better postured to suggest programmatic changes. However, a robust, healthy U.S.-flagged fleet that attracts a strong mariner workforce will always rely on sufficient cargo opportunities. We support initiatives to expand Government-impelled and commercial cargo opportunities for participants in the MSP as well as other sealift programs (i.e., the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement, Voluntary Tanker Agreement, and the Tanker Security Programs).

17. Senator KELLY. General Van Ovost, one of the biggest challenges U.S.-flagged carriers face is a lack of demand. If we required more government cargo to sail on U.S.-flagged vessels or gave tax breaks to retailers for shipping cargo on U.S.-flagged vessels, what benefits could that provide to our strategic sea lift capabilities?

General VAN OVOST. We support a robust and resilient U.S.-flag fleet, and cargo preference laws such as the Military Cargo Preference Act of 1904 and the Cargo Preference Act of 1954. Any measures Congress can take to ensure a steady flow of cargo for American merchant vessels will help sustain our maritime industry, preserve vital jobs for American mariners, and maintain a strong and capable fleet for national defense. This approach not only supports economic growth by securing domestic shipping routes but also bolsters our global military reach and operational readiness, allowing us to rapidly deploy and sustain our forces anywhere in the

world. This strategy aligns with my belief in the critical role of the U.S.-flagged Merchant Marine fleet as part of our national defense strategy and our unwavering commitment to safeguarding our national interests.

18. Senator KELLY. General Van Ovost, one big challenge the maritime sector faces is a workforce shortage. How would you characterize the risk of an insufficient number of American mariners?

General VAN OVOST. The Department of Defense's ability to project military forces is inextricably linked to the commercial industry and we rely on the Maritime Administration (MARAD) to evaluate the sufficiency of the mariner pool to support operations. For major contingencies, we rely on the same pool of commercial merchant mariners to provide commercial sealift capacity through the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement and simultaneously man and activate the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force (RRF).

Past assessments indicated sufficient mariners to activate the RRF and operate both fleets, but prolonged concurrent operations necessitating crew rotations would cause mariner deficits. MARAD is currently administering the congressionally mandated Mariner Workforce Working Group to reevaluate mariner sufficiency and operational risk and we look forward to the results.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

U.S. MANUFACTURED DRONES

19. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, the Wall Street Journal ran an article on April 10, 2024 called, "How American Drones Failed to Turn the Tide in Ukraine." The article highlighted how badly U.S. industry lags Chinese drone manufacturers. Is your staff receiving lessons learned from Ukraine that are being passed back to the Department of Defense to improve unmanned systems like those being produced under the Replicator Initiative?

General CAVOLI. Yes, USEUCOM continually collects observations and lessons learned related to the employment of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Ukraine through both classified and unclassified channels. These observations and lessons learned are documented and shared with Department of Defense (DoD) agencies through official channels including the Joint Lessons Learned Information System and Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy meetings. In addition to official channels, there are direct channels for USEUCOM to share these lessons with entities such as the National Ground Intelligence Center, Naval Postgraduate School, and others.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, another reason that Ukraine has turned to Chinese components for drones they domestically manufacture is because China has the raw materials needed to create those components. Many of those raw materials are also available in the United States, but blocked by regulatory restrictions put in place by this Administration. Would you support exceptions to U.S. environmental and land use laws for defense production to access strategic and critical minerals domestically?

General CAVOLI. As the USEUCOM Commander, my responses are limited to matters within my scope of authority. I am not able to provide information regarding exceptions to U.S. environmental and land use laws related to defense production and access to strategic and critical minerals. For such inquiries, I recommend reaching out to the relevant U.S. Government authorities or agencies that handle these matters.

ARTILLERY IN UKRAINE

21. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, the US and NATO allies have transferred a variety of self-propelled and towed 155mm howitzers to Ukraine. Based on your observations and feedback from Ukraine, which systems are the most effective?

General CAVOLI. Based on observations and feedback from the Ukraine Armed Forces, the most effective 155mm howitzers transferred by the U.S. and NATO Allies include the M777, the M109, and the FH-77 Archer.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, are the Ukrainians employing self-propelled and towed howitzers differently in this conflict?

General CAVOLI. Yes, the M777 Howitzer is being employed for long-range and high-precision effects, while the M109 Howitzer is being employed when superior mobility and protection are required. The FH-77 Archer, a self-propelled howitzer,

provides a different option when a prime mover (heavy transport vehicle) is unavailable to reposition M777s. Its ability to “shoot-and-scoot” make it ideal in situations that demand tactical movement and maneuver flexibility and an automated high rate of fire during rapid engagement scenarios, counter-battery fire, and precision strikes.

LARGE SCALE GLOBAL EXERCISE 2024

23. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, what lessons related to operating equipment and weapons systems in the high north have been identified from Arctic Shock, BALTOPS, and Nordic Response?

General CAVOLI. The lessons learned from exercises like Arctic Shock, BALTOPS, and Nordic Response are crucial for understanding the challenges and best practices for maneuvering units and equipment and employing weapons systems in the high north. The extreme cold undermines equipment reliability, making frequent maintenance checks and regular servicing essential to prevent failures. The remote and harsh environment presents new challenges for transporting and resupplying personnel and equipment, underscoring the need for all-season mobility. It also creates challenges for the employment of aviation assets due to constantly shifting terrain related to the accumulation of snow, melting ice, etc. The Arctic’s mobility challenges, in particular, present opportunities for developing new vehicles designed for snow and ice, as well as enhancing capabilities for communication, navigation, search and rescue, targeting, and commanding and controlling operations. Importantly, while NATO Allies like Norway have sufficient over-the-snow transportation capabilities for self-preservation, there is a pressing need to develop similar organic United States military capabilities to improve mobility across all seasons in order to effectively compete with and deter Russia and the PRC in the diverse environment of the high north.

24. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, what lessons related to cold weather training and resourcing were identified from Arctic Shock, BALTOPS, and Nordic Response?

General CAVOLI. The recent accession of Sweden and Finland into NATO, which expanded NATO’s Western Flank into the European high north, reinforced the need to assess forward posture and training requirements. For resourcing, deployed Marine Corps forces utilized pre-positioned equipment from both Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway and Maritime Prepositioned Ships to support rapid deployment. Use of this equipment with Arctic specifications highlighted the need for forward postured equipment sets and a review of the capabilities and quantities required. Regarding training, cold-weather operations demand specialized training for personnel, including survival skills, managing cold-weather gear, and mitigating health risks such as frostbite and hypothermia. Furthermore, NATO’s Cold Weather Winter Instructor Course serves as a force multiplier to USEUCOM service components, supporting USEUCOM’s ability to operate in high north conditions.

INTEGRATED DETERRENCE

25. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, do you assess the NATO & EUCOM posture as sufficiently strong to deter further Russian aggression elsewhere in the region, regardless of outcome in Ukraine?

General CAVOLI. The recent accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO, along with the approval of NATO’s regional plans, has reshaped the theater’s geography and posture requirements. Consequently, USEUCOM, in collaboration with our NATO Allies, continually reassesses and refines the placement of forces with the right capabilities in strategic positions to deter further Russian aggression. Adapting theater posture to meet this challenge is an ongoing process that requires NATO and USEUCOM to creatively align resources and strategies and share information. Expanding our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), ground maneuver, long-range fires, and protection capabilities through a long-term investment strategy will help guide NATO and USEUCOM’s force posture in the right direction. Additionally, energizing the Euro-Atlantic defense industrial base and modernizing platforms—such as the Army’s Long Range Fires Battalion and advanced 5th generation fighter squadrons—are essential to meeting evolving requirements.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, some have argued that deterrence is divisible; meaning, the United States can lessen or stop support for Ukraine, but still send a strong signal that we will stand with Taiwan should the PRC invade. Do you assess that our adversaries view deterrence as divisible?

General CAVOLI. No, deterrence is not divisible. Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine poses a direct threat to the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Meanwhile, the PRC's hostility toward Taiwan threatens peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. It is increasingly clear that the United States does not have the luxury of sequential threats, requiring the DOD to simultaneously deter both Russia and the PRC. The U.S. strategy to bolster deterrence in the European and Indo-Pacific theaters is grounded in our global priorities to constrain Russia and out compete the PRC. As global competitors, Russia and the PRC are very attentive to changes in U.S. defense policy and military activities. With respect to supporting Ukraine, the U.S. and our NATO Allies are providing significant and much needed support, with the overall contribution by our European Allies and partners exceeding that of the United States. Reducing U.S. support to Ukraine—while our NATO Allies and European partners lack the capacity to offset the difference—would undermine deterrence, diminish our global image, and signal to our adversaries that military force is a viable option to counter U.S. interests. If Russia succeeds in Ukraine due to a lack of Western resolve, the PRC may view it as an opportunity to act against Taiwan.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, what shortfalls need to be addressed to posture NATO to deter Russian aggression?

General CAVOLI. NATO is a defensive Alliance. In order to deter, deny, and, if necessary, defeat Russian aggression, it is imperative for the NATO Alliance to generate the military capabilities and capacity necessary for collective defense of the Euro-Atlantic area. Increases in defense spending, coupled with the Allies' unprecedented commitment to military modernization, present a near-term strategic opportunity to modernize NATO's collective defense systems for the long term. More specifically, Allied investments in logistics and sustainment, command and control, integrated air and missile defense, maneuver forces, fighter aircraft, undersea warfare, electronic warfare, and cyber and space—as well as intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance capabilities—will improve the executability of NATO's regional plans, thus deterring adversaries and assuring Allies and partners. However, realizing this ambitious modernization agenda will take time, even for our most capable Allies. As such, the Euro-Atlantic defense industrial base, as well our U.S. foreign military sales programs, must increase production capacity and streamline processes to deliver systems and munitions to our Allies and partners in a timely manner. Forward positioning the right forces, with the right capabilities, in the right locations—such as the Eastern Flank—is another important element of NATO's defense plans.

ARMY MULTI-DOMAIN TASK FORCE

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, how have Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces supported your operations in EUCOM?

General CAVOLI. The U.S. Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces (MDTFs) have significantly supported operations within USEUCOM by enhancing the integration of land, cyber, space, air, and maritime capabilities to address complex security challenges. Specifically, the 2d MDTF, activated in Wiesbaden, Germany, plays a crucial role in synchronizing precision effects in support of USEUCOM and U.S. Africa Command objectives. The MDTFs provide USEUCOM with advanced capabilities including intelligence, cyberspace operations, electronic warfare, and space operations, enabling USEUCOM to enhance deterrence, shape the security environment, and prevail in large-scale combat operations. These capabilities are designed to penetrate adversary anti-access/area denial environments, which are essential in countering sophisticated threats posed by adversaries such as Russia.

MARINE CORPS

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, how has the Marine Corps supported EUCOM operations since Russia renewed its invasion of Ukraine in 2022?

General CAVOLI. The Marine Corps supports the Security Assistance Group—Ukraine with 55 marines, conducts limited duration Ukrainian Special Forces training events, and provides military equipment and resources through Presidential Drawdown Authority. Eleven Marines partnered with British and Dutch Marines for forty-five days to provide reconnaissance, medical, and infantry training to Ukrainian soldiers in the Netherlands. Beginning in September 2024, the Marine Corps will provide a small contingent of Marines in support of a Maritime Regional Training Hub in Braila, Romania. The Program of Instruction will train Ukrainian Marines on individual skills and platoon and company collective skills, to include day and night amphibious operations training.

BLACK SEA ACCESS

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli, a potential next area of conflict if Russian aggression isn't effectively deterred is in the Black Sea region. Turkey, a NATO member, controls access to the Black Sea for warships. Would U.S. or non-Black Sea State unmanned surface vessels be allowed access given the Montreaux Convention restrictions?

General CAVOLI. The application of the Montreux Convention to unmanned surface vessels is unclear. Whether such vessels are considered warships is an unsettled area of the law, and the analysis would likely depend on the specific characteristics of the vessel (e.g., displacement, armaments, and navigational capabilities). Further, it is not clear whether Türkiye would continue to restrict U.S. and NATO access to the Black Sea through the strait following further Russian aggression in the region. Regardless, unmanned surface vessels shipped to the region via other air, land, or surface routes could potentially be introduced to the Black Sea through the territory of other Allies and partners.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. General Cavoli and General Van Ovost, have you explored land-based transportation routes by rail or road to get materials to the eastern side of the Black Sea should the maritime routes be closed to military cargo?

General CAVOLI. Yes, USEUCOM's relationships with NATO Allies are fundamental in building resilient lines of communications, to include ground transportation routes that support engagements with partners on the eastern side of the Black Sea. In the past, military cargo has been successfully moved via Türkiye's ports and ground lines of communication in support of U.S. and NATO activities.

General VAN OVOST. USTRANSCOM is responsible for ensuring strategic connection to Intra-theater distribution networks and is aligned with EUCOM on expanding maritime access, synchronizing on major movements now through fiscal year 2025. The dynamic nature of contested logistics demands this forward thinking and flexibility. Additionally, we have commercial contracts that provide multi-modal and land-based services which reach through the eastern part of Turkey, and a long history with partners in Georgia and Azerbaijan. We remain nested with EUCOM as they continue to develop more expansive Lines of Communication with in their AOR, and as the supporting Command, we stand ready to support USEUCOM's land distribution network initiatives and provide EUCOM with movement solutions that best fit their needs.

CONTESTED LOGISTICS

32. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, how much does TRANSCOM rely on commercial companies to move military supplies and equipment by air?

General VAN OVOST. By air, for fiscal year 2023, 57 percent of shipments (41 percent by weight) were moved by our commercial partners.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, how much does TRANSCOM rely on commercial companies to move military supplies and equipment by sea?

General VAN OVOST. By sea, for fiscal year 2023, 97 percent of shipments (also 97 percent by weight) were moved by our commercial partners.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, the increased use of long range sea-based drones and long range aerial drones to attack merchant ships underscores the susceptibility to the Ready Reserve Fleet's lack of self-defenses. There are likely to be insufficient amounts of naval vessels to provide escort protection in the event of a large scale conflict in the Indo-Pacific. Has TRANSCOM explored bolt-on/carry-on self-defense options to protect military cargo while it is transported on the high-seas?

General VAN OVOST. USTRANSCOM has not explored bolt-on/carry-on self-defense options to protect military cargo while it is transported by merchant ships on the high-seas. However, U.S. FLEET FORCES is leading an Asymmetric Warfare Team currently studying (1) options that can be employed to address Urgent Operational Needs Statement (UONS) timelines in the next 18 months, and (2) options that could constitute a more comprehensive solution within the FYDP or possibly out to FYDP+2. While there have been great strides in capabilities to counter long-range sea-based drones and long-range aerial drones, they all require queuing from an air search radar system. There are currently no bolt-on air search capabilities being reviewed that would enable merchant ships to employ anti-aerial drone weapons. NAVTRANS is linked into this study and has expressed the desire for it to review a complete self-defense system for the defense of merchant-like vessels.

MSC ships are naval auxiliaries and may be armed without legal issue, although it has been policy to only arm such ships with defensive weapons when they are crewed by civil service mariners. Vessels of the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) are considered public vessels and may be armed under the authority in 10 U.S.C. Section 261, when so ordered by the President. All commercial merchant vessels have an inherent right of self-defense and may use weapons for that purpose, despite being private vessels. By tradition, the weapons are general small arms only.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, what lessons have we learned by proxy from the Russian-Ukraine conflict with transporting equipment by rail in a contested environment?

General VAN OVOST. The logistics lessons from the Russian-Ukraine conflict are not new and highlight again the necessity of examining logistics in detail. Rail is an effective means of transporting material in bulk, but less adaptive to barriers that are presented in a contested environment. Over the past year, we rapidly moved rail shipments throughout the United States in support of the war in Ukraine, consisting of more than 2,559 containers and 640 rail cars. USTRANSCOM did not oversee the rail transport in the European theater and defers to USEUCOM (specifically the 21st Theater Sustainment Command) for lessons learned from that portion of the transport.

Rail remains a strategic multiplier in theater for Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Lines of Communication (LOCs) by moving more volume to staging locations for final onward movement by truck or convoy. Utilization of rail in the USEUCOM theater has been inhibited by lack of dedicated capacity to plan and manage rail operations. The U.S. Army Expeditionary Rail Center (ERC) was developed specifically with that mission in mind. Members of the ERC would deploy to support GCC LOCs by acting as the coordinator with the local Host Nation (HN) rail carriers to ensure rapid movement of logistics by rail in theater. Barriers in a contested environment would not physically impact rail movement except for actual destruction of rail networks. Barriers would likely be overcome through coordination with the HN throughout the theater to ensure delays were minimized or eliminated through agreements and thorough understanding of DOD Foreign Clearance Guide and HN customs clearance requirements. Rail capacity in theater remains vital to supporting LOCs and providing the rapid movement of bulk materials and heavy equipment to support GCCs and partner nations.

STATUS OF THE MARITIME ADMINISTRATION'S READY RESERVE FLEET

36. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, the Pentagon's sealift plan for conflict currently relies on mobilizing the roughly 50 Ready Reserve Fleet ships to get our forces and equipment to the fight. The average age of the ships of the Ready Reserve Force—which make up the bulk of the military sealift fleet—is 45 years old. Seventeen of the ships are 50 years or older. Sealift vessels under the Military Sealift Command face similar issues. Can you describe in detail the twin risks of a sealift fleet that is both too small and too old?

General VAN OVOST. Fleet sufficiency can be viewed from both a capacity and an operational readiness standpoint. The current combined commercial (VISA/MSP) and organic (RRF) fleets have sufficient capacity to meet initial sealift requirements to project forces. However, the RRF is experiencing significant operational readiness issues due to the age of the fleet. The strategy for improving strategic readiness is recapitalization of the fleet through the purchase of newer, less-expensive-to-maintain, vessels into the RRF.

The current recapitalization strategy is supported with funding in the Future Year Defense Program (FYDP) to buy and convert two vessels per year, while executing the current planned retirement schedule. While the congressional support is encouraging, at the current rate of retirements, purchasing two ships per year does not maintain our required capacity. We also remain constrained by law to a total of nine used ship purchases (10 U.S.C. § 2218), a limit we expect to reach in fiscal year 2025, contingent on available appropriations, after which time no additional purchases are authorized.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, have you been able to address the aging and small Ready Reserve Fleet by acquiring used ships that, while not new, are younger than those they replace?

General VAN OVOST. The Navy and the Maritime Administration (MARAD) are executing the strategy to recapitalize the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) by acquiring newer used ships from the commercial market and retiring older ships from the force. MARAD acquired two (2) used ships in 2022 and three (3) additional ships

in 2023, for a total of five (5) of the nine (9) ships authorized by Congress in 10 U.S.C. § 2218. MARAD is currently seeking additional ships for purchase using funding from previous fiscal years, and they expect to reach the congressional limit in Fiscal Year 2025. We must continue to add younger ships to the RRF as planned retirements will remove 27 ships in the next eight (8) years.

JONES ACT

38. Senator SULLIVAN. General Van Ovost, The Jones Act was intended to preserve a robust domestic shipbuilding base but that has simply not occurred. The number of oceangoing ships of at least 1,000 gross tons that transport cargo and meet Jones Act requirements has declined from 193 to 99 since 2000 and only 78 of those 99 can be deemed militarily useful. One of the main causes of that decline is the domestic-built requirement of the Jones Act, which prohibits U.S. shippers from operating vessels constructed abroad. American-built coastal and feeder ships cost between \$190 and \$250 million, whereas the cost to build a similar vessel in a foreign shipyard is about \$30 million. Accordingly, U.S. shippers buy fewer ships, U.S. shipyards build fewer ships, and merchant mariners have fewer employment opportunities to serve as crew on those nonexistent ships. Facing exorbitant replacement costs, ship owners are compelled to squeeze as much life as possible out of their existing vessels. That means the Jones Act fleet is not only shrinking, but rapidly aging. The atrophied State of U.S. commercial shipyards indicates there is no domestic capacity to immediately recapitalize the Ready Reserve and Military Sealift Command Fleets. Do any of our partners and Allies have the capacity to immediately produce new ships for these fleets?

General VAN OVOST. Allies such as South Korea and Japan build ships with features that are militarily useful to Department of Defense operations. Additionally, a large number of ships participating in the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) and the Maritime Security Program (MSP) were built in these two countries.

However, regarding the Ready Reserve Force, 10 U.S.C. § 2218(f) prohibits purchase of new vessels built in foreign shipyards and only allows a limited number (currently nine (9)) of used vessels to be purchased with funds in the National Defense Sealift Fund unless specifically authorized by law.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (EUCOM)

39. Senator BUDD. General Cavoli, can you please explain the value of Special Operations Forces in your area of responsibility?

General CAVOLI. Special Operations Forces (SOF) play a critical role in enhancing deterrence across Europe. SOF maintain a continuous and strategic presence throughout the region, providing invaluable capabilities and flexibility. Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) is at the forefront of this effort, actively training Ukrainian SOF to strengthen their defensive capabilities and supporting joint operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. SOCEUR, in collaboration with NATO Special Operations Forces Command, is not only leveraging lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine but also enhancing interoperability between U.S. and NATO forces. This cooperative approach significantly amplifies our collective operational footprint and capability. By integrating these advanced SOF capabilities, we effectively bolster our deterrence posture, ensuring a robust response to potential hybrid threats and demonstrating a united and resilient defensive stance throughout the USEUCOM area of responsibility. These examples illustrate how SOF's specialized capabilities and their integration with conventional U.S. and allied forces contribute significantly to regional stability and deterrence.

40. Senator BUDD. General Cavoli, what impacts, if any, do you expect to theater operations given planned force structure and personnel cuts to Army Special Operations Forces?

General CAVOLI. The planned force structure and personnel cuts to Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) are expected to have several significant impacts on theater operations, to include: 1) Placing strain on operational capacity and resources; 2) Reducing the capacity of major force program enablers; 3) Impacting strategic deterrence through decreased capacity to execute high-profile training and advisory missions that deter adversaries, project power, and strengthen allied integration; 4) Disrupting established Allied integration exercises; and 5) Potentially degrading flexibility and rapid response to hybrid or emerging threats without robust program

enablers and sufficient end strength. Careful planning and resource management will be essential to mitigate these risks in order to maintain effective theater operations.

41. Senator BUDD. General Cavoli, have you or your command been consulted on the assessment of optimal force structure for special operations forces required by section 1075 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act?

General CAVOLI. U.S. Special Operations Command, alongside partners at Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense Special Operations/Low intensity Conflict (SO/LIC), led the working group to produce the 1075 report, which currently is under review with SO/LIC, OSD, and the Joint Staff. Upon completion of that review, USEUCOM, along with the other Combatant Commands, anticipate an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the report. USEUCOM does continuously register special operations forces requirements through Global Force Management processes and procedures.

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT (EUCOM)

42. Senator BUDD. General Cavoli, do you consider the F-15E Strike Eagle to be a capable aircraft and are there particular characteristics that make it ideal for your area of responsibility?

General CAVOLI. Yes, the Strike Eagle is a very capable aircraft ideally suited for the USEUCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). The F-15E, its aircrew, and maintainers continue to generate a proven on-call, all-weather, combat power capability. The F-15E has the largest weapons payload capacity of any assigned U.S. fighter aircraft in the European theater. Additionally, the two USEUCOM assigned F-15E squadrons represent ~30 percent of the total U.S. fighter force relied upon daily, not only across Europe, but able to range quick action contingency responses in U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility. Last, the aircraft will continue to hold Dual Capable Aircraft certification to perform nuclear surety missions.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

AIR FORCE POSTURE

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Let me bring the hearing to order. For my colleagues' awareness, we intend to conclude today's hearing by 12 noon due to possible floor proceedings, and also the possibility that any one of our colleagues may object to proceeding past 12 noon.

So, this will require us ending the open session at—by 11 a.m. and then moving immediately to a closed session at SVC-217. I ask that Members strictly adhere to the 5-minute timeline, and I will have my gavel to remind people. In that spirit, I will submit my opening statement for the record. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would submit my statement for the record as well.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. Let me recognize Secretary Kendall. Mr. Secretary.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE FRANK KENDALL III,
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

Secretary KENDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Reed, Senator Fischer, Members of the Committee, General Saltzman, General Allvin, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Department of the Air Force's fiscal year 2025 budget submission.

The Department of the Air Force budget request supports the National Defense Strategy. We appreciate the Committee's support for the recently enacted fiscal year 2024 budget and your efforts to

secure timely passage. As you are aware, the 6-month delay has had a real impact.

That time cannot be recovered, but at least we can now move forward with our urgent modernization priorities. As I have testified before this Committee repeatedly, time is my greatest concern.

We are in a race for military technological superiority with a capable pacing challenge. Our cushion is gone. We are out of time. As we have briefed the Committee on the classified level, the pacing threat moves steadily forward. I appreciate the opportunity to have a classified session today, Mr. Chairman, as well.

Continued failure to provide on time authorities or appropriations will leave the Air Force and Space Force inadequately prepared. We know the Committee recognizes this, and we appreciate your strong bipartisan support.

Our fiscal year 2025 budget request complies with the Fiscal Responsibility Act. We are requesting \$217.5 billion for the Department of the Air Force, which includes \$188 billion for the Air Force and \$29.4 billion for the Space Force.

The fiscal year 2025 budget reflects an increase of about 1.5 percent over the enacted fiscal year 2024 budget and does not keep pace with inflation, or with the 7 percent publicly acknowledged growth of China's military budget.

To stay within the levels of the FRA, the Department of the Air Force had to adjust our previous plans. The 2025 budget request seeks to preserve the momentum behind our modernization efforts, particularly the work on operational imperatives that we initiated, and that this Committee supported in fiscal year 2024.

In order to preserve modernization, we have marginally reduced procurement and we have sustained our foundational accounts at levels we deemed acceptable but no more. Because the Space Force budget is dominated by research and development accounts, we have had to marginally reduce the pace and scope of our Space Force modernization programs.

Our first priority in the National Defense Strategy remains differential Homeland, which the Department of the Air Force primarily supports through investments in domain awareness, air and space defense, early warning, and cyberspace defense programs. Our second National Defense Strategy priority is to deter strategic attack against the United States, our allies, and our partners.

The Department of the Air Force's 2025 budget request prioritizes nuclear modernization to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. Notably, the Sentinel ICBM program has experienced unacceptable cost and schedule increases and is currently undergoing a Nunn-McCurdy review.

The Department Air Force will work closely with the Committee as that review reaches its conclusions. The third National Defense Strategy priority is to deter aggression and be prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary.

The Department of the Air Force needs immediate and significant capability and modernization to keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the PRC. The Department of the Air Force operational imperatives and the closely related cross-cutting operational enablers continue to guide our modernization program.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request includes \$6.1 billion for these efforts. Finally, the fourth National Defense Strategy priority is to build a resilient Joint Force and enduring advantages.

This budget request invests to ensure that we can recruit and retain the force we need, so that our airmen and guardians, and their families, have the quality of life they deserve and can serve to their full potential.

As we have briefed the Committee, the Department of the Air Force is also currently undertaking a department wide effort to re-optimize to meet the needs of great power competition.

The intent is to minimize both cost impacts and personnel or unit movement. We will work closely with the Committee as we develop detailed plans. We do not anticipate any significant impact on the fiscal year 2025 budget, and we have not requested funds for this purpose.

The DAF also appreciates the Committee's support for the DOD Quick Start Initiative that was enacted last year. The Department of the Air Force has obtained approval from the Secretary of Defense for two programs that will be initiated under this new authority.

They are, a more resilient national GPS position and navigation and timing capability, and C-3 battle management for moving target indication. Time matters, but so do resources. The United States is facing a competitor with national purchasing power that exceeds our own, a challenge we have never faced in modern times.

China is actively developing and expanding capabilities to challenge strategic stability, attack our critical space systems, and defeat our ability to project power, especially airpower. Conflict is not inevitable, but it could happen at any time.

General Allvin and I just returned from a trip to some of our key bases in the Indo-Pacific. We should all be very proud of our men and women serving in harm's way and doing everything they can to deter and to be ready for a conflict unlike any we have seen before.

The Department of Air Force's fiscal year 2025 budget request is focused on addressing these realities. We commit to working with the Committee to secure timely enactment of this budget request. Thank you. We look forward to your questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. General Allvin, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID W. ALLVIN, USAF, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE

General ALLVIN. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Senator Fischer, and distinguished Members of this Committee.

Today, I am proud to represent the 677,000 total force airmen serving our Nation. I want to thank you for your unyielding support, not only for those airmen, but for their families as well. I would like to open by stating my immense pride in the exemplary performance of our airmen this past weekend.

As part of a joint coalition effort, they successfully thwarted the massive air attack by Iran on Israel's home soil. Their professionalism and skill turned a potentially catastrophic event for

Israel into a strategic defeat for Iran and its proxies. As we look across the strategic landscape, we find ourselves in a time of significant consequence.

The simultaneous demands of strategic competition with an aggressive and increasingly capable PRC, and persistent acute threats from around the globe, require the Air Force to maximize the readiness of today's forces, while adapting our structures and processes to offer the best opportunity to prevail in an environment of enduring competition. Time is not on our side.

The fiscal year 2025 Air Force budget request reflects difficult choices. We have made tradeoffs to keep the Air Force's operational readiness today at the minimum acceptable to meet the Nation's demands, while seeking to preserve the previous years' advances in modernization.

The Air Force budget request also invests in the Air Force's most precious asset, its airmen, to ensure they remain the decisive advantage upon which the Nation defends. Strategic deterrence is a key priority in our National Defense Strategy, and the United States Air Force remains committed to the recapitalization of our nuclear force.

We are actively supporting the process triggered by the Nunn-McCurdy breach of the Sentinel program and will continue to pursue the path of a safe, secure, reliable, and effective ground lake of the nuclear triad well into the future.

Our ability to support the National Defense Strategy priority of deterring aggression and prevailing in conflict demands a modern Air Force that is connected to the Joint Force and can close multiple kill chains in minimal time to control the tempo of a complex fight with a competitor.

To that end, the fiscal year 2025 budget proposes continued investments in the F-35 and F-15EX, albeit with fewer than preferred quantities dictated by the constraints of the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

We remain committed to the Advanced Battle Management System, C3 Battle Management, and to the NGAD family of systems, particularly collaborative combat aircraft, which will allow the Air Force to deliver the affordable mass required to be effective against a very capable PRC.

We are also committed to building forward based resiliency enough to enable continued sortie generation even while under attack. To arrest the decline in our readiness, we have proposed modest increase investment in flying hours and the weapon system sustainment funding to support them, while prioritizing investments in critical, physical, and cyber infrastructure.

Our airmen are and will always be the deciding factor in any conflict our Air Force faces, and we are committed to their health, development, and quality of life. We have made significant progress thanks to Congress's support to increase basic pay, adjust the basic allowance for housing and subsistence, to account for macro-economic factors. There is still work to be done.

During our recent trip to the Indo-Pacific, Secretary Kendall and I saw dedicated airmen eager to accomplish the mission despite infrastructure degradation caused by natural disaster and persistent

environmental challenges, as well as limited access to the health care enjoyed by many CONUS spaces.

The job of your Air Force has not changed since its inception, support and defend this Nation through credible deterrence and unmatched combat prowess. To preserve that level of deterrence, we must maintain our readiness today, modernize our forces for tomorrow, and provide the absolute best support for our airmen.

Success on any battlefield is a team effort. I want to thank the Members of Congress and this Committee for your past and continued support. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General. General Saltzman, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL B. CHANCE SALTZMAN, USSF, CHIEF OF SPACE OPERATIONS

General SALTZMAN. Chairman Reed, Senator Fischer, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify on the Space Force's posture for fiscal year 2025.

As the Space Force prepares to celebrate its fifth birthday, we are wholly dedicated to the work of forging a service purpose built for great power competition. Space has never been more critical to the security of our Nation, and the success or failure of the Joint Force depends heavily upon the capabilities we present.

It is our responsibility to contest and control the domain, to defend U.S. space capabilities, and to protect the Joint Force from space enabled attack. Gaining and maintaining space superiority is the purpose for which the Space Force was established. With about 3 percent of the Department of Defense's budget, the Space Force offers a tremendous value proposition to the Nation.

Every dollar invested in space brings asymmetric returns, but that means every dollar cut creates asymmetric risk. Against a near peer adversary, space superiority is the linchpin. Without it, we cannot deter conflict. Without it, we cannot provide vital effects. Without it, we cannot protect the Joint Force.

Until we have built the infrastructure to achieve space superiority, the Space Force is a work in progress. The Space Force's theory of success includes three parts, avoiding operational surprise, denying the benefits of attack in space, and conducting responsible counter space activities.

The Space Force budget request is designed to support the National Defense Strategy by building, training, and equipping the forces the Nation needs to perform each activity, preserving freedom of action in space, while deterring and denying adversarial objectives.

Avoiding operational surprise requires us to maintain an accurate understanding of the space domain at all times. 8.3 percent of our budget is dedicated to the same. Operating across disaggregated sensor frameworks, the Space Force provides the maximum information possible to decisionmakers from the tactical to the strategic level.

Denying the benefits of attack in space demands that we make any attack against U.S. space capabilities impractical and self-defeating. 43.4 percent of our budget is devoted to this objective. In-

vesting in resiliency for missile warning and tracking, satellite communications, and precision navigation and timing.

Hybrid architectures and proliferated constellations impose a heavy cost on aggression. Finally, responsible counter space activities describes the mechanism by which the Space Force contests and controls the space domain. The fiscal year 2025 budget dedicates 24.7 percent of the Space Force's budget to space superiority.

Within the constraints of the FRA, fiscal year 2025 Space Force budget reflects hard choices to maintain legacy space services and preserve current readiness, but it also slows the fielding of a modernized force. Addressing these challenges depends on guardians that are trained and ready to meet the high tech demands of space operations.

For that reason, I would like to personally thank the Committee for its support for the Space Force Personnel Management Act. This will be a major force multiplier in the Space Force's efforts to modernize the way we recruit, build, and retain talent. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Space Force's fiscal year 2025 budget and posture.

Even in the face of accelerating threats, the Space Force remains the preeminent military space organization in the world. With the support of this Committee, our guardians will preserve and expand our strategic advantage, and we will step up to meet the challenge of our facing threat.

So as long as you continue to trust and invest in your space service, the Space Force will respond with unparalleled value for the Nation. I look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Secretary Kendall, General Allvin and General Saltzman follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE FRANK KENDALL, GENERAL B. Chance Saltzman, and General David W. Allvin

OVERVIEW

The President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget request continues the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) implementation of the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), while striking alignment with the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA). The DAF remains focused on the Department of Defense's mission to defend the U.S. Homeland, safeguard and advance vital United States national security interests, and meet growing threats to a stable and open international system, especially those posed by our pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party. In line with the priorities of the Secretary of Defense, this budget request supports that mission and invests in the people and teams that are our decisive advantage.

The DAF is currently undertaking a Department-wide effort to optimize how we organize, train, and equip the Air Force and Space Force to meet the PRC pacing challenge. These efforts are necessary for us to remain competitive and are being undertaken with a strong sense of urgency. They cannot, however, substitute for the resources the DAF needs to execute its missions.

The total DAF budget request for fiscal year 2025 is \$217.5 billion which includes \$188.1 billion for the Air Force and \$29.4 billion for the Space Force. This is an approximate 1.5 percent increase from the DAF fiscal year 2024 enacted budget. The DAF had to implement some difficult tradeoffs and take risk in certain areas to stay within the funding levels provided under the FRA.

A forced reliance on funding through Continuing Resolutions has already significantly hampered the DAF's ability to keep pace with evolving threats by withholding authorization and appropriations to initiate new programs of record or increase spending on existing programs. Unfortunately, the time we have ceded cannot be recovered. Timely and consistent authorizations and appropriations for defense spending in line with this budget request are necessary to deter and, if re-

quired, defeat threats to our national security. Continued failure to provide on-time authority and appropriations will leave the Air Force and Space Force inadequately prepared for the dramatic geopolitical, technological, economic, and environmental challenges we are facing. To keep pace with the threats in the changing strategic landscape, we urge the Congress to enact this budget request without delay.

Responding to Increasing Threats

The threats to our national security are dramatically increasing. The 2022 National Defense Strategy identified the PRC as the only country with the will and increasing capability to reshape the international order. In 2023, the PRC increased its annual military budget by approximately 7 percent with estimates showing it can support continued defense spending growth for at least the next 5 to 10 years.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) already fields the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region. It has combined a growing arsenal of long-range precision weapons with improving space-based capabilities to expand the capability of its long range kill webs and enable strikes against U.S. and Allied Forces, air bases, carriers, and high-value airborne assets.

In addition to using space capabilities to target United States and partner terrestrial forces, the PLA is rapidly increasing its fielded suite of kinetic and non-kinetic counterspace capabilities. These include antisatellite missiles, "inspection and repair" systems that can grapple and disable satellites on orbit, laser weapons and jammers, and reusable spaceplanes with a range of potential military uses.

The PRC is also advancing its electronic warfare and cyberspace attack capabilities to threaten U.S. bases and capabilities in the region and the United States Homeland. For example, the PRC has targeted critical infrastructure in Guam that could be used to disrupt United States air operations.

The PRC has also continued its rapid nuclear expansion, on track to exceed previous projections, with more than 500 operational nuclear warheads and a nascent nuclear triad. China is moving ahead of expectations to field a nuclear arsenal comparable to that of the United States. The PLA Rocket Force has at least 2,800 theater class ballistic missiles and 350 international-range ballistic missiles, including hypersonic missiles, highlighting its approach to diverse potential nuclear-delivery systems. Many of these systems have dual-use (conventional or nuclear) potential.

We must keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the PRC while also managing the acute threat from Russia, deterring threats from other regional actors, while remaining vigilant to potential Violent Extremist Organization threats. Russia continues to place a strong emphasis on modernizing strategic weapons that will allow it to hold the United States Homeland at risk, particularly with hypersonic and other next-generation weapons. Russia is developing and deploying a range of counterspace systems including surface-launched, air-launched, and orbital anti-satellite weapons, laser weapons, electronic warfare systems, and cyber capabilities that can threaten military and dual-use space assets. Both Iran and North Korea are also working to expand their military capabilities.

In the midst of these growing threats, the capabilities of the Department of the Air Force are integral to the four priorities of the NDS: defending the Homeland; deterring strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners; deterring aggression and being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary; and ensuring our future military advantage by building a resilient joint force and defense ecosystem. With budgetary pressure, the DAF budget request balances short-term risks and readiness against the need to rapidly modernize capabilities required to deter future threats and meet NDS priorities.

Complying with FRA

The DAF's budget is aligned with the FRA. The global obligations and enduring missions of the DAF have not changed. Our global commitments have not changed. As a result, our force structure and human capital structure remain roughly constant from fiscal year 2024. The requirements to maintain adequate operational readiness, support global deployments, and meet immediate mission requirements were met, but funded to the highest level of risk considered acceptable. For example, the so-called "foundational accounts" for Weapons Systems Sustainment, Facilities, and Flying Hours were funded at the lowest level considered acceptable in both the Air Force and the Space Force. This practice can be tolerated in the short term under the constraints of FRA.

With these "current force" related elements of the budget allocated, investments in the "future force" were adjusted to manage risk. The DAF budget request protects essential modernization, especially the investments derived from our work on Operational Imperatives and Cross-cutting Operational Enablers, and chose to marginally reduce procurement of systems already in production in order to sustain as

much as possible the planned pace of research and development funding for capabilities necessary to keep pace with existing and imminent pacing threats. Procurement accounts were adjusted downward in the Air Force from previously planned levels for some key programs, including F-35 and F-15E/X. Procurement accounts also decreased with fact-of-life delays in T-7 and E-7 production. The fiscal year 2025 Air Force procurement account request is \$29.0 billion and the Space Force procurement account request is \$4.3 billion. These adjustments generally allowed research and development accounts to keep pace with inflation. They did not permit the desired growth over time. This is particularly true for the Space Force where transformational modernization is needed urgently.

Meeting National Defense Strategy Priorities

Defense of the Homeland

Our first priority remains defense of the Homeland. The DAF supports this priority through investments in domain awareness, air and space defense, early warning that increases strategic deterrence and enables defense of critical infrastructure, and cyberspace defense programs. These investments are closely tied with the DAF Arctic Strategy and position the DAF to support implementation of the 2023 Homeland Defense Policy Guidance.

Deterring Strategic Attacks

Our second priority is to deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners. The DAF provides two legs of the Nuclear Triad and 75 percent of Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3). The DAF's full-scope nuclear modernization program recapitalizes all current systems and supporting infrastructure to deliver modern and credible deterrence capabilities, which are essential in today's increasingly uncertain international environment. Decades of deferring modernization of cold war-era systems, combined with adversary nuclear modernization, make it imperative to modernize U.S. nuclear forces to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent to protect the U.S. Homeland, as well as Allies and partners.

DAF nuclear capabilities provide unique, complementary, and credible options in support of integrated deterrence. Decades of deferred modernization have left little room for error in our recapitalization program if we are to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. The fiscal year 2025 budget requests more than \$19.4 billion for nuclear modernization efforts including the Sentinel Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, B-21 Raider, Survivable Airborne Operations Center (SAOC), Long-Range Standoff Weapon, Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared programs, and the Evolved Satellite Communication System. Additionally, the Space Force is in the early stages of developing and fielding a more resilient missile warning and tracking capability focused on tracking advanced threats by integrating new critical missile tracking capabilities. While B-21 and LRSO are currently close to planned cost and schedule profiles, other programs are experiencing difficulties, and these programs have not completed development. Sentinel is undergoing a critical Nunn-McCurdy review due to cost and schedule increases. The SAOC cost estimate has also increased and is putting pressure on the DAF's budget.

Deterring Aggression and Prevailing in Conflict

The third priority of our NDS is to deter aggression and be prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary. The DAF needs immediate and significant capability modernization to keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the PRC. Each year, the threat continues to advance as does our effort to define cost effective competitive operational innovation. The DAF deeply appreciates the "Quick Start" provision placed in the fiscal year 2024 NDAA and will take full advantage of this opportunity to save precious time. Our effort to Reoptimize for Great Power Competition is intended in large part to create institutions with the mission of ensuring continuous competitiveness against our pacing challenge. The seven DAF Operational Imperatives and the Cross-cutting Operational Enablers body of work continues to guide the DAF's modernization effort. The fiscal year 2025 DAF budget request includes \$6.1 billion for these efforts, \$4.0 billion in the Space Force and \$2.1 billion in the Air Force excluding B-21 investments available at a higher classification.

Building a Resilient Joint Force and Defense Ecosystem

The fourth NDS priority is to build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem to ensure our future military advantage. Our airmen, guardians, and civilian teammates are the decisive advantage in our strategic competition, and this budget request invests to ensure they can serve to their full potential. Programs that respond

to the most pressing problems of our airmen, guardians, and their families are detailed for each DAF Military Service in the sections below.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Strategic competition with the PRC while also managing acute and persistent threats requires the Air Force to modernize to maintain its preeminent status in the world. The Air Force continues to implement the programs identified under the Operational Imperatives and follow through on initiatives designed to maintain the Air Force's qualitative advantages over any competitor. The Air Force is investing in force structure and capabilities aligned with the NDS. As the strategic environment is rapidly changing and technology fundamentally alters the character of war we are in a time of consequence. The Air Force is determined to maintain its position as the leader in speed, agility, and lethality upon which the joint team, the Nation, and allies rely.

The fiscal year 2025 Air Force budget request is \$188.1 billion. The Air Force budget invests in foundational accounts in an attempt to arrest the year-over-year degradation of the capabilities, operational readiness, and supporting infrastructure necessary to implement the NDS, but doing so mandates a slower rate of needed modernization which increases the risk to the DAF's overall readiness. The budget fully funds nuclear modernization programs to deter strategic attacks, continuing the most extensive recapitalization effort of the nuclear enterprise in the Air Force's history. (The recently announced Nunn McCurdy cost breach on the Sentinel ICBM program is still being addressed and final estimates are not available at this time.) It also continues investment in modernization focused on critical long-range kill webs (\$310.6 million) and affordable mass (\$719.8 million) central to the ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression. This is in clear recognition of the PRC pacing challenge and Russian acute threat. The Air Force budget request also invests in the Air Force's most precious asset—its airmen—to ensure they remain the decisive advantage the Nation depends upon.

Air Force's Role in Defending the Nation

For fiscal year 2025, the Air Force must make difficult choices to balance risk today and into the future. Today, the Air Force is accepting risk across the Service's modernization accounts in order to maintain minimally acceptable near-term operational readiness. This places additional risk on the Air Force's ability to deter and defeat any adversary going forward.

The fiscal year 2025 Air Force budget request prioritizes operational readiness in the current year and seeks to preserve previous years' substantial advances in modernization and procurement. The Air Force's operational readiness is near the minimum level acceptable for the Service to meet the Nation's demands.

While this budget attempts to sustain the modernization momentum created by the Operational Imperatives and Cross-cutting Operational Enablers, it takes risk in the medium term to balance immediate operational readiness needs at the level of maximum tolerable risk. The medium-term risk most noticeably impacts the Air Force's ability to field the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) Family of Systems, as well as a mature Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM) system, the Air Force contribution to JADC2.

The Air Force is requesting \$2.1 billion to meet the immediate Operational Imperatives required to maintain the Air Force's qualitative advantage and ability to deter and, if necessary, win whenever called upon by the Nation. The Operational Imperatives provide the Service with critical capabilities, readiness investments, and the foundation required to transition and sustain a wartime posture against our pacing threat. Notably, the USAF fiscal year 2025 budget request continues progress toward fielding an operationally optimized Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) (\$174 million) that will improve situational awareness and provide decision-support tools to close hundreds of kill chains within relevant timelines while operating in a highly contested environment. The fiscal year 2025 Air Force budget supports achieving moving target engagement at scale (\$177 million), which will be decisive in a conflict with a well-resourced peer-or near-peer adversary. Fielding the NGAD Family of Systems (\$675 million), particularly Collaborative Combat Aircraft, will allow the Air Force to augment current and future platforms with lower-cost complementary systems that can cost-effectively achieve control of the air in highly contested environments. The B-21 and its Family of Systems (details available at a higher classification) will be the backbone of the Air Force's bomber force and provide critical operational capability for both conventional and nuclear missions and provide precision effects en masse against targets worldwide. The Air Force is committed to building resilient forward basing (\$594 million) that ensures sustainable and networked bases capable of sufficient sortie generation and

mission execution in a contested environment. The Service is also investing toward securing the critical readiness required to mobilize and move the Air Force and Joint Force into theater (\$232.9 million), including hardening mobilization and support capabilities against cyber and non-cyber threats. These investments represent significant efforts in critical systems and assets required by the increasingly challenging threat environment.

Among the Air Force's highest priorities is achieving electromagnetic spectrum dominance and an information advantage in highly contested environments. The Air Force's budget includes a \$50 million budget request in fiscal year 2025 for investment in EA-37B Baseline 4 capability enhancements and advanced waveform development. Furthermore, the Air Force is investing in mission resilience and adaptability efforts such as the 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing's rapid reprogramming to ensure effective electronic attack, support, and defensive capabilities; synchronization efforts such as Air Combat Command's Electromagnetic Battle Management (EMBM). The Air Force's investments in electromagnetic spectrum dominance are vital to ensuring that the Nation's warfighters, Joint mission partners, and Allies build, achieve, and maintain mission effectiveness, survivability, and, ultimately, warfighting advantage over the Nation's adversaries. These efforts aid in maintaining the Air Force's credibility in both assurance and deterrence roles.

As the Air Force adapts to the changing strategic environment, we are reoptimizing every aspect of the Service around meeting the PRC pacing challenge. The Air Force is focusing organizations responsible for strategic readiness on current operational readiness, creating and/or elevating organizations that are critical to this strategic environment such as cyber and the nuclear enterprise, and creating a single command to focus on future capabilities. These reoptimization decisions make changes that are within the current authorities and, to the extent possible, the resources of the Department of the Air Force. As we strive to keep pace in a strategic environment where the competition has sustained and consistent growth in funding, these efforts alone will not be enough.

Air Force's Role in Taking Care of People

The Air Force is committed to attracting and retaining the best airmen in the world. In fiscal year 2024, the Active Duty Air Force is currently on track to meet its recruiting goals. Air National Guard and Reserve recruiting are trending upward but continue to remain a challenge for the Service. The Air Force has continued to break down barriers to service and made progress thanks to Congress's significant support to provide requested pay increases and increasing economic security for airmen through cost-of-living adjustments to basic pay, BAH, and BAS. Additionally, the Air Force is opening its bases to local communities to showcase the service to the public and connect with the Nation's possible recruits. The then VCSAF's cross functional team on Barriers to Service implemented 18 policy changes since January 2023 to expand future recruiting opportunities and increase eligibility to serve. These changes include accelerated naturalization at BMT, aligning the body composition to the DOD standard, and expanding the tattoo policy. These changes have provided tangible improvements without sacrificing quality. The CFT will continue to review and adjust DAF policies and initiatives to best address future recruiting challenges and amplify efforts to increase propensity to serve for all.

To maintain talent, the Air Force has focused on quality-of-life impacts for its airmen, investing to ensure they have the resources required to thrive. The Air Force has concentrated on improving access to childcare; this budget request includes a \$40.0 million MILCON submission for a CDC at Mountain Home AFB, on top of 11 CDC MILCON projects that the Air Force is executing in fiscal year 2025, and \$50 million in Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization focused investment in CDCs. The Service is also on track to implement the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military's recommendations and programs as approved by the Secretary of Defense, expanding victim care and support for victims of sexual assault. Specifically, the Air Force is increasing the presence of embedded mental health personnel in line units to prepare for contingency operations. Demand for these mental health services has increased twofold over the last decade while mental health manning has remained relatively unchanged. To offset the lack of providers, the Department of the Air Force is training servicemembers at every level on basic mental health skills. The Air Force has also invested in Interpersonal and Self-Directed Violence Prevention and Response with \$451 million in the fiscal year 2025 budget request to implement initiatives supporting and protecting airmen.

Quality of life also demands the best living and working facilities possible. Due to fiscal constraints resulting from the FRA, the Air Force was unable to reduce the \$46.8 billion of deferred maintenance and repair backlog, nor achieve the 2.3 per-

cent plant replacement value (PRV) reinvestment goal envisioned in the Infrastructure Investment Plan. The fiscal year 2024 budget request set this goal at 1.58 percent and the fiscal year 2025 budget request reduces it to 1.5 percent. Additionally, the existing CR has directly impacted the Air Force's ability to release funds and award dormitory contracts in the current fiscal year. The inability to release funds increases risk to meet the Air Force's dormitory investment goal of \$1.1 billion by 2026, and the inability to fund and award dormitory projects in fiscal year 2024 will roll into fiscal year 2025. However, with this budget request, the Air Force will meet the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA requirement to invest at least 5 percent of the estimated replacement cost of the total inventory of permanent party dormitories for facility improvements. The Air Force is deliberately investing to sustain adequate dormitories. The fiscal year 2025 budget request includes a planned investment of \$250 million for future prioritization of dormitory repair, but that does not include fiscal year 2024 rollover due to funding delays. The Air Force is also engaging with local leaders to increase the availability of affordable housing options for families. These moves, along with the substantial increase in BAH for many localities, have increased housing opportunities and living facilities for airmen.

To be the best, we must manage our airmen's talent. The Air Force is defining new Total Force skills required to meet the demands of Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN), Agile Combat Employment, and Future Force Design. As part of reoptimization, the technical tracks for officers and enlisted airmen as well as the introduction of Warrant Officers for Cyber and IT, seek to attract and retain the critical talent needed in fast-paced and rapidly evolving critical technology sectors that are shaping the modern battlefield. We are also improving talent management by investing in processes and systems that increase agility, flexibility, and data access. The Air Force is exploring ways to identify the most innovative airmen, network them, and ensure they can field innovative solutions to meet the Air Force's most significant challenges.

Air Force's Role in Succeeding Through Teamwork

Teamwork is critical in the total Air Force, including the Reserves and the Air National Guard, all as part of the Joint Force meeting the NDS objectives. That teamwork begins within the DAF, where the Air Force relies on and supports the Space Force. Both Services depend on each other in developing and fielding the Operational Imperatives and achieving the Department's reoptimization efforts. Cooperation of both the Space Force and Air Force is required to meet the challenges posed by the Nation's adversaries. The ability to conduct precision strikes, engage moving-targets, close kill chains, and build situational awareness in a highly contested environment requires the seamless integration of both Services. The Air Force and Space Force are inexorably intertwined, ensuring that both services, the Joint Force, and our allies and partners will prevail wherever called upon.

Meeting our pacing challenge also demands that the Air Force seamlessly integrate with the larger Joint Force, the combatant commands, and our allies and partners. This is the essence of Integrated Deterrence. As part of the reoptimization efforts, the Air Force is executing large-scale exercises to test its capabilities against peer threats in highly contested environments and re-designing force presentation models to ensure combatant commanders most stressing operational needs are met. The fiscal year 2025 budget includes \$428 million in investment to support the integrated priority lists of the combatant commanders. The Operational Imperatives and capability investments across the Service are critical to ensuring the Joint Force can succeed against the pacing challenge.

While the Air Force focuses on supporting the Joint Force in meeting the NDS priorities, the Service also realizes that Allies and partners are a center of gravity for United States national security. Allies and partners facilitate access, basing, and overflight. The Air Force is committed to working with our Allies and partners, especially in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, to advance an international order grounded in rules and norms. The Air Force continues to streamline FMS programs and work with allies to develop interoperable capabilities beginning from the initial design of systems.

Teamwork is also required with the Defense Industrial Base to ensure a robust industry that is the world leader in technology and production capacity that can adapt at speed and scale. As we promote the strength of the Defense Industrial Base, the Service is working with industry partners on delivering relevant capabilities with increased speed and capacity and ensuring mission-dependent supply chain and logistics resilience.

Teamwork inside the Department of the Air Force; the Joint Force; the Defense Industrial Base; and Allies and partners will be the cornerstone of integrated deterrence and combat capability in strategic competition with the PRC. The inter-

dependence of these forces demands constant attention to drive seamless integration and interoperability. Unity in action and capabilities developed between the Air Force, Joint Force, and Allies and partners will provide our Nation and our Allies an advantage that no potential adversary can match.

Perhaps as much as any time in history, teamwork is required across the whole of our government to tackle the increasingly complex and dangerous challenges that face our Nation. The Air Force will continue to work transparently and collaboratively through the Department of the Air Force, Department of Defense, executive branch, and Congress to field and maintain the most ready and dominant Air Force for the Nation.

UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

Since its establishment in 2019, the United States Space Force has focused on one, overarching imperative: to secure the Nation's interests in, from, and to space. As the threats in space to American prosperity and security both increase and become more sophisticated, the Space Force must transform and therefore, it is prioritizing investments that prepare the Joint Force and the Nation to confront the dangerous operating environment that space already has become. This transformation is severely complicated by the constrained fiscal environment, which has forced the DAF and the Space Force to make hard choices.

Space Force's Role in Defending The Nation

The world's use of space is growing at an accelerating rate, making space simultaneously more important and more dangerous. The domain is no longer the benign expanse of the past. Counterspace threats continue to destabilize the environment, and space-enabled attack increasingly holds the Joint Force and our Homeland at risk. The PRC, and to a significant extent Russia, have operationalized space. The United States has not kept pace. With space undeniably defined as a warfighting domain, the Nation depends upon the Space Force to secure its interests in, from, and to space.

To meet this challenge, the Space Force has organized its modernization efforts around a theory of success that aims to protect the Nation and its interests, while also preserving stability and long-term usability of the domain. This approach adheres to three guiding principles: (1) avoid operational surprise in the space domain, (2) deter attacks against U.S. interests in space and (3) prevent an adversary from using space to attack our Homeland or the Joint Force. The destruction of forces in space risks creating long-lasting hazards and indiscriminate risks. For this reason, the Space Force's concept of space superiority seeks to protect U.S. interests without jeopardizing the future of the space domain.

Avoiding operational surprise in space requires the Space Force to maintain constant awareness of the battlespace, supplemented by a robust capability to accurately produce indications and warnings for malign behavior. Over 8 percent of the Space Force's fiscal year 2025 budget is dedicated to this purpose. Specifically, the Space Force budget invests \$1.25 billion into the space domain awareness mission area, including funding for the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability, SILENTBARKER, and Space Data Fusion. These programs extend the Space Force's umbrella of awareness in the space domain, by establishing a clear picture of the operating environment and denying adversaries the ability to strike U.S. assets without warning.

To deny the benefits of a preemptive counter-space strike, the Space Force must build resilient space capabilities that guarantee continuity of critical services to the Joint Force despite current and growing adversary counterspace forces. These critical services include missile warning; communications; targeting; and Position, Navigation and Timing. The Space Force must transform these services to make them resilient to attack. As airborne systems providing communications and targeting have become more vulnerable and as threat long-range precision strike systems have proliferated, the Joint Force dependency on space is significantly increasing. To that end, the Space Force budget invests \$2.58 billion, or 55 percent of the total space-based missile warning budget, to field a proliferated multi-orbit missile warning network. Operating across different orbital regimes and sensor types, this hybrid approach complicates an adversary's attack options against U.S. space assets, enhances resiliency of a no-fail warning mission, and assures critical decisionmaking data will be available at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The Space Force is procuring two additional GPS-IIIIF vehicles. Presently, there are 31 satellites in orbit with four in storage and two slated for launch in fiscal year 2025. Simultaneously, the Space Force is researching more resilient PNT options. The fiscal year 2025 budget also devotes \$4.4 billion to developing satellite communications (SATCOM) systems capable of operating through contested and degraded environ-

ments. The Space Force is working to ensure that all of its capabilities can deter, overcome, and operate through enemy action.

\$7.25 billion—nearly a quarter of the Space Force’s fiscal year 2025 funding—invests in the ability to counter an adversary from using space to attack the U.S. Homeland or the Joint Force. This set of investments, which cannot be discussed in detail in an unclassified setting, is a major transformational effort for the USSF because it enables the newest Space Force mission, space superiority. The need to gain and maintain space superiority over peer adversaries is the distinguishing characteristic of a transformed Space Force and it is a top priority. Unfortunately, the compounding effects of Continuing Resolutions and the fiscal year 2025 top-line funding constraints under the FRA have had significant impact on the Space Force’s ability to meet the demands of this critical mission.

Finally, to reoptimize for the pacing challenge, sustain our long-term competitive advantage, and ensure the relevance of our technical investments, the Space Force is establishing a Space Futures Command. Overseeing the forward-looking force design process by which we determine our objective force, Space Futures Command will provide vital structures and processes for our force development activities. Working closely with the Air Force Research Laboratory this Command will routinely assess the relevancy of and make recommendations on the priority of areas of scientific research. This will provide a clear and consistent demand signal to all partners, unambiguously identifying the technologies we consider to be essential to our success.

The Space Force is in the early stages of a major transformation, from a force focused only on peacetime capabilities to a force that also includes the full range of warfighting capabilities. The Space Force we have today, no matter how ready it is, does not have the range of capabilities needed against the pacing challenge. Preserving current force capabilities is necessary but not sufficient. We must invest to transform our legacy space capabilities into a credible warfighting force to deter and, if needed, to defeat our adversaries; and we must do so with a sense of urgency. This requires on-time and stable funding. Continuing Resolutions force the Space Force to rearchitect programs, miss launch windows, and break delivery timelines, spreading mission delays across the FYDP. For example, hypothetical year-long CRs can force the Space Force to slow its launch procurements, precipitating impacts for years to come by reducing the capability it can get on orbit, creating industrial base challenges, delaying test and training activities, and generating more barriers to its transformation.

Space Force’s Role in Taking Care of People

The Space Force’s small but technologically sophisticated workforce means the Space Force must deliberately manage talent on an individual basis. In 2023, Congress passed the Space Force Personnel Management Act. This landmark legislation will enable the Space Force to build a modern personnel management system that will better allow the Space Force to develop and retain the elite military cadre it needs to be competitive and successful. The permeability between full-time and part-time military service the single component creates will allow guardians of the relatively small Space Force to flexibly manage their careers and better meet their personal and professional goals while meeting Space Force operational needs.

The Space Force is also piloting the Defense Civilian Training Corps in fiscal year 2025. This program, which will act as a civil service counterpart to the Reserve Officer Training Corps program, will recruit civilian guardians with desirable backgrounds following the completion of their undergraduate education. Additionally, fiscal year 2025 resourcing will allow the Space Force to expand developmental opportunities for all guardians. Here, the first step will be a redesigned Officer Training Course. Under this program, all newly accessed officers will attend the same initial skills training course to learn the fundamentals of cyber operations, intelligence, and space operations. This combined initial skills training will ensure all officers have a comprehensive operational background prior to pursuing more specialized duties like acquisition. The Space Force is truly committed to being operationally focused.

The demands placed on guardians continue to grow as space becomes a more dangerous operating environment. To prepare for this challenge, guardians must be able to develop, train, and exercise their operational tradecraft in a secure environment against high-fidelity simulated threats. To meet these requirements, the Space Force is building the necessary test and training infrastructure from scratch. In fiscal year 2025, the Space Force budget invests \$438.7 million into the Operational Test and Training Infrastructure (OTI) program. The Space Force is also expanding its investments in the test enterprise to account for the electromagnetic and orbital warfare mission areas. Recently, the DAF organized all of these activities

under a single Program Executive Officer, ensuring resourcing transparency, accountability, and interoperability across the test and training enterprise.

One personnel challenge the Space Force faces as a small service is creating the organizational capacity to perform current operations while simultaneously building operational readiness for a high-intensity conflict. To better balance these two, the Space Force is formalizing how it builds operational readiness in combat force elements. The Space Force is accomplishing this by implementing the Space Force Generation model for readiness, which is made possible by a requested additional \$344.2 million invested across several accounts. This investment enables a rotational model for Employed-in-Place missions, allowing personnel to accomplish threat-focused combat training before they are presented to the combatant commanders for day-to-day operations.

Space Force's Role in Succeeding Through Teamwork

The Space Force is not just an important teammate, but an essential one to the Joint and Combined Force. Broader operational success across all domains and theaters will depend on the Space Force succeeding in its missions. First, the Space Force provides services that the Joint and Combined team must have, or they will fail. Achieving that requires not just fielding effective capabilities joint warfighters need, but also securing those capabilities from adversarial attack. Second, the Space Force protects the Joint and Combined team from space-enabled attack. The Space Force cannot succeed in either regard without robust relationships across the U.S. enterprise and with indispensable Allies and partners.

To that end, partnerships with the other Services and throughout the Joint Force is a top Space Force priority. In fiscal year 2024, the Space Force established several service components to integrate Space Force capabilities and expertise into the Combatant Commands. For example, the Space Force established U.S. Space Forces Europe and Africa, giving both USEUCOM and USAFRICOM a dedicated team of experts in space planning and operations. The fiscal year 2025 budget invests an additional \$27.8 million to build service components in support of every Combatant Command. Once fully implemented, this program will give every Combatant Command access to guardians who can help integrate space capabilities into their joint operations.

Nationally, there are many agencies and organizations with equities in the space domain. This is why the Space Force is partnering with a variety of government agencies to unify effort and leverage common interests for mutual benefit in space. For example, space-based surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting is a critically important emerging mission area for the Space Force. Therefore, the Space Force is working with the intelligence community, as well as industry partners, so that the Space Force can accomplish this important mission as part of the Joint Force.

As a highly technical service, the Space Force depends on a strong industrial base. An eighth of the Space Force fiscal year 2025 budget is dedicated to commercial space services which will help reinforce and energize the space industrial base our Nation depends upon. Moreover, the Space Force is continuing to develop its commercial space strategy within the larger DAF and Department of Defense industrial policy framework to identify areas for deeper partnerships with the diverse commercial space market.

The Space Force can no longer afford to delay its necessary transformation. Space capabilities are foundational to how the Joint Force projects power across the world and are increasingly at risk—they are old, vulnerable, and already not fully meeting joint warfighter needs. Lessening these risks requires transformational change—transcending the status quo and making smart investments in not just new systems, but also people—America's guardians

CONCLUSION

The Department of the Air Force is in a race for technological superiority against a well-resourced strategic competitor. The United States is now facing a competitor with national purchasing power that exceeds our own, a challenge we have never faced in modern times. The PLA is actively developing and expanding capabilities to challenge strategic stability, attack our critical space systems, and defeat our ability to project power, especially air power. Conflict in the Indo-Pacific region is not inevitable. The United States is actively working to prevent conflict by strengthening combat-credible deterrence. However, acute and persistent threats still exist, and the security and prosperity undergirded by the United States military for decades is increasingly challenged. The DAF fiscal year 2025 budget request is focused on addressing this reality. The DAF has funded current readiness accounts at the lowest acceptable level while investing remaining resources in essential modernization. Some Air Force procurement has been deferred to free up funding for new

capabilities in development. The Space Force lacks similar tradeoff options, forcing delays in needed systems, especially counterspace systems. The DAF fiscal year 2025 budget request is aligned with the NDS. It addresses mission requirements while taking care of people and fulfilling our role in the Joint, interagency, and combined team. We urge timely approval of this budget request to allow us to keep pace with the challenges facing the United States.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Saltzman. Mr. Secretary, we have been endeavoring for the last several years to replace the E-3, AWACS, aircraft, which has certainly served well but is reaching its limits. Could you fill us in on the progress toward getting the E-7 in the air to replace the E-3?

Secretary KENDALL. Yes, we are still moving ahead with the E-7. It is funded in the 2025 budget. We had a slip production of one more aircraft a year to the right.

The price that we got from the prime came in much higher than we had anticipated, and we have been involved in negotiations to try to get it down. We have come much closer, but we are not really at closure yet, so we have some additional work to do there.

So, I am anticipating—I am maybe being optimistic here, but hopefully that will get to an agreement very shortly and then be able to move on with the program. We are still committed to the program, but we have got to have an affordable aircraft.

Chairman REED. The Australians, among others, have the E-7. Our version would be more sophisticated or quite different?

Secretary KENDALL. It would be. It would have to include all of our communication systems and so on. So, there are a number of modifications from the original E-7, which are several years old, that have to be made to meet our requirements. So that is part of the problem with the cost.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Allvin, a significant part of the lifecycle cost of an aircraft is sustainment cost. I think around here, we—our first reaction is the sticker shock. You mean, it costs x?

But we don't realize how much it really cost to keep flying. For example, the F-35 is, I think, about \$39,000 per hour for flying. Can you tell us what progress the Air Force has made in reducing the lifecycle cost of the F-35 system in particular?

General ALLVIN. Thank you, Chairman, and of course, the F-35 will be the backbone of our force into the future. So, having it sustainable is certainly required for us to be able to afford it and all the other things.

The Joint Program Office has been undertaking this, what they are referring to is a war in readiness, trying to understand each of the individual elements and segments that are driving the cost up. I think that program is underway. We expect to see some results from that in the very near future.

The other thing is that when you purchase the new weapon systems, you also have to purchase the contract logistics supply system as well, which adds a bit of an additional cost to it. So, digging into that and understanding how we might be able to transition to this performance based logistics is another way into the future.

As you know, we have been working back and forth with the prime on how to do that. We couldn't come to a conclusion that was satisfactory for both sides to be able to have all of the things that we needed, so we are going to reenter that as well to ensure that

in the future we can have a performance based logistics system that will drive down the cost of sustainment as well.

Chairman REED. There has been a determination, I presume, over time that contractor based sustainment is more efficient than uniform sustainment by military personnel?

General ALLVIN. That was certainly the premise when they put it into the CLS, and so, now we are looking at adjusting that to the current environment, how we may be able to adapt to ensure that we can get some of the efficiency and affordability, but also the operational responsiveness that we need.

Chairman REED. Thank you. General Saltzman, your chief task is to provide the trained and equipped Space Force guardians, and you can you sort of give us a sense of what are the obstacles you are facing in that?

General SALTZMAN. Yes. Thank you, Senator. The conditions have changed radically in space over the last 10 years or so. One of the analogies Secretary Kendall and I use is it is akin to going from a merchant marine and transforming into a U.S. Navy. That requires different equipment, that requires different training.

So, what we are working on currently is advancing the training of our guardians. We have invested in fiscal year 2025 about \$438 million to enhance the training infrastructure. This includes new simulators, new ranges, aggressor forces to simulate the threat, all to give them realistic training for the competitive environment they are going to face.

But maybe more importantly, and certainly more in terms of investments, is giving them the equipment they need, resilient architectures that are going to be more capable, more effective in the contested environment, and looking for the counter space capabilities to deny an adversary the ability to use space enabled targeting against our Joint Force.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you very much. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, gentlemen. I share with many of my colleagues a deep concern regarding the future of the United States Air Force. Its fighters, bombers, tankers, and cargo aircraft are in constant rotation around the world, ready to combat any threat.

I understand that we must modernize our forces and divest when it makes sense to do so. However, many of the aircraft that the Air Force has requested to divest in this year's budget, such as the F-15Es, are among the most combat capable, with expensive upgrades and thousands of flight hours remaining on the aircraft. In the event of conflict, we need not only capability but also capacity.

Not every place in which the Air Force is expected to operate is a high end threat environment. I am especially concerned about the impact of these budget caps on the Space Force, whose programs form the backbone of every other services combat capability.

Communications, command and control, and guidance for weapon systems all rely on space, and more vital mission sets are expected to move to space in the near term, though not fast enough to justify such rapid divestment of airborne programs.

Yet, this budget request does not include the resources necessary for the Space Force to grow its capability at scale and at the speed

of relevance. Indeed, your request for Space Force is \$600 million less than what the Department requested last year.

General Saltzman, in your opening statement, you stated, “the Space Force lacks similar tradeoff options, forcing delays in needed systems, especially counter space systems.” I am concerned about the level of risk we are accepting by delaying development of these systems.

If Congress were to provide additional funding for development of these counter space systems, would you be able to execute that funding?

General SALTZMAN. Yes, ma’am. We have a series of programs that are still in R&D, but there is a good, solid program that with additional resources, we would be able to accelerate and deliver capability in this DP.

Senator FISCHER. We have also heard a lot about what the Air Force is doing related to re-optimizing the great power competition, General Saltzman. What does that look for—look like for the Space Force, please.

General SALTZMAN. Thank you for that. We are very excited about the re-optimization, and like I started in the previous question to Senator Reed, it is about recognizing that the environment has shifted and that we have to train differently.

So, we have reestablished new advanced training standards for our guardians to be able to respond in this contested environment. We have also created a new force presentation model, which creates both the time and the tools for our guardians to be able to train against this adversary.

Most importantly, probably most recognizable, you will see the establishment of a space futures command. This is in recognition that there is a great many efforts that are going on in science and technology, in operational concepts, new missions, and we wanted to make sure we could get our arms around that as quickly as possible and really focus delivery of the right kind of systems with the right prioritization in time, so that we can continue to have an enduring advantage over our threats as we go into the future.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir. General Allvin or Secretary Kendall, what are additional updates that you can share in this setting on new developments in the B-21 program?

Secretary KENDALL. The B-21 is moving forward. I am always very careful about saying positive things about programs in development. They all have risk. But at this stage, the B-21 has been performing close to original scheduling and costs, and delivering capability is in testing. We just had the milestone CE approval to enter low rate production. So, the program is moving forward. At this point in time at least, we are pretty happy with the progress.

Senator FISCHER. Great. Thank you. General Allvin, it is my understanding that one of the changes at the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center is establishing that two star general as PEO for international ballistic missiles. What benefits will this bring to the Air Force’s capability to help them execute that Sentinel program?

General ALLVIN. Thank you, Senator, and this is really part and parcel to what things we were looking at with the re-optimization, understanding—keeping the main thing, the main thing. Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of our national defense, and so, the

ability to oversee at the right level, with the right authorities to do integration of the ICBM leg of the triad is very important. So, elevating that to the two star level gives more seniority and more authority to be able to integrate the nuclear material management and all of the systems that will be able to support the ICBM.

Like we think that is going to be pivotal regardless of what comes out of the Nunn-McCurdy review. Going forward, that ground leg of the triad, that recapitalization is going to take years upon years, and so we want to ensure we have the right level of leadership and oversight to see this massive program.

Senator FISCHER. Correct. We need to make sure we have what we need and continue to move forward on that program. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for testifying today. This is for General Allvin. The agile combat employment strategy requires the appropriate posture and supporting infrastructure at locations throughout the Pacific. For example, just last week, the Air Force awarded a \$409 million contract to rebuild an airfield used during World War II on the island of Tinian.

General Allvin, does the Air Force have the appropriate forward basing it needs to execute agile combat employment? Are there plans for more reclamation efforts at Pacific airfields similar to Tinian and the runway upgrade of—Air base, Basa Air Base in the island of Luzon?

General ALLVIN. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. Secretary Kendall and I were there for about 2 weeks ago. We are on the island of Tinian, and certainly it holds not only a historic place, but it also is going to be part of the future as far as our agile combat employment scheme of maneuver.

So direct answer to your question, Senator, is we are on the path. We have the wing commanders and the Commander of Pacific Air Force with a very strong understanding of what it takes to do our agile combat employment, and they continue through their wing level exercises to sort of to build that out, at least intellectually and conceptually.

As we continue to fight for the resources to do that, we do have designs on several of these clusters, these spoke bases to include Tinian, that the Secretary and I were on. You mentioned a couple of the other ones but building out not only the runway but the necessary, not overly necessary, just what we need to operate those hub and spoke locations.

We have a ways to go in the funding, but we are designing the requirements, prioritizing them, and we do intend to exercise to ensure we have everything we need to execute that that scheme of maneuver that is going to be required.

Senator HIRONO. But as part of the—or maybe a major part of the reason that we need to have these facilities in the Indo-Pacific is because of recognizing that China is definitely having—they are reaching out to a number of these island nations to influence them. Is that one of the reasons that we want to do this?

General ALLVIN. Senator, that is correct. We want to ensure that we have the agility and be able to complicate their targeting calculus to ensure survivability and success in that theater.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. I support your effort. Secretary Kendall, last year's NDAA included a provision directing the Secretary of Defense to conduct a feasibility study regarding the advisability of transfer—transferring all covered space functions of the National Guard to the Space Force.

The results of this study have not been released, but I am concerned that you are already pursuing, apparently, or DOD is, a provision in this year's NDAA that would move all space missions out of the National Guard.

So, how does this change—by the way, I think it is important for us to actually have the results of this analysis, and I would hope that the analysis is also including outreach and the input of these National Guard units that are performing some of the space functions that I am sure you know, Mr. Secretary, there are about 1,000 National Guardsmen in states, not just Hawaii but there are about 100 in California, Colorado, Florida, New York, Ohio, Alaska.

So, while that study has not even been completed, I hope that you have gotten—reached out to these National Guard units. Have you, in conducting this study that we do not have the results of yet?

Secretary KENDALL. The study is in final draft. First of all, let me just say that we deeply value the units that are part of essentially our space capabilities. We are looking at which ones will be covered under the act.

Consulting with General Saltzman, and we have looked at the functions of those units to see if they fit into the Air Force or Space Force architecture more appropriately. Most of them do fit within the Space Force, or a couple that I think may be more appropriate in the Air Force, but they are all valued and they are all important.

We want to have them continue to serve. We are looking at how to best make that happen. General Saltzman and I are both very strongly of the opinion that the right way to do that, from the point of view of national capability and for the ability to manage the Space Force, is to bring those units into the Space Force, ultimately under the Space Force Personnel Management Act that was just passed by the Congress last year.

The Space Force is incredibly small, and it was designed to be lean and mean I guess is a way to put it to be very efficient in how it operated and to have as minimal amount of bureaucracy associated with it.

We are very grateful that this Committee and your colleagues on the other side of the Hill supported the Space Force Personnel Management Act that allows the Space Force to have full time and part time people in it, and to be very flexible in how it manages people. So, we want to bring these hard units into that same structure. That is clearly, from the point of view of the Space Force, the best solution.

Senator HIRONO. Mr. Secretary, I am glad to hear that. Although transferring these units into the Space Force might mean transferring these part time people who are located in all the States that

I mentioned away from their States and other functions, so I have a concern about that.

General Saltzman just testified today that it is very important in terms of the recruiting and retention of the people who are going to be doing these functions. So, I have concerns that—of the movement. I do have other questions, Mr. Chairman, that I will submit for the record. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds, please.

Secretary KENDALL. Mr. Chairman, if could have 1 minute to respond to Senator Hirono.

Chairman REED. Yes. The only 1 minute you will get.

Secretary KENDALL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is no intention to move anyone. So, there is some concerns out there that I think are overblown.

People will basically have stability if they transition. We are doing this now with some of the Reserves. There are about a thousand people in the Reserves, essentially, that are going to be moving under the Space Force Personnel Management Act.

We are going to handle the Space Guard people the same way, basically. So, they would have stability, and they will be able to continue to serve in the way generally that they currently would serve.

There should not be a lot of concern about dramatic changes as far as any of them are concerned. General Saltzman may want to add a quick word on it.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. That helps clarify the issue very much. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Kendall, General Allvin, General Saltzman, thank you for your service, and thank you for being with us today to share your testimony. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the actions of the pilots and aircrews of the 494th and the 335th Fighter Squadrons, who performed so magnificently over the weekend.

We are all proud and humbled by their clear excellence, and to the entire Joint Force for the job, they did in responding very, very quickly. Secretary Kendall, given the events over this past weekend, it seems clear to me that there is no substitute for military hardware and that divesting platforms in the short term to pay for future capabilities is not necessarily the most desirable option or choice.

Congress must fund the Department at levels commensurate to the global threat environment. Broadly speaking, in this open setting, where does your fiscal year 2025 budget assume the most risk?

Secretary KENDALL. If I were to look over at the Department of the Air Force's budget, I am most concerned about the pace at which we are moving forward in space, particularly counter space. I am not uncomfortable with where the Air Force is in terms of force structure or capabilities globally.

We have a large Air Force, and it is very capable. It is not as large as it once was, but we have a lot of units, and the two you mentioned I think did a fantastic job, but we have a lot of other units who could do very similar things if called upon to do that.

Our average aircraft is about 30 years old, and we need to move forward with the next generation of capabilities as quickly as we can. On the Space Force side, though, as General Saltzman mentioned, we are going from a country that had space capabilities designed to operate in space with impunity and very little in the way of counter space capabilities.

So, we are moving from a merchant marine like arrangement to a military naval force arrangement, which means we have got to have resilient assets in space that will survive and attack and provide the services that are so important to the Joint Force, and we have got to protect the Joint Force from similar systems that the other side has that would threaten us and target us.

So, we need to do both of those things, and those are transformational capabilities compared to what we currently have in the Space Force for the most part. My greatest concern, again, is time and moving forward as quickly as possible with the kind of space capabilities we need, particularly counter space.

Senator ROUNDS. I guess just to followup on that, and once again I suspect this is one that all of you would probably participate in responding to, but ISR is critical, and right now we have got platforms that do a great job, but they are not necessarily space based.

Space based is critical long term, but it would appear that right now, we are still building those ISR capabilities for the Combatant Commander to have in order to finish that kill web. General Allvin, would it be clear—would you, at least in your professional military opinion, would you share with this Committee where we are right now with regard to our ISR platforms that the Combatant Commanders are requesting at this time?

General ALLVIN. Absolutely, Senator. Of course, you know, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance absolutely critical to be able to close those kill chains and have the situational awareness that Combatant Commanders need.

I would say that where we are is we are in a transition. I think there is a comfort with the level of the capacity that airborne ISR has been able to provide, and during our transition to space, air mix I think is, from air—

Senator ROUNDS. General Allvin, I am going to cut right to the chase on this. Fair to say we are assuming risk in this transition?

General ALLVIN. Senator, I would say we assume risk in any of the transitions. We are trying to manage that risk to the platforms we have, retaining the platforms that we have through the RQ-4 through 2029 and those that we have in the airborne layer until we get more resilience through the spaceborne layer, because that is where the future is.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. General Allvin, also with regard to the family, the B-21 family. Right now, the actual platform itself, we have ordered or were prepared to purchase 100. Would you say that that is the minimum number needed of the base platform?

General ALLVIN. It certainly is the future of our bomber force. Before—100 is the program of record. I think we are not going to reach that number until probably the mid 2030's and beyond, and before we commit to that as being the platform beyond that, I think there are other technological advancements that we would see to

be able to augment that and have a better mix because, as you know, there, there also—there is a price to pay for them. They are going to be very capable.

Senator ROUNDS. But the 100, sir, is the minimum?

General ALLVIN. That is the program of record, absolutely.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Let me recognize Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, you began your testimony talking about the Nunn-McCurdy process and Sentinel. Very expensive program designed years ago. Make the case for the ground based leg of the triad.

Secretary KENDALL. I should mention that I am recused on Sentinel itself, but I can definitely answer your question about ground based leg. For as long as I have been in this business, about 50 years, the country has relied upon the triad for nuclear strategic deterrence. It presents an adversary with a very difficult problem if it is contemplating an attack against the United States.

The ICBM leg in particular, which is our largest and most responsive leg of the triad, presents a dilemma because if it is attacked, it basically can be very responsive and respond immediately with a large scale counterattack.

The submarine part of the fleet provides a more secure Reserve, if you will, that is smaller in size but more survivable. Then, of course, the bomber leg provides additional flexibility and the ability to present an adversary with another way in which they can be attacked.

That triumvirate, that triad has been enormously effective in preventing a nuclear war for more than half a century—almost approaching a century now. At one point, I think you could have had a debate when the only nuclear powers were Russia and the United States and our arsenals were declining, that we could have gone to some other arrangement.

But the thing that has happened in the last few years that really reinforces the need for the ICBM leg is China's breakout and their expansion of their nuclear force, which is truly the progress—

Senator KING. China is making huge investments in a land based—

Secretary KENDALL. China is making a large investment, and they are going to an inventory within the next few years that is comparable to that of the United States and Russia.

So, for the first time in our history, we are going to live in a world in which there are three large scale nuclear powers. That is a very dangerous world, and I think reducing our capability, reducing our options in the face of that would be a serious mistake.

Senator KING. Of course, the fundamental of our entire defense policy is deterrence.

Secretary KENDALL. Exactly.

Senator KING. In order to maintain deterrence, the ground leg is an important factor. Thank you. When we buy a major weapon systems, B-21, F-35, do we acquire the IP?

What I am leading to here is the ability of our military to 3D print parts so that we are not subject to a long supply chain delays and also potentially additional cost.

Do we have the—I believe that every hangar should have a 3D printer and every Navy ship should have a 3D printer so that we are not tied to that long tail of parts. What is the status of our acquisition of the IP so that that can be effectuated.

Secretary KENDALL. Our history is mixed on IP acquisition. The F-35 is a good example of a program where we didn't do that. It was acquired initially under a philosophy of total system procurement, which essentially left in the hands of the prime contractor a lot of control of the program.

Makes it very hard to upgrade. It makes it very hard to make changes and do them in a cost effective way, and to take advantage of competition. Our more modern programs generally are built where we acquire the intellectual property we need to control both upgrades and maintenance so that we have a lot more flexibility in how we manage. The B-21 is being done that way.

The NGAD program is being done that way. It is one of the lessons we have learned very painfully over our history in acquisition. I am not sure that we always get it right today, but my—I am not doing acquisitions anymore. I am in a different role now.

But my guidance, when I was doing that, was that when we still have the benefits of competition, we need to get the intellectual property rights we are going to need for the life of the program.

If we can get reasonable prices for those rights at that time, and then be in a position to manage the program effectively going forward. That is the way we should be doing this. I can't say that we do it in every case.

Senator KING. General Saltzman, we may need to talk about this in a classified setting, but you used the term denying the benefits of attacks in space. Secretary Kendall used counter space. Clearly we are playing catch up in this situation. Is there anything you can say in the open setting to provide some reassurance that we are not totally vulnerable in space right now?

General SALTZMAN. Yes, Senator. Thank you for that. The fiscal year 2025 budget, I think, continues to advance us on a pretty solid timeline for adding resilient architectures to the critical missions like missile warning, satellite communications, data transport.

I am pretty comfortable with where we are headed in terms of denying the benefits of an attack on our systems to some degree. The problem, again, as the Secretary mentioned, was the fact that the PRC, in particular, has built a very robust, space enabled targeting system and have continued to do so at a very rapid rate.

So, scaling up to develop not just the type of counter space capabilities that we need, but the quantity of those capabilities to hold those targets at risk is where we are falling behind in the timeline, and we are not just moving as quickly as I think we should.

Senator KING. Thank you. General Allvin, I am going to submit this question for the record, but I would like some thoughts from you about the Transition Assistance Program and how it is being implemented in the Air Force.

I worry about the transition process from Active Duty to veteran status. Very dangerous moment, and so, you don't need to respond now, but I will look forward to your response on that question. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Good morning, gentlemen. General Saltzman, fiscal year—the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget contains a new program for space access, mobility, and logistics. It is only \$20 million. What is your plan for this?

General SALTZMAN. Sir, that type of money is used to study to figure out if there is military utility, and so, for example, we are looking at a concept called dynamic maneuvering, if we can have unlimited fuel in our spacecraft because we have the ability to service them on orbit, then we can have more dynamic orbits which are harder to target.

That is the concept, that is the idea, but we really need to evaluate that to figure out if there is serious military utility there before we invest heavily in a program, and the \$20 million gets us along that line.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, \$20 million for 5 years, that is not a lot of money. I mean, is that going to get the job done?

General SALTZMAN. I believe we will have the answers to our basic questions on military utility with that, and then we can make a determination whether we need more funding.

Senator TUBERVILLE. How is your recruiting and retention?

General SALTZMAN. We are doing great. We still get thousands of applicants for hundreds of positions, and we are above 90 percent in terms of the people that we want to retain.

So, I am not convinced that that is going to last forever, and so, we are working hard to make sure we provide our guardians with high levels of challenges and opportunities to enhance their own competencies, to make sure we can retain that workforce.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Secretary Kendall, recently, I guess you decided to cut in half to MH-139s, and we have got 1 or 2. I think we got eight total eventually coming to Montgomery, in Maxville. What is your plan on this?

Secretary KENDALL. I Maxville has one already, and another later this year, and then the full eight about a year after that. We did cut the buyback. We cut it from about 80 to about 40. The reason for that was that the threat change and the areas in which we expect to operate have changed.

So, it is a fairly expensive special purpose helicopter that isn't—doesn't have that much utility in some of the theaters where we would have to operate given the threats are there. There are a number of other assets and in many cases can be used for personnel recovery.

So, we basically downsized it to have what we think is a reasonable force to meet our needs given the changes in the threat. That has been the fundamental driver.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. I was at the Tyndall Air Force Base recently. How is that coming? That was a disaster, what happened to Tyndall, but we are rebuilding it back. Is it coming along pretty good?

Secretary KENDALL. I would have to get your detailed answer for the record, but yes, is a basic answer to your question. A lot has been put into Tyndall to restore it.

Secretary KENDALL. There are 37 National Disaster Recovery (NDR) projects at Tyndall Air Force Base, and five (5) projects are complete. Thirty (30) projects are in construction. The status for the remaining two (2) projects is below, and timelines are subject to receiving additional funds:

1. Air Force Civil Engineer Center Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) Facilities and Gate: The estimated award date is May 11, 2025.
2. Deployment Center/Flight Line Dining/Army-Air Force Exchange Services (AAFES): The estimated award date is December 31, 2025.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General Allvin, F-35s. We are putting a lot of eggs in a basket on this. Are we getting enough flying time knowing the cost of F-35s, of operating and maintaining?

General ALLVIN. Well, Senator, we are certainly trying to manage that to get as many as we can. You know, we—as the weapons system sustainment accounts and the flying our program accounts are very much interrelated, and so, as we try and drive down the costs of what it costs to sustain that, we can put more of that into flying hours. No pilot thinks he or she ever has enough flying hours, but we certainly are augmenting that with our synthetic training.

Our joint synthetic environment is also helping us understand the things that we don't necessarily want to do an open air because of security. I would say, though, that every pilot wants to fly more, but we are trying to manage that well to keep that proficiency up, to keep up with the pace and threat.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We want to make sure our pilots are safe, obviously. In the confrontations we have been having lately, the F-35 have been used, that you know of?

General ALLVIN. The F-35 has been a part of—some of the recent ones, like over the weekend, it was not required for that capability, and it actually wasn't in the theater. But the assets that we had in the theater, they come through request from the Combatant Commander, and we provide the assets for which they request.

Those were satisfactory in that permissive environment. In the highly contested environment, the contested environment, that is really where this fifth generation capability of the F-35 provides today, but even more so into tomorrow with the Tech Refresh 3 and Block 4 capability to upgrade capabilities.

Senator TUBERVILLE. General, how is our recruiting in the Air Force?

General ALLVIN. Recruiting in the Air Force is doing quite well. It is really improving. On the Active Duty side, we actually just recently increased our goal, and we think we are going to make that increased goal.

On the Reserve side, they are going to be within 1 percent. They think they may actually make it as well. The National Guard had a deeper deficit to recover from. I think last year they were well below. They are going to be within 5 percent. So, we are gaining on all fronts. We are certainly not resting on our laurels.

In the 2025 budget, we asked for another \$50 million to be able to distribute out to more recruiting centers to have more digitization of records and things so we can also have the recruiters do more recruiting rather than just admin work.

So, we are not giving up that we have got it all linked right now, but we certainly are on the right path.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We are increasing numbers?

General ALLVIN. Absolutely.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Is that what you said?

General ALLVIN. Yes.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What percentage, do you know?

General ALLVIN. Well, I would say right now we are——

Senator TUBERVILLE. The goal.

General ALLVIN. What percent of the goal? The Active Duty Air Force right now is reaching 100 percent of its goal—101 percent, quite frankly, which allows us to bank a few. The Reserves, 99 percent, and the Air National Guard, about 95 percent.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, welcome. It is good to see all of you here today. Secretary Kendall and General Allvin, as you know, this past January, the Air Force announced that Selfridge Air National Guard Base will be receiving 12 new KC-46 refueling tankers in 2029.

I just want to say, I don't think I can emphasize enough how grateful I am to the Air Force for making this announcement. Certainly, a very big deal for our area, and the community is very excited to receive these critical refueling tankers that will continue to play really a tremendous strategic role for us for decades to come.

At the same time, and I have talked to both of General Allvin and Secretary Kendall, I also remain committed to securing a future fighter replacement for the retiring A-10's that are currently flying at Selfridge.

The Air Force basing announcement clearly stated at the time that the KC-46 decision does not preclude Selfridge from "being considered for a future fighter aircraft mission or other potential missions in the future."

I would just like both of you, if you would, could reaffirm and commit on the record that Selfridge is still in consideration for a future fighter basing decision at some point. Secretary Kendall.

Secretary KENDALL. Senator, thank you. Selfridge would be in consideration for future fighter basing decision, potentially. But at the current time, we don't have an option to do that. The reason we made the programmatic decision to put the KC-46 there was in part at least because of the divestiture of the A-10.

So, those two are linked together. Our general policy is to replace a flying mission that is divested with a like flying mission where we can. If we can't do that, we try to apply it with another flying mission, and then if we can't do that, we try to replace it with an enduring mission. In the case of Selfridge, the KC-46s are basically to replace the combination of the KC-135s and the A-10's.

In the future we may be at a very different place. General Allvin mentioned in his opening statement the CCAs that we are acquiring. We don't know the final inventory number there, but we expect it to be large, so there is a possibility there.

We are looking as we build our 2026 budget at our overall fighter modernization plan overall. So, there is a possibility in the future, but none that we can point to right at this time.

Senator PETERS. General Allvin, you want to add any to that comment?

General ALLVIN. I, just to answer the specific question, it does not preclude, but the Secretary has really laid out with respect to the basing decision and criteria.

Senator PETERS. Right, but it doesn't preclude future, as we continue to work. General Allvin, and I appreciate the time that we took yesterday, or last week rather, to meet. As part of that conversation, we discussed the critical importance of the collaborative combat aircraft, which Secretary Kendall just referred to.

We also talked about a potential pilot program to study drone operations in medium and high intensity airspace, which right now is problematic with unmanned aircraft. This pilot program would allow the Department of Defense to experiment with existing unmanned systems like the MQ-9 Reaper, to pave the way for the employment of future platforms like CCA.

So, my question for you, sir, is what benefits and lessons learned would the Air Force—would the Air Force gain from this kind of pilot program? Would you support a pilot program of that nature?

General ALLVIN. Thank you, Senator. I certainly would. I think as we look forward to the arc of where the contested environment in which we are going to need to fight, that arc is one that requires us to really investigate all the options for how we maintain survivability at the right risk, to be able to penetrate, to be able to survive and to be able to close these kill chains.

It has increasingly become apparent to me that there is ripe for study how we do it in the uncrewed area where we are developing the autonomy as well. We have a current program in parallel that we are looking at the length of—the portfolio to which you can put autonomy in these collaborative combat aircraft, as well as how we utilize them and base them. So, we are trying to go as fast as we can into the human, machine teaming play.

Senator PETERS. Yes, if I can build on that. We discussed last week the importance of the KC-46 refueling tanker, as well as the need for some out-of-the-box thinking when it comes to collaborative combat aircraft employment.

As part of that discussion, you mentioned the possibility, the possibility of employing KC-46s a command and control node for future CCA aircraft. You know, I understand that those decisions are in the very early stages, but what steps with the Air Force needed to explore this KC-46 and CCA command and control concept?

General ALLVIN. Senator, I think the first step that we need to do is to get better situational awareness on the KC-46s. That is something that we are looking into very strongly.

General Minihan has done some experiments out in the Indo-Pacific showing that if you just have a C2 node, the ability to communicate in ways that the tanker right now can't, that starts your ability to have a more resilient command and control network.

Now, whether that next step is to go from just being a communications node relay to actually doing airborne battle management is something that can be investigated. But the first start is to ensure that you have the connectivity of your mobility platforms in a way that you didn't before.

That opens up the opportunity to do more than just being a comms relay, but maybe doing more command control.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you. Appreciate it.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Kendall, a sort of a followup on Senator Peters' question. Missouri is home to Whiteman Air Force Base, and the 442d Fighter Wing is there.

The A-10, you know, the Air Force is moving on from the A-10, and that will be—really come to fruition in 4 years. You know, it has some really experienced pilots and maintainers, and we are already starting to see the retention issues because there hasn't been a follow on mission.

What can you tell me today about how you are approaching that? Because there are some options, but there has really just not been a lot of movement.

Secretary KENDALL. I don't think we have an option yet for the A-10 replacement.

Senator SCHMITT. Can I make a suggestion?

Secretary KENDALL. Yes.

Senator SCHMITT. The F-15EX would be a great option.

Secretary KENDALL. We will take that under consideration, Senator.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Second, Rosecrans, which is in Saint Joseph, Missouri, is home to the aging fleet of C-130Hs. Interestingly—and, you know, some have said that the last round was pretty political based on where they went. I just want to make the point, Rosecrans trains people from all around the world.

For example, the Indian Air Force comes in with their C-130Js to be trained by the folks at Rosecrans who have Hs from the 1980's. There have been eight, you know, appropriate in this next round. So, I guess just for either one of you, where do you see this headed?

General ALLVIN. Senator, those eight Hs that were appropriated, certainly they go through the basing process, and the candidate bases, I understand that Rosecrans is going to be considered as one of, I believe, four candidate bases for those.

Obviously, it meets the criteria. That is the first part of the strategic basing process, and it does meet the criteria, obviously, because they are flying 130—but the expectation is it will be under consideration. The Director of our Air National Guard Bureau works closely with the Secretary on making those decisions, but it should be in the consideration.

Secretary KENDALL. Let me just add that I delegated the last C-130 trade basing decision to the head of the Air National Guard, and I will probably do the same with this one.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Secretary. Kendall, I do want to ask you, I sent a letter to Secretary Austin, you know, asking for some accountability with these DEI positions that have found their way throughout the Pentagon and our Armed Services. Secretary Kendall, do you know how many DEI positions exist in the Air Force—full time positions?

Secretary KENDALL. It is a relatively small number, Senator. We are in the process of complying with the law, and we will comply

with it. I think the due date to have this done is about the middle of June, if I remember right. So, we will get you the exact—

Senator SCHMITT. Well, the answer is 70—70. The Navy has 18. The Army has 19. Those are 18 and 19 too many, as far as I am concerned. But 70, what do these people do all day long? Like I am asking because what do these DEI coordinators do all day long, 70 of them, in the Air Force?

Secretary KENDALL. I think—I thought the number was higher than that, actually.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, that is full time position, so maybe—I am actually very curious now what you are going to—what your report might show. But 70 full time positions, what do they do?

Secretary KENDALL. They oversee programs that are in that area. They oversee our training in that area. They are responsible for some of our data collection that will be related to that. We did two disparity reports in the Department that were started before I came in, and probably shortly afterwards.

They are responsible for that. Those report showed pretty significant disparities in results of things like the criminal justice system, in promotions and command selection rates, and then senior school selection, and those pointed us at actions we could take to try to address some of those concerns.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Well—

Secretary KENDALL. They had they have done, I think, valuable work—

Senator SCHMITT. Well, I look forward to your full report, and I could make a suggestion how you could be a real leader for the country. You should fire them all, every single one of them. It is so divisive.

Senator Tuberville has talked about recruiting. The elephant in the room is, the truth is that this is dividing our folks in the military by race. It is taking us backward. It is cultural Marxism and somehow you are, you know, you are here today defending this. So, you know, I have got legislation to get rid of them all.

You could take a real leadership position by firing everybody tomorrow. That would be great. I do have time for one quick question. I know that we are moving a lot of ISR capability to space, and I am generally supportive of that.

But are you guys concerned at all that we are maybe moving too quickly away from some more traditional capabilities?

Secretary KENDALL. Just as a quick comment on—I think we have a fundamental difference of opinion about DEI.

Senator SCHMITT. We do. We certainly do.

Secretary KENDALL. Regarding ISR, we are moving, we are transitioning into space because of the vulnerability of some of our airborne platforms. AWACS and JSTARS are great examples of that.

The same is true with some of our UAVs, unmanned aerial vehicles that operate—can operate in a contested environment. We will always have a balance between airborne capabilities and space based capabilities.

We want to confront our adversaries with a more difficult problem than just having to deal with one of those. But because of the range at which—and the sophistication of which our adversaries

are reaching out to engage some of those platforms, they are pushed back so far that they can't be effective in many cases, or they have to operate in a way which limits their effectiveness in order to be survivable.

So, we are moving a lot of that capability in the space, and we are doing it with the resilient architectures that General Saltzman talked about earlier.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Schmitt. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our military is the best and the strongest in the world, so it is no surprise that foreign governments have been recruiting both Active Duty and retired officers.

The Washington Post found that hundreds of foreign governments have hired hundreds of retired officers, from Saudi Arabia, to Libya, to the United Arab Emirates. General Allvin, is there a National Security risk when our trained military personnel work for foreign governments?

General ALLVIN. Senator, there certainly is.

Senator WARREN. So retired officers working for foreign governments could endanger our military competitiveness. That is why we require retired officers who want to work for foreign governments to receive approval from their military service and from the Secretary of State.

Now, we tightened up that process last year in the National Defense Authorization Act, but there are still some loopholes in this space. For example, Active Duty servicemembers are allowed to start negotiating employment with foreign governments before they leave the military.

General Allvin, could allowing Active Duty airmen to negotiate work on behalf of another government while still wearing their U.S. uniform pose risks to our National Security?

General ALLVIN. Well, Senator, there is—while they are still in uniform, they are still subject to the policies, the restrictions, and the UCMJ—

Senator WARREN. I understand that, but they are also permitted to negotiate with foreign governments for their future employment. What I am asking is, does that potentially pose a conflict of interest that threatens our security, at least potentially?

General ALLVIN. I say potentially, could, yes.

Senator WARREN. All right, I agree. You know, we need to strengthen our rules so that Active Duty personnel aren't selling their services to foreign governments while they are still in uniform.

There is another loophole that we need to close. Last year, the Air Force issued a memo raising concerns about China's recruitment of both current and recently retired Air Force personnel like pilots, maintainers, and other technical experts that have a lot of insight into United States air tactics.

Now, in many cases, these individuals are hired by private entities and actually may not know that they are signing up to work for a foreign government, and our laws requiring retired personnel to get approval before working for a foreign government are much less clear if the officers are hired by a private company that is doing work for that foreign government.

General Allvin, from your perspective, are we in a better position to protect classified information and U.S. National Security when we know if a retired officer is working for a contractor that works for a foreign government?

General ALLVIN. Senator, we are, and I think, as you know, my predecessor, now Chairman Brown, put out that NOTAM really to raise awareness, and also to serve as a deterrent. Both of those I think are having good effect.

The—our AFOSI is getting good reports back, but it is not only about educating those within the force, but also the mandatory now as you transition out—also that we are making sure we do that as well.

Senator WARREN. Yes, and I appreciate that and treat this as awareness is raised on this. You know, these arrangements can pose serious conflicts of interest, and in fact, the Air Force rejected two retired generals' requests to work for an Azerbaijani cargo carrier because it would raise concerns about potential conflicts given previous contracts the Air Force had awarded to the airline.

So last year I secured a position—a provision in the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act to require work on behalf of foreign governments, even indirectly through a private company, to be approved by the U.S. Government.

I think it is foolish not to use our National Security expertise to help retired servicemembers identify if their potential employer is asking them, potentially, to break the law here. So, I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Air Force to close any additional loopholes that allow foreign governments to target and exploit our servicemembers.

Thank you all, and thank you in particular, General Allvin, for your work in this area.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, very much for your service to our Nation and to your teams as well. We appreciate you being here today.

First, Secretary Kendall, we know the Iowa National Guard is really important to me, and so I am going to address to you some of the questions coming from our great Iowa Air Guard.

Secretary Kendall, when the National Guard's 185th Air Refueling Wing in Sioux City, Iowa, converted from its F-16 fighters to the KC-135 tankers way back in 2003, the United States Air Force said that they would upgrade the airfield at the Iowa National Guard facility.

Now the 185th Air Refueling Wing might, nothing confirmed, but might lose its mission because the runway, which has not yet been upgraded, here we are 20 plus years later, is insufficient for the KC-46s, which will eventually replace the 135s.

Secretary Kendall, why do you feel that it has taken so long to begin the airfield expansion? Do I have your commitment to work with the National Guard to assess the runway upgrade situation of the airfield at the Iowa National Guard facility in Sioux City?

Secretary KENDALL. Thank you, Senator. We have started the architectural and engineering activities associated with three projects

at the airfield, and I think the Congress has been notified of that. So, we are moving forward with those upgrades.

There is a runway repair project at \$45 million, runway extension at \$47 million, and an aircraft parking apron at \$45 million. They are not all the way through the process yet. This is the earlier phases, but the process has begun, and we will work with you on that.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Can you outline maybe the timeframe that we might see some of that work done? Walk me through that assessment and when we could actually see work begin—

Secretary KENDALL. I will get you the details for the record, but essentially we have to get to a 35 design, percent design maturity before we put a MILCON project down. So, we are in the earlier stages of that process, and I will get you the dates as to when different phases of it might be completed.

Secretary KENDALL. The Architecture and Engineering (A&E) notification for three (3) military construction (MILCON) projects at Sioux Gateway Airport was signed by the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and Environment on March 21, 2024, and notified to the Readiness Subcommittees on House Armed Services Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee. The three (3) projects are Repair Runway (\$45 million), Extend Runway (\$47 million), and Add/Alter Aircraft Parking Apron (\$45 million). The A&E contract for all three (3) airfield projects has been awarded, and criteria review conference and design charrette was held at the end of April 2024. The estimated completion date of the design is August 15, 2025.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Thank you so much, Secretary, and I do understand the importance of transitioning to a more capable aircraft like the 46. Do we also have your commitment that any change to the 185th Air Refueling Wings' mission set will be on pause until a full and proper MILCON assessment is completed?

Secretary KENDALL. I am not aware of any changes that would be—would occur in the interim. I will double check that and get back to you on that, but I am not aware of any.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Secretary. It is just important that I get that on the record. So, again, we have got such a great unit. The 185th has been so engaged around the globe, we want to make sure that they are taken care of.

So, Secretary Kendall, as we are now in an era of great powered competition, the urgency of modernizing and recapitalizing our air refueling and strategic airlift capabilities is absolutely paramount.

If you could walk us through how you are ensuring our transition from the older KC-135s to the newer 46s is conducted without compromising mission readiness.

Secretary KENDALL. Essentially, as we retire 135s, we are replacing them with 46s on a one for one basis, generally speaking. It is not always exactly the case. We are trying to make sure we have a smooth transition so that we don't have a gap in capability for the tanker fleet, and we are required to maintain the general fleet at a certain level. So, we have to stay within those statutory constraints.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Thank you, and General Allvin, SOF continues to play a vital role in strategic competition, particularly in irregular warfare. So, what is your view on the role of the Air Force Special Warfare and AFSOC in great power competition and future conflicts?

General ALLVIN. Yes, thank you for that, Senator. I think they are doing a tremendous job in really adapting. That is one of the things Special Operations has always done. They have really adapted to the missions that have been laid out in front of them. But in their transition really also to great power competition, they have adjusted some of their AFSCs to be more relevant.

What was the Special Operations Weather Team? Now they are more special reconnaissance, and they are part of this newly formed Special Tactics Team, which includes the combat control teams, the pararescue, the tactical air control party, and now the strategic reconnaissance.

They are really forming—sort of the way they did when they used to be in the old great power competition, understanding how to operate ahead of main force elements, in this case in a more electromagnetic spectrum contested environment.

They are really doing some pathfinding work in helping to find those—take their niche capabilities and do things at speed and agility that maybe the standard, conventional forces couldn't do. I think I am really impressed with how they are moving along.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, and General, and I was excited to learn from you about the Air Force special reconnaissance, airmen and airwomen, and we appreciate their service. It is a great opportunity for them and for us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Secretary Kendall, General Allvin, General Saltzman, thank you for being here today. Secretary Kendall and General Allvin, I want to thank you for your continued collaboration as we secure a long term future for Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson.

During last year's hearing, I asked you about the stand up of the new power projection wing at DM, and I would like to followup on that today, and also followup on Senator Ernst's discussion with you, General Allvin.

In the last year, we brought new search and rescue and advanced electronic platforms to DM, and I would like to hear any updates on the power projection wing that you can provide. General Allvin, starting with you, you have just embarked on this ambitious plan to reoptimize the Air Force for great power competition.

A key component of this is the creation of deployable combat wings. The power projection wings provides just such a force for Air Force Special Ops command. Can you talk about the wing's overall importance in the Air Force's strategy?

General ALLVIN. Yes, thank you for that, Senator. In some ways, some of the things that the Special Operations community have been doing have been a little bit of pathfinders with our deployable combat wings, reorienting to where you have the ability to train with support teams in garrison in the way you expect to deploy with that unit together.

Training together, doing individual training, then consolidated training, certification training, all those things are paving the way. With this power projection wing at Davis-Monthan, it is oriented toward the Indo-Pacific.

So not only in its structure is it designed to be able to address the pacing challenge, but in its orientation as well. I think there will be lessons that we learn in the structure and the make up of those sort of wings that will apply to the larger Air Force.

Senator KELLY. Right. Thank you, and Secretary Kendall, your new strategic strategy here is ambitious and I support your efforts. But there are a lot of moving parts here and still a lot to be done to get all the units in place at Davis-Monthan.

Can you provide assurances that you will still be able to manage all of these movements and stick with the timeline to stand up the power projection wing?

Senator KELLY. Senator, we got to do everything we can to make that happen. Right now, we are on track. The site activation task force—I was out there in February, as I think you know, and the EIS is on track for completion in 25, through quarter 25.

Those are kind of the governing events. So, I think we are moving forward on schedule, but we will continue to monitor that and make sure that we do.

Senator KELLY. So, you are not anticipating any new delays?

Secretary KENDALL. Not at this time.

Senator KELLY. Do I have your continued commitment here to ensure full transparency on this process?

Secretary KENDALL. Absolutely, Senator. I will work closely with you on it.

Senator KELLY. If any issues come up, would you please bring them to my attention as soon as you possibly can?

Secretary KENDALL. Yes, I will.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, and on electronic warfare, Secretary Kendall, it is—EW is a cornerstone of any modern conflict, and it is only going to increase in importance as we prepare for great power competition.

The Air Force and DOD need to continue to focus on electronic warfare, because achieving EW superiority is going to be the key to getting air superiority. I am encouraged by systems like the new Compass Call airplane that is being deployed at Davis-Monthan. But also, the new F-15 EW systems.

But I am also concerned that our training ranges aren't able to replicate the threat sufficiently. If we want to succeed in the Indo-Pacific, we need to ensure that our military is prepared for operations that are realistic because of the training being realistic. The emitters available for training, and our ranges, aren't quite realistic enough to fool a fifth generation aircraft.

This is—so it is no way to train for pacing challenges. In my view, the exercises and the training we do should be the hardest thing we do here, so that when it is time to fight, we are more than ready to go. It is imperative that DOD expand its training ranges to provide more realistic training.

Achieving that level of readiness is going to require coordination across the branches. That is why I have advocated for DOD to assess the capacity for testing and training of EW operations and identify areas where multiple ranges can be used to simulate the Pacific Deterrence Initiative.

For example, at the Fort Huachuca's Electronic Proving Ground with its restricted airspace, favorable terrain, access to frequencies

and spectrum, and bands of spectrum, and the authorities required to conduct EW training, it offers great potential for advanced and dynamic electronic warfare testing, experimentation, and training.

Secretary Kendall, how important is it to find opportunities for realistic EW training, and how can the Air Force benefit from EW testing and training in an environment like Fort Huachuca?

Secretary KENDALL. It is critical, Senator. I haven't looked at Fort Huachuca specifically. General Allvin may have some information on that, but for Nellis and for JPARC in Alaska, and for the exercises, I think you are aware of that we really see—down in the Pacific.

Having ability to emulate both the threat and the space and time constraints that are applicable against the pacing challenge are really important to us. So, if Huachuca offers some additional opportunities there, we would be happy to pursue those.

Senator KELLY. Yes—

Secretary KENDALL. I am not familiar exactly with what we are doing there.

Senator KELLY. What it offers is it has got geography. It is a bowl. You can emit at orders of magnitude, I think a couple orders of magnitude power compared to what you can emit on the Barry Goldwater range. So, it offers—you know, F-35s can detect the sensor at a much greater range, more realistic training. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Secretary KENDALL. We will take a look at it.

Chairman REED. Let me recognize now, Senator Budd.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, gentlemen. Secretary Kendall, we have spoken at length regarding the Air Force budget, my concerns with the Air Force plan divestment of fighter aircraft, including the F-15 Strike Eagles from Seymour Johnson, my State of North Carolina.

So, I am deeply concerned about what a growing fighter capacity gap could mean for the fight in the Indo-Pacific. But also, as was made clear over this past weekend, our fighter aircraft are also playing major roles in other regions, including U.S. Central Command every single day. So, I would like to turn to you, General Allvin, for just a moment, and again, thank you for being here.

The Committee heard from the Commander of INDOPACOM this year, and just recently in fact, that there is a role for Strike Eagles in scenarios in the Indo-Pacific. The head of NORTHCOM also told this Committee the F-15E is in many ways unmatched air to ground, and in many ways, it is unmatched air to air.

It also has a phenomenal radar that can pick out low and slow moving, and it has got a great radar cross-section, which is useful for drones and other threats like cruise missiles. It was the 335th Squadron at North Carolina's Seymour Johnson Air Force Base to prove that out on Sunday when they helped shoot down dozens of drones fired at Israel from Iran.

The Supreme Allied Commander of Europe told the House Armed Services Committee last week that Strike Eagles and, I quote, "figure heavily in his plans at EUCOM." He also said it would be very important not to have a gap between the retirement of one aircraft and the arrival of the next.

Most recently, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs agreed with these assessments of the F-15E and asserted that it is indeed a very capable aircraft. General Allvin, do you agree with these officers' assessments of the capability and importance of the Strike Eagles in scenarios across the Combatant Commands, yes or no, sir?

General ALLVIN. I absolutely do agree with those assessments. I would offer that those assessments are part of—first of all, I want to echo what you said about what happened over the weekend. Brilliant cruise skill and courage. That skill and courage in those aircraft also had a connection with a command and control system.

Brilliant stuff done in the AOC, an air battle management system, and all of those systems are what made it successful. The platform is very capable, but it has to have the systems around it in order to be effective and combat effective, and so going into the future, we would imagine that that platform is going to have to fire weapons longer range.

That range has to have target custody for that munition to be able to track the target all the way. It needs to be able to be—to defend itself in that theater. It needs to be able to have a base from which it can move around.

All those things are what is going to make it successful against a pacing challenge. So that capability in and of itself is very impressive. But when you are in a fiscally constrained environment, we try and manage how many of those, and those with respect to other platforms, what is the mix of the entire system beyond just the weapon and the aircraft to make it effective against—in the highly contested environment against the PRC? But it is a highly capable aircraft.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General, and I will just note that many of those, including those at Seymour Johnson, have been upgraded or soon to be upgraded, or can be upgraded to be useful into the 2030's or 2040's. Secretary Kendall, turning to you, sir, where is the fighter roadmap required by the NDAA. We have heard, Secretary, that it is sitting with you.

Secretary KENDALL. It is in final review. Should be over here shortly, Senator.

Senator BUDD. We look forward to receiving that report. When should we expect the congressionally required report on divestment of F-15 aircraft? Will it be compliant with Section 131 of last year's NDAA?

Secretary KENDALL. Right now, our plans are to take out additional F-15s in the out years, but of course we will be complying with the current law and our 2025 budget is consistent with that.

Senator BUDD. Hopefully in compliance with 131 of last year's NDAA. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I hope the Committee takes note of the testimony it has received this year and seriously considers prohibiting divestment of the F-15 Strike Eagles, particularly 26 F-15 Strike Eagles next year. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much, Senator Budd. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Reed, for holding this important hearing. I would also like to thank Secretary Kendall, General Allvin, and General Saltzman, for testifying today, and of course, for your service to our country.

Secretary Kendall, I know we have had so many meetings, but I really appreciated our phone call last week, and I just want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of the Nevada Air National Guard and their mission, which they do so well.

Not only does 152d Airlift Wing in Reno provide rapid global mobility and are currently preparing for deployment, but they are also—they also protect the Homeland by fighting those horrific wildland fires in Nevada and throughout the West with legacy C-130Hs.

This mission is extremely dangerous as they fly heavy, low, and slow over these fires in challenging mountainous terrain. Upgrading to the C-130Js would provide increased power and cargo capacity for fire retardant, which would result in increased flight safety, and of course, firefighting capability.

Mr. Secretary, now that the Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Appropriations Act has provided funding to procure eight additional C-130Js, funding that I fought to secure, can I have your commitment to seriously consider Reno when making a basing decision due to their obvious operational need?

Secretary KENDALL. Yes, Senator, I think we are proceeding with that basing selection, and I believe Reno is one of the units being considered.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, and can I have your commitment that the Air Force will strongly consider location and the mission served in particular regions of the country when making their basing decisions to ensure that the Air National Guard is best equipped to respond to these emergencies?

Secretary KENDALL. I think we have a list of basing considerations that will be consistent with what we have done in the past.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I am going to move on now to housing and our dorm shortages, because at Nellis and Creech, we have—actually, Senator Kelly was talking a little bit about Nellis over there.

But in Nevada, home to Nellis and Creech Air Force bases, I have observed firsthand the unique challenges that each base faces, particularly when it comes to affordable housing and dorm availability for our airmen and our guardians.

Given the widespread and distinct nature of these shortages across the Department and the Air Force, a one size fits all solution is really insufficient to address the issues. Secretary Kendall, what additional authorities, if any, could be granted to Service Secretaries to address the current housing and dormitory shortages, thereby improving really the welfare and readiness of our personnel across the Force?

Secretary KENDALL. We are looking at some innovative ways to do that through public, private partnerships in various forms. The Navy has a project in San Diego, I think, which is an example of how to do that. I am not aware of additional authorities we need at this time, but if there are any, then I will get back to you with that.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, appreciate that. I am going to stay on you and stay on Creech Air Force Base a little bit. We love Creech, and with the experimental operations unit considering

Creech Air Force Base as the eventual deployment of the collaborative combat aircraft—I am going to say CCA.

That is a little bit easier. We must address the complexities of the new systems' basing. Decisions about where to house these systems needs considerations beyond, again, conventional requirements such as employment options, infrastructure adaptations, airspace control, and of course, electromagnetic spectrum availability.

So, given the challenges posed by these new systems, could you elaborate on the variables that the Air Force might—that you might be considering in the CCA basing decision? Specifically, what unique characteristics and complications might we anticipate?

Secretary KENDALL. Senator, that work is going on now to decide what the considerations will be. We are a little bit early in the process. Creech is, I think, a very reasonable candidate, however.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Thank you. Well, I am going to move on. We are going to keep on Creech in particular, but Nellis as well, to General Allvin. You know the sacrifices, each one of you really know the sacrifices and challenges that airmen and their families make during their permanent change of station.

One of the difficulties that is really challenging for us is finding and accessing childcare at each new location, and so, you know, childcare remains one of the most needed services for our military members. But it is still in such short supply, it is too expensive and difficult.

So currently, General, in your role as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, what can you do to help increase access to affordable childcare that is flexible, particularly Creech, they go to 24—well, all of them, they go 24/7, 365. We need some help out there.

General ALLVIN. Well, thank you, Senator, and I couldn't agree with you more. A lot of times we put things into a band called quality of life, but it is actually a readiness issue as well, to make sure that our airmen can focus on the mission at hand, understanding that they know that their families and children are well cared for.

Specifically, I think we—what I can do as Chief of Staff is continue to advocate for the programs at the Department of Air Force is really already undertaking with respect to going above and beyond staffing those child development centers that we actually have. We have increased the staffing through the incentivization of 100 percent reduction—free for the first child, 25 percent off for the other children, for those are working on staff there.

That has actually increased our staffing from 61 to 63 percent to 81 percent. So that is helping staff the existing one. But to your point, Senator, specifically in some of these nontraditional areas where you have not normal business hours, this requirement, the increase in the family childcare centers, the ones that can be done at home, are those that are actually certified to do such.

We have increased funding and incentives for that, about 21 percent from where it was in fiscal year 2023. So, we continue to do that, and in other areas for facility restoration and modernization, we have put a lot of money into that as well.

On the MILCON side, overall, sometimes we just need more facilities. On the MILCON side, we have had 35 MILCON projects

under consideration. Already 11 of them are at appropriation and design—or and delivery. The other 24 in design.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. I look forward to continuing to work with you on all of that. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Cramer, please.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service and for being here, and I look forward to the next session as well, the classified section.

No hearing with the Air Force would be complete without me sort of jumping on board with some of my other friends who have asked about ISR. Secretary Kendall, I am going to go more at it from the re-optimization plans that were released in February, and my office has sent an RFI asking about how the new Air Force structure might affect the 319th Reconnaissance Wing in Grand Forks, specifically.

I mean, this is a very high demand air force base with very few people and assets. At least how do—I guess to put it pointedly, how do these low density, high demand units like the Global Hawk Wing in Grand Forks, or other ISR units, for that matter, on the Air Force fit into the plan for re-optimization, and I just add, you know, I mean, I read all 12 pages on the airplane this morning. There is not a mention of ISR. There is lots of mentions, 16 of China RPC, 8—anyway, no ISR in 12 pages. So, how does Grand Forks fit into re-optimization?

Secretary KENDALL. It doesn't directly. The re-optimization of great power competition is largely about focusing our readiness units on readiness, creating units who are focused on the future, and sustaining advantage over time.

Developing our people. Some of the things we are going to do in terms of their skill sets and so on, their readiness for that kind of conflict. Also, some changes in the Secretariat. So, specific units are not directly addressed.

As we form units of action that are either deployable or fight in place or are supporting, there may be some changes on the margin as a result of that. That is work that is going to take place over some time. There is no direct correlation between what we are doing under re-optimizing and specific units.

Senator CRAMER. Okay—

Secretary KENDALL. Yes, we do have plans—

Senator CRAMER. I understand but maybe not specific units, but ISR at large is not even mentioned as a priority, where it used to be always mentioned as a priority.

Secretary KENDALL. ISR is a very high priority under our operational imperatives and under cross-cutting operational enablers. So, it is a very big part of our modernization program, which is separate from the re-optimization.

As we talked about earlier, we are moving a lot of our ISR capacity into space because our airborne platforms, many of them are too vulnerable to attack. They are not survivable enough. We want to keep a balance. We want to keep some airborne platforms and some space base capabilities as well. We have requirements to have ISR for less contested environments, more benign environments, as well as highly contested environments.

So, we are trying to have a balanced mix of capabilities and sustain that while we move forward. Some of our legacy capabilities, if you will, are less valuable to us against the pacing challenge. We are just not effective against a pacing challenge——

Senator CRAMER. You know, I get all—I understand all that. Modernization is important everywhere and in every mission, and space is obviously critical to it. Obviously, I am—I have a bias for space.

But I also have talked to enough people both in space and especially COCOMS, especially recently, especially very recently, who are frightened to death about the gap between, their ability to find a target, identify a target, hit a target, today, or over the course of the next few years, and the day that space is not so vulnerable that it can stand alone.

General Allvin, did you want to speak to that? Then I do have a question about——

General ALLVIN. Yes. The only thing I will add to what the Secretary said is specifically within reference to a great power competition. We are aligning our wings in order to be able to deploy how we expect to fight.

So, there will be three different types of wings. One will be deployable combat wings, one will be in place combat wings, think missile wings, but the other are combat generation wings. These are very, very important, and this is where the 319th falls in.

It needs to be able to generate the combat power that can fall into a wing, because you are not going to deploy the entire wing at once. That wouldn't be it. That would be, for some of the other types of wings.

So, while ISR may not be mentioned specifically, neither is probably air mobility, or neither is maybe air refueling, those are the parts—they are called the combat generation wings because they will feed into the larger deployable construct, but we wouldn't expect the entire 319 to take—to be able to go and deploy the entire wing because it is such a HTLD asset, right. It needs to be able to be distributed all across.

So that is why it is part of these combat generation wings, and I am ready to talk at length, and I am going to go with my time.

Senator CRAMER. Yes, and as am I. So, real quickly then speaking of modernization, and I will just cut to it. I mean, we picked up some rumors in the last couple of days that the commercial engine replacement program might be in some doubt.

Of course—that would be the reengineer of things like the B-52, which has only been around about 60 years, and we expect to be around another 30 or so. Just to just confirm for me that that is just a vicious lie that somebody is spreading, then I will be happy.

Secretary KENDALL. No, the commercial—the reengineering of the B-52 is proceeding, if that is what you are asking about, Senator.

Senator CRAMER. That is what I am asking, thank you.

Secretary KENDALL. It is proceeding——

Senator CRAMER. Appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Senator Cramer. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, General Allvin, thank you for appearance today. I want to add my congratulations to the brave men and women of the force who were involved in the defense of Israel over the weekend, to include two former Senator Cotton defense fellows, Budd and Ralby. I am told I am not supposed to say anything more than that, but I am glad to see that their skills have not atrophy while they were desk molesters up here for me.

Now, it is very important that we not just have our own capabilities, but that we train our foreign partners and capabilities. We can't be everywhere all the time at once.

So, I want to respond to Senator Warren's questions, General Allvin, about retired flag officer supporting foreign militaries. I have a slightly different perspective.

I think it is a great thing when America's retired generals and admirals go overseas, take the skills and the knowledge they have learned, and help train foreign military partners to be more proficient, to be more respectful of the laws of war, to be more professional in their own services.

So far from taking steps to restrain retired flag officers serving under contractual relationships with nations like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or emerging nations in Eastern Europe who are recent NATO members, I think we should encourage it. General Allvin, I don't know what you plan to do in retirement.

Maybe you plan to just go fishing all the time, but if you want to do that, I think that would be a great thing for you to do. This Committee carefully considered that matter last year in our markup, and those markups aren't public. You don't know what happened.

But this was a serious debate then, and Senator Warren called one of these measures a loophole. It is not a loophole. It is specifically how we wrote it, because we think it is a good thing for our retired flag officers to be advising partner nations whose militaries may not yet be as skillful or as professional as ours, but whose militaries we should want to be as skillful or professional as ours.

So, General Allvin, can I get your commitment that we will continue to ensure retired flag officers can, in fact, work with partner and allied nations?

General ALLVIN. Yes, Senator. I certainly don't want to weigh into the—how the legislative process works, but I think that those two positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, which is why we have the approval process.

There are only certain nations against which you are disapproved, and those—we understand which those are. But there is still, that stopgap requires the approval of the Secretary and Secretary of State in order to do that.

So, I believe that stopgap helps to mitigate your position, from Senator Warren.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, you look like you had something you wanted to add on this topic.

Secretary KENDALL. I just want to say, I think we are talking about apples and oranges here. I think Senator Warren is concerned about, very understandably, pilots who were hired by China, for example, indirectly through—

Senator COTTON. Let me stop you there because we are not talking about apples and oranges. She raised two different topics.

I do want to say I am concerned about the second topic she raised, which is the practice of not just American, but Western trained pilots, mechanics, maintainers, and others going to work, often indirectly, through private military contractors for, say, China and South Africa, let's say. That is something we definitely need to crack down on and something that we took steps with.

Senator Kelly and I have worked on this challenge as well. We need to make sure that all those pilots and those maintainers and mechanics that we have trained are not using their skills that the taxpayers paid for to indirectly or directly help our adversary.

So, I am glad to hear that you are counseling all those people as they leave the service to be aware of their obligations. I mean, I frankly think should be strictly prohibited if not made a crime to work for a foreign military like China's.

The contrast to her first point, which is, again, military officers, usually flag officers, sometimes field grades, going to work for friendly nations like Saudi Arabia or Jordan or the United Arab Emirates, some fruits of which we saw over the weekend.

So, I just want to say, it is good when they go to work for pro-American countries. It is bad when they go to work for anti-American countries. It is pretty simple. I don't see what the complication is here.

Secretary KENDALL. We don't have any disagreement with that, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. One final point, since we are talking about making sure that foreign partners have strong capabilities, so we don't have to carry the load everywhere. Secretary Kendall, General Allvin, you know that a top priority for Senator Boozeman, for me is, foreign military sales training mission at Ebbing Air National Guard base in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

We know that they are still working out a few things in terms of the construction in the airspace. Secretary Kendall, you have committed me in the past on several occasions you are going to make sure that this stays on time and that we have the sound of freedom return to the river valley later this fall.

Can I get your commitment again, given whatever the latest developments on your end, that that is still going to happen on time this fall?

Secretary KENDALL. Before I give you a commitment about on time, let me go double check and see exactly where we are. I know we are moving forward on this, and I haven't had any reports that we are just slipping schedule but let me—

Senator COTTON. I haven't either, but you never know when you are dealing with the real world of building this thing or moving that thing. I just don't want to have—not dealing with the real world, but the bureaucratic world of red tape. So, I just want to make sure that you have got a sword over the Gordian knot. You are ready to cut if you have to.

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force is scheduled to have Ebbing ready for the First Aircraft Arrival from Poland in September 2024. However, a production slip by Lockheed Martin will likely delay the aircraft delivery to Poland and Ebbing until December 2024. Poland will operate its mission in its entirety at Ebbing out of temporary facilities (estimated 2.5 to 3 years).

Funding for two projects is under the fiscal year 2024 section 137 spend plan:

- Fiscal year 2024 Squadron Operations Mission Planning is 35 percent design (\$34 million)
- Fiscal year 2024 Foreign Military Sales 3-Bay Hangar is also at 35 percent design (\$42 million)

Secretary KENDALL. We will do whatever we can to stay on schedule, absolutely.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Mullin, please.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General Saltzman, Secretary Kendall, and General Allvin, for being here, and for everybody that is your support staff that we know does the heavy lifting behind you, thank you for sitting through this hearing. I obviously showed up late, so I am back to clean up here.

Secretary Kendall, I just want to tell you thank you for your attention to the cadet that you and I visited about. It seems like it is working out. I know that seems like a small thing for what you deal with, but it is important, and I appreciate you taking the time to visit with me about it.

Secretary KENDALL. That is good to hear, Senator. Thank you. I am glad it is working out.

Senator MULLIN. I hope 1 day you get a meeting, and you understand why I want to do everything I can. Great, great young man. Like I said, you guys, your attention really pushed things.

Secretary KENDALL. He has been through quite an ordeal, and he is doing really well. It is encouraging to see. Amazing story.

Senator MULLIN. Really, it is. Secretary Kendall, I want to stay with you for just a second. Listen, I know you are up against a budget, and ideally, everybody at the table right now, you guys would like to have as many airframes as you possibly can in the air. Because of budget overruns with the E-7s—you know, we are divesting to invest. I think that is the term you guys are using. Is that correct, General Allvin?

General ALLVIN. I would say to modernize.

Senator MULLIN. Divest, invest, modernize. But we are going from—I mean, just what is on you all's docket right now. You are going from 250 airframes to 91 airframes. We know during time of war, attrition plays a huge role.

We have got our new planes that are coming out that is, you know, double the cost at \$2.5 billion per plane that is going to be in the air, and we are talking about the maintenance of the E-3s, which is why we are bringing them out of the sky.

If I understand correctly, the chairman and I, we were at Tinker Air Force Base this last Saturday and Friday both, and they brought up the concerns about being to continue their mission. They say, you know, we will do what is handled to us, but just to keep their mission capabilities right now, it takes 16 planes in the sky.

To secure the current mission, there is going to be a lag between the delivery of the E-3s and the E-7s. We are not even talking about the fighting jets right now, but just in that frame alone, what are we—is it just about the money, or we are divesting ourselves of so many airframes and going to so few, and it seems like

we are in a—pretty interesting times right now, and I am really concerned, and I am not trying to just get on to you and tell you how to do you all's jobs. I am saying, what do we—what do you need from us? Mathematically looking at this, it doesn't make any sense.

General ALLVIN. Senator, I think specifically with the E-3, they are starting to divest themselves. This is one of those where just in order to keep them flying is a challenge. The capabilities that we are anticipating in the future—this is the constant that we have, trying to understand how do we maintain the readiness for today and still not leave my successors or my successor's successor in this seat saying, why don't you have an Air Force that can compete with, you know, where China is right now?

We are trying to skate to where the puck is going to be with China. At the same time, preserve the readiness, and so, this is some of the challenge that we have, and so that managing this readiness is never easy, but I will tell you that, at some point the statement of quantity has a quality on its own, it is only good if that quantity can survive. It is only good if that quantity can be effective.

Now, we saw over the weekend it can be effective against one type of adversary, in one type of environment, in one area. But in order to meet what our National Defense Strategy wants us to do in the highly contested environment against a pure adversary, some of those capabilities, it really is just you have more quantities that might be left in the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

We need to ensure that those crews can survive. They can execute their mission. So that is where this tension between retaining enough for today and preserving enough for the pacing threat.

Senator MULLIN. I totally understand that, and when you start talking about, you know, what is going down to E-3s—they referred to us as the motors, which I know frames, airframes can be upgraded with new motors put on the side of them constantly. Is it even a possibility?

You don't have to answer that. I am just trying to think outside the box. But still yet, when we start talking about just sheer numbers, we start looking at what our adversaries are doing, they are coming out with planes with a lot less technology on them, but the sheer numbers can overwhelm what we have.

When we are dropping this many airframes, we are not going to have the numbers, and I don't care—it is like a drone swarm. I don't care what you have in defense, eventually they are going to start poking through because ours do end in the bottom of the Pacific, and we cannot replace a \$2.5 billion plane fast enough.

Secretary KENDALL. Senator, the problem we have is that these aircraft—E-3 is a really good example. I was on one at Nellis a couple of years ago, and it was built in 1972.

Senator MULLIN. Sure.

Secretary KENDALL. The radar on it is an obsolete radar, basically. Our crews are working very, very hard to try to keep these airplanes operational, and it is a really uphill fight.

So, by retiring some of the E-3s, we are able to free up some parts to at least keep some of the remaining aircraft more operational. But they are not effective against the pacing threat, and

they are going to die very quickly. They just don't have the resilience or the capability to survive.

We have really got to get to the next generation. So, keeping airplanes around that are going to be ineffective and are essentially very vulnerable to attack in the early stages of the conflict, this is not putting us in a better position.

Senator MULLIN. But—and Chairman, I will wrap up right here, excuse me. But the gap between the delivery of the new plane and the old plane is what has me concerned. We are divesting faster than we are getting them in, and the cost runs continue to go mind blowing over cost. I mean, double.

At some point, the math actually doesn't add up either. But how are we going to keep the mission capability there all the way through the transition? I mean, we haven't got to the Air Guard that we are going to be losing and not be able to control our Homeland by divesting of them too.

But there is a real concern there, and I know that is a lot more to unpack than we have time here, but I don't want to be part of the problem and I don't want to try telling you how to do your job. I want to work with you to make sure that we can stay mission capable.

So, I look forward to working with everybody here. Thank you again for your time. Really appreciate the work.

Secretary KENDALL. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Mullin. Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today. Mr. Secretary, I want to compliment you. You have been one of the voices. It's, put it pretty bluntly about the challenges with China, and we need to be ready actually for a war with China, if they choose to do so.

So, I appreciate your, your directness on that. Let me ask, so, you know, this is a tough question for all of you generals, tough question for you. The President talks a big game on the challenges, and then 4 years in a row, he puts forward inflation adjusted cuts to the Department of Defense—4 years in a row. That is the Biden legacy. Now, he always expects us to boost it up.

The left wing of his party doesn't like defense spending. So, they, you know, double digit increases in every other Federal agency. I think this year, \$7.5 trillion. But once again, the Biden administration, the Commander In Chief says, nope, you guys get a cut. Shrinking the Army, shrinking the Navy, shrinking the Marine Corps.

This budget right now does that. I don't think it shrinks the Air Force. But do you think inflation adjusted cuts to the Department of Defense is what Xi Jinping and Putin should be seeing? I mean, is that how you prepare for war or enhance deterrence, by cutting you guys?

Secretary KENDALL. Senator, we have been very pleased to have significant increases in the Air Force budget, Department of the Air Force budget, in 2023 and 2024 in particular. The 2-year budget deal that we have, you know, does limit—the Fiscal Responsibility Act in 2025.

Senator SULLIVAN. General, I am in—look, these are hard questions for you guys, I know, because I know our military leaders. You go in there. You fight for a bigger budget. OMB, the President, they tell you, sorry, I am going to increase Department of Interior by 25 percent. You guys get a cut. But in terms of our adversaries. China is building out a huge military. They keep saying 7 percent increases.

We all know that is not true. I was in a classified hearing. I am going to just mention it because the DNI and the DIA head, the Lieutenant General, won't get back to me. They actually said in that hearing—it was a classified hearing.

I am just going to publicly say that it was about \$700 billion that China puts toward its military, all in. It is a pretty big number. I think the American people should know that which is why I am saying it right now.

But what do you think in terms of our adversaries when they see defense cuts. What do you think that does for deterrence?

Secretary KENDALL. We are continuing to move forward, Senator, with our modernization program. Not quite at the rate that we would like to have this year because of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, but we are moving forward.

We are trying to manage the risk across time with the current force, the more immediate force, and the future force, but I think we are at acceptable risk with the budget that we are presenting to the Congress.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me turn to one of my favorite topics. Billy Mitchell, the father of the U.S. Air Force, called Alaska the most strategic place in the world. I appreciate the Air Force's focus on that, on our State and how important it is. There has been a significant buildup in Alaska.

We have over 105th generation fighters located in Alaska now. The Air Force's fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$250 million for the Joint Integrated Test and Training Center at JBER. This represents a significant new training capability in how it will enable the Air Force to plug in to live fire exercises at JPARC, probably the most advanced training range in the world, to give pilots across the U.S. Military an unrivaled training venue.

Can you just talk a little bit about why that JITTC is so important? That is to you, General, as well.

General ALLVIN. You know, Senator, I will start by saying it is—like many of our fifth generation capable testing training centers, it is providing the opportunity to test advancements in a synthetic environment in ways you couldn't actually do in a physical environment.

But with this increase, we are able to look at the models for how we believe that the threat is going to act. We take these models, we can validate them in the JPARC, which is why the integration of these two, between the live environment and the synthetic environment, it allows you to test some hypotheses and maybe in a place where you wouldn't want—the adversary to see you in open air.

Senator SULLIVAN. So that is a top priority in our preparation for a China conflict?

General ALLVIN. Absolutely, and when you can replicate those through the JPARC modernization that we are doing with those emitters, then you can have a better chance of looking at those models, validating those, and maybe tweaking them back in. Between the two, the synthetic and the live, you get better than either of them individually when you can connect them.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask one final question. My time is up, but Mr. Chairman, if I may. We have been back and forth, this Committee, me, the Air Force, on tankers and the strategic importance of having them located not just in one place in the lower 48.

I was a little bit disappointed that after many years, I go back and forth with Air Force leadership, the final decision was, well, we are going to put all our tankers in the lower 48 at certain bases.

I can't remember which ones, but it seems to be more of a budget driven idea than a strategic driven idea. Mr. Secretary, you and I, and the previous Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who is now the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, got to a resolution on that where we said, well, we are going to be bringing more KC-135 tankers to Eielson.

How are we doing on that? I want to make sure in this hearing you are still committed to that. It seems like that timeline has kind of moved to the right, and it is really important not just for Alaska, but for the strategic ability to move aircraft anywhere in the world, but particularly to the INDOPACOM theater, if there is a conflict.

Secretary KENDALL. Sir, you know, that capability is important to us, but as you are aware and we have discussed, we have an issue with housing at Eielson that we are trying to address, and we are concerned about the quality of life of our people that we have to assign there. So, that is an issue that we are working as we try to move forward on the tankers, I think.

Senator SULLIVAN. But you are still committed to move those tankers there, as you and I—

Secretary KENDALL. We have to address—the situation for our people as part of that process.

Senator SULLIVAN. Are you walking this commitment back to me, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary KENDALL. I don't think so, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. You have committed to this to me like several times. So, this is a little concerning. We are going to work on the housing issue, but can I just get a commitment again? I got it from the—heck, he is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs now, to be four KC-135s at Eielson.

Secretary KENDALL. We haven't changed our plans as far as I know. Do you have anything to add to that? I think we are still in the same place, but we do need to address this issue.

Senator SULLIVAN. General.

General ALLVIN. That is still on our plan, Senator. But as we were just at Eielson as well, we know we do need to ensure that we don't have the aircrew and the support going up there, as it is an austere location, because we know the quality of life, we need to be able to retain those families up there as well.

So, the plan is, as it is written, hasn't changed, but the determination of how and when we can get housing and quality of life is going to be dispositive on how fast the pacing can go up—

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Gentlemen, I thank you for your testimony. At this point, we will recess the open portion of the hearing and reconvene SVC-217. Let's try to be there in about—between 11:05 a.m. and 11:10 a.m., which would allow for a moment to recollect and refresh. With that, I will adjourn the open portion.

[Whereupon, at 10:52 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

AIR FORCE RESTRUCTURING

1. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, in February you announced big changes to the Department of the Air Force to be more competitive in the era of Great Power Competition and maintain a more predictable deployment cycle for airmen and their family members. Does this budget request adequately prioritize your proposed restructuring efforts, specifically changes to how operational wings are structured?

Secretary KENDALL. Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition does not change our fiscal year 2024 or fiscal year 2025 budget requests. We are reoptimizing how we present forces at the Wing level to provide more effective combat capability through more coherent warfighting teams, and we will continue to engage Congress throughout the implementation process. We expect to have more specific cost information with the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request.

2. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, how is the transition progressing and are you confident this approach will build more capable teams, especially to support operations in the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary KENDALL. Progress is on schedule with our implementation plans, emphasizing the reoptimization of force presentation to foster more capable teams that can compete effectively in a dynamic environment, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. I am confident this approach will yield more capable teams better equipped to navigate the challenges of our pacing threats. By prioritizing investments in capabilities and readiness tailored to this strategic theater, we are not only positioning ourselves to meet the demands of the evolving environment effectively, but we are also ensuring continued supremacy in our respective domains and better posturing the Department to deter and, if necessary, prevail in an era of Great Power Competition.

E-7 PROCUREMENT

3. Senator HIRONO. General Allvin, with the ongoing retirement of the E-3 aircraft, Pacific Air Forces has identified an urgent need to field the E-7 Wedgetail as soon as possible. The President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget includes over \$400 million to continue Rapid Prototyping of the first two E-7 Wedgetail aircraft in support of a production decision in fiscal year 2026. What is the updated procurement schedule for the E-7 Wedgetail?

General ALLVIN. The Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget requested \$418.5 million in Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) to continue the E-7A Rapid Prototyping Program, which designs the U.S. system and build two operationally representative E-7A prototype aircraft. The Air Force plans to define the E-7 Rapid Prototyping contract in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024. Both prototype aircraft are scheduled for delivery in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2027. The Air Force is planning for a follow-on production decision in fiscal year 2026. We will continue to analyze necessary E-7 production and deliveries to ensure the capability is fielded at the needed pace within the budgets provided.

4. Senator HIRONO. General Allvin, how is this delay impacting the mission of Pacific Air Forces, and what is the contingency plan if there are further procurement delays?

General ALLVIN. The E-7 is a more capable airborne Air Moving Target Indicator (AMTI) and Battle Management Command and Control (BMC2) platform than anything in the current Air Force inventory in terms of reliability and performance. However, the E-3 AWACS is still present in the Pacific Theater and will be so for at least the next few years. Additionally, the Air Force is fielding improved hardware to expeditionary battle management nodes in the Pacific. This improved kit

will enhance the capacity and agility of BMC2 execution in support of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

The Air Force is working hard to prevent further delays in E-7 procurement. If there are further E-7 delays, the E-3 AWACS may have to be extended.

SPACE MISSION CONDUCTED BY AIR NATIONAL GUARD

5. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, you testified that the Air National Guard members who are currently conducting space missions would be afforded geographically stability and would not have to move or be relocated if they transition to the Space Force instead of creating a separate Air National Guard. Is there any formal acknowledgement of this policy that is in writing or do you have an anticipated date of when to expect a formal guarantee that they will not have to move?

Secretary KENDALL. The report submitted pursuant to Section 924 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act identifies the Secretary of the Air Force's intent that Air National Guard members who volunteer for transfer would be able to continue serving in the same location upon joining the Space Force. The Chief of Space Operations has also made this commitment in congressional testimony.

6. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, if the Air National Guard personnel conducting space missions are absorbed in the Space Force, how will this affect the State Partnership Program?

Secretary KENDALL. The State Partnership Program is a value-added National Guard program of significance to the Nation. If Air National Guard personnel conducting space missions transition into the Space Force, they will continue to engage and provide outreach as the mission dictates. Only six (6) states have space-related elements subject to potential transfer. On average, these elements constitute approximately four (4) percent of the total authorized end-strength for the affected states; as such, we anticipate no significant impact to State Partnership programs. State Partnership programs will continue to be executed by States with the Army and Air Guard. A close partnership will continue to exist between the Defense Department, the Services, and the States.

MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEMS

7. Senator HIRONO. General Saltzman, the Department of Defense is increasingly turning to space-based systems for its ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missile defense sensing needs. These technologies will be critical to future plans to defend Hawaii. I remain interested in evolving missile defense and know there is \$4.7 billion in the fiscal year 2025 budget to proliferate a multi-orbit missile warning architecture to counter near-peer threats. These space systems come with their own unique risks. How is the Space Force ensuring these capabilities are resilient in the face of disruption, whether through cyber or kinetic attack?

General SALTZMAN. The fiscal year 2025 budget allows the Space Force to continue to pivot to a proliferated Resilient Missile Warning (MW)/Missile Tracking (MT)/Missile Defense architecture in Low Earth Orbit and Medium Earth Orbit. The proliferation of more satellites in various orbits increases resiliency to kinetic attack. We are also implementing a cybersecurity posture that requires a stringent level of cryptographic protection for messages being passed between the two segments using National Security Agency-certified crypto equipment to increase resiliency against cyber-attacks. Meanwhile, the Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared programs are key to maintaining global MW coverage as the Resilient MW/MT architecture delivers. These programs are instrumental to providing capabilities for wartime scenarios and in defense of the Indo-Pacific theater, to include Hawaii.

JOINT AND PARTNER EXERCISES

8. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall and General Allvin, conducting exercises with allies and partners is the cornerstone of integrated deterrence and our asymmetric advantages in the Indo-Pacific. Pacific Air Force Agile Combat Employment exercises are listed as the number one priority on the Air Force's Unfunded Priority List. Can you talk about why these exercises are so important in the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary KENDALL and General ALLVIN. Operating with our allies and partners is a cornerstone of integrated deterrence and one of our asymmetric advantages. Against a pacing challenge, this interoperability will be critical to meeting our mutual objectives and displays strength in unity. Exercising this capability will better enable us to prepare for and execute with our regional allies and partners. These exercises also offer the opportunity to build relationships and increase access to basing and overflight, which is critical in the Indo-Pacific.

9. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, why was funding for these exercises not included in the President's Budget?

Secretary KENDALL. Our plan is highly sensitive to changes in our topline. The budget caps approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act's topline limit required us to make some tough, responsible choices. During the fiscal year 2025 budget cycle, the Department of the Air Force focused on transforming for the future. General Allvin's Unfunded Priorities List addresses areas where the Air Force would have applied additional funding had it been available, where emerging analysis on Great Power Competition showed an area of need, and where the Service can provide additional forces to Combatant Commanders.

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE RECOVERY EFFORTS

10. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, in May 2023, Typhoon Mawar struck the island of Guam. It was the strongest storm to affect Guam in more than 20 years. Guam remains an essential strategic site for the U.S. military in the Indo-Pacific but still has a significant way to go with rebuilding. Now that we are approaching 1 year since the devastation of Typhoon Mawar, do you have an update on the recovery and rebuilding efforts at Andersen Air Force Base?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force planned \$126 million in fiscal year 2023 for Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) to provide immediate damage response and clean-up at Andersen Air Force Base. Since then, the Department has refined and prioritized FSRM and military construction (MILCON) requirements across the Future Years Defense Program. Additionally, the Air Force Contract Augmentation Program was set in motion with an additional \$176 million in fiscal year 2024 FSRM to tackle repairs to building envelopes, roofing, doors, windows, and HVAC systems. Similarly, the 356th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Group was recently activated and assists with recovery efforts. We estimate that \$1.3 billion in FSRM and \$7.9 billion in MILCON are needed for recovery, including improved resilience projects. That is approximately two times the Natural Disaster Recovery supplemental used to recover Tyndall AFB following Hurricane Michael in 2018 and Offutt Air Force Bases following flooding in 2019.

11. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Kendall, is the Air Force coordinating recovery efforts with DOD's new lead senior defense official for Guam, Undersecretary of the Navy Raven?

Secretary KENDALL. Yes, we coordinate recovery efforts in Guam with the Undersecretary of the Navy, Mr. Raven, by the Guam Military Synchronization Governance Structure. Specifically, the Undersecretary of the Air Force participates in the Guam Synchronization Oversight Council, which Mr. Raven chairs. The Council is informed through monthly work by the Guam Installation and Community Support Working Group, in which the Department of the Air Force also actively participates.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

12. Senator KING. General Allvin, the fiscal year 2019 NDAA required pre-separation counseling to be completed by transitioning servicemembers at least 365 days prior to leaving the service, yet a GAO report found that only 11 percent met this requirement. Additionally, GAO found that only 25 percent of servicemembers have met statutory TAP requirements. What are you doing to increase these numbers within the Air Force to take care of transitioning servicemembers? What new initiatives are you implementing this year to address these dismal rates?

General ALLVIN. The Department of Air Force (DAF) initial counseling (IC) and pre-separation rate for servicemembers before 365 days from separation/retirement is 32 percent. Our rate would rise to 53 percent if we do not count exclusions. The issues impacting compliance are servicemembers cannot apply for retirement more than 365 days out and all voluntary retirement dates are established on or after the 365-day window, making the member non-compliant even if they register for IC the same day they apply for retirement. Also, the retirement date for involuntarily retired members is not within the member's control. It is usually less than 365 days, which automatically makes the servicemember non-compliant. Last, Air Reserve members are not eligible to register for IC until the order start date, and the order length is usually 365 days or less, again automatically making the member non-compliant.

While the current DAF IC and Pre-Separation completion rates before 365 days remain low, overall Transition Assistance Program (TAP) completion rates are higher. The TAP completion rate for Active Duty servicemembers remains approximately 96 percent, while the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard's compliance rates are 79 percent and 38 percent, respectively. Many Air Reserve members are automatically in default due to the timing of orders.

We track installations' TAP compliance monthly and strive to increase our TAP completion rates. In April 2023, the DAF added compliance factors linked with the inspection program for commanders to ensure members begin TAP at least 365 days from projected retirement or separation. We forwarded a Commander Fact Sheet to the field, shared it at the Military & Family Readiness Center installation, and provided it during leadership training. Finally, we are connecting with servicemembers on the DAF and Air Force Personnel Center Facebook pages.

This year we are implementing several new initiatives to address TAP completion and are engaging with unit commanders to address deficiencies. We are also utilizing monthly installation loss-rosters to identify and connect with members 24 months prior to their projected retirement date or 18 months prior to projected date of separation. We are adding a TAP reminder message to the required annual military record review. Finally, we have a project to create a commander's dashboard to provide unit leadership visibility on TAP projects and completions.

13. Senator KING. General Saltzman, what are you doing to increase these numbers within Space Force to take care of transitioning servicemembers? What new initiatives are you implementing this year to address these dismal rates?

General SALTZMAN. The Space Force will continue to amplify messaging to encourage guardians to start the Transition Assistance Program process 24 months before retirement and 18 months before separation ensuring mission requirements are not the reason for a late start. We will assess why transitioning guardians are not receiving the required preparation for post-military planning and connect with unit leadership of those members to address root causes and mitigate future non-compliance. Finally, launching the Space Force Personnel Management Act will provide guardians with an alternative option to separation altogether to continue serving when personal situations arise.

BANGOR, MAINE'S CONTRIBUTION TO AIR FORCE ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING

14. Senator KING. Secretary Kendall, the Maine Air National Guard's 101st Air Refueling Wing (ARW), located in Bangor, has one of the most capable 3D printing capabilities in the Air Force in terms of capability, capacity, and trained technicians. What has the Air Force learned from the 101st ARW, and how have you applied lessons from their experience?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force has leveraged lessons learned from all units, including the 101st Air Refueling Wing, on developing and scaling Advanced Manufacturing expertise to include 3D printing. Recently, units participated in the Spring Advanced Manufacturing Program Office Technical Interchange Meeting to share lessons learned, innovative techniques, and training ideas across the entire community. I visited the Wing recently and was impressed by their innovation and expertise.

15. Senator KING. Secretary Kendall, what ways are you developing this at the Wing level across the Department (Active and Reserve Component) to include:

- a. investments in capability (e.g. devices/machines and software),
- b. capacity (e.g. number of devices),
- c. number of personnel being trained,
- d. retaining those trained personnel,
- e. developing and expanding training, and
- f. developing certification requirements.

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force has approved large-scale printer investments, including Fortus-series polymer printers and EOS-series metal printers. Additional printers are approved, and other low-cost polymer printers are in use. The Air Force's current inventory includes nearly 300 3D printers at a variety of bases throughout the world. Over 650 Air Force personnel have graduated from Advanced Manufacturing and Cold Spray courses, and over 100 personnel are certified operators for large-scale 3D printers. The Air Force is committed to ensuring Wing-level access to 3D printers and expanding access to training opportunities for our airmen in the field.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

F-35 BASING DECISIONS

16. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, last year the Air Force selected the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 104th Fighter Wing for the next F-35A Lightning II squadron. When do you anticipate the environmental impact statement to support this decision will be complete and made available to the public?

Secretary KENDALL. We anticipate the Massachusetts Air National Guard 104th Fighter Wing F-35A Lightning II squadron's final environmental impact statement will be completed and available to the public in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025.

17. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, when do you expect to sign a record of decision selecting the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 104th Fighter Wing for the next F-35A Lightning II squadron?

Secretary KENDALL. We anticipate the first quarter of fiscal year 2025 for competition of the environmental impact statement and the final strategic basing decision will immediately follow.

102D INTELLIGENCE WING

18. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, what is the status of the Air Force's review of whether to reinstate the 102d Intelligence Wing?

Secretary KENDALL. The 102d Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group has been reinstated. Air Combat Command (ACC) deployed a recertifying team from the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing (ISRW) on May 5-18, 2024, to conduct a functional mission assessment. The 480th ISRW recommended to return the 102d Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group to its Title 10 mission, to which ACC's commander concurred. The 102d ISRW returned to its operational Title 10 mission and the 102d ISRW reinstated on June 1, 2024.

19. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, when do you expect the Air Force's review of whether to reinstate the 102d Intelligence Wing to be completed?

Secretary KENDALL. The review of the 102d Intelligence Wing concluded on May 18, 2024.

20. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, are there any outstanding recommendations from the Air Force Inspector General review of the 102d Intelligence Wing?

Secretary KENDALL. The offices of the Secretary of the Air Force Inspector General, Air Combat Command Inspector General, and Air Force Intelligence Directorate re-inspected the unit on April 3 and April 4, 2024, to review four (4) remaining open deficiencies. The reinspection concluded that the 102d Intelligence Wing satisfactorily addressed all open deficiencies through its corrective action plans and formally closed all deficiencies.

21. Senator WARREN. Secretary Kendall, if there are outstanding recommendations from the Air Force Inspector General review of the 102d Intelligence Wing, what steps does the Massachusetts National Guard need to take to close those recommendations?

Secretary KENDALL. The 102d Intelligence Wing addressed all open deficiencies.

SENTINEL PROGRAM

22. Senator WARREN. General Allvin, the Navy has developed non-destructive techniques to measure Trident motor properties and assess aging. Will you apply these techniques to Minuteman to collect more data or estimate aging effects for individual motors? If not, why not?

General ALLVIN. The Navy conducts non-destructive testing in addition to destructive tests like Minuteman III. Annually, the Navy performs four (4) live-fire flight tests, while the Air Force conducts three (3) operational test launches each year. Like the Navy, the Air Force employs non-destructive and destructive testing methods to evaluate performance and safety.

23. Senator WARREN. General Allvin, one objection to extending the life of Minuteman III is that flight testing will deplete the number of available missiles below that needed to operationally deploy 400 missiles. To account for this concern, will you reduce the number of tests or reduce the number of deployed missiles, e.g., by reducing the number of Minuteman to 350 and increasing the number of warheads on Trident to compensate for the difference?

General ALLVIN. The Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) signed an Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM) as part of the certification decision following the Nunn-McCurdy review. The ADM directs the Air Force to restructure the Sentinel program and provide USD(A&S) an outline of a modified acquisition strategy within 60 days. As this modified acquisition strategy is developed, the Air Force will work with the operational community to optimize deployment timelines and ensure a transition between Minuteman III and Sentinel that considers risk, mitigations, and trades across cost, schedule test strategy, and performance. We will share the decisions and supporting rationale with your office as they become available.

24. Senator WARREN. General Allvin, given the Sentinel program's delays, are there steps you are planning to take to extend the life of the MMIII missiles and at what point would you consider it necessary to do so?

General ALLVIN. As part of restructuring the Sentinel program, preserving schedule will be a key consideration; however, a delay of several years is currently estimated from the original initial operational capability (IOC).

The Air Force has been and will continue to sustain the Minuteman III (MM III) system until a replacement capability is available. The Air Force continues to invest in replacing the Minuteman III system's aging and obsolete components to ensure the nuclear triad's land leg is ready and reliable for nuclear deterrence. The Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget allocates approximately \$1 billion annually to MM III sustainment activities (Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Procurement, and Operations and Maintenance). In the Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget, the Air Force is initiating four (4) new MM III sustainment programs: Stage One Battery Replacement, Depot Re-entry Support Equipment, Little Mountain Test Facility Updates, and Missile Transport Equipment.

25. Senator WARREN. General Allvin, can pit production at Los Alamos meet the initial requirements of the Sentinel program? For how long?

General ALLVIN. Pit production is a National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) responsibility and NNSA should provide an official response. However, the initial requirements of the Sentinel program will be satisfied with the W87-0/Mk21 re-entry vehicle which is operational on Minuteman III today and are not impacted by Los Alamos' pit production capabilities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

CYBERSECURITY POSTURE

26. Senator MANCHIN. General Allvin, after looking at the fiscal year 2025 budget, there seems to be consistent decreases in funding regarding cybersecurity. This includes cutting funding on cybersecurity related to operational communications to cybersecurity underpinning nuclear deterrence programs. These cuts in cybersecurity are occurring right when numerous officials have testified and open source reporting has indicated China and other State actors are consistently targeting our networks seeking to exploit our cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Can you go into detail on how this decrease in cybersecurity funding right as malign actors seeks to find and exploit such vulnerabilities won't cause increased risk to national security?

General ALLVIN. The Air Force continues to invest in cyber and enterprise information technology (IT) and has increased its programmed investment by 2.6 percent in fiscal year 2025 from \$7.78 billion to \$7.98 billion. The increase invests in the Department of the Air Force Data Fabric, Integrated Cyberspace Defense System, and Zero Trust efforts, including Non-classified Internet Protocol Router Identity, Credential, and of Access Management. Additionally, the Air Force has invested in the sensing and monitoring of the Air Force network, which will allow our Cyber Security System Provider to have increased awareness of threats to the network.

DRONE INCURSIONS

27. Senator MANCHIN. General Saltzman, the use of drones continues to be leveraged by our adversaries with increased quantity and complexity. Drone incursions and their lethality continues to be a threat. The cost incurred by our adversaries is far less than the risk these drones pose and the cost the U.S. incurs with counter measures. Drones have been a threat in the Middle East since the early 2000's, now more prevalent than ever in the Red Sea and also continue to threaten our military installations at home and aboard. It has taken too long and resulted in too many lives lost. We must find a low cost, reliable solution to deal with this persistent

threat. There has been a lot of talk about directed energy weapons but overall minimal results. Are you aware of any solutions in development to provide our troops proper force protection against drone incursions?

General SALTZMAN. Yes, we are aware of and are participating in examining several capabilities that may enhance the joint community's defensive capability. Directed energy has high potential for inclusion in counter-drone systems, but there are limitations on currently available technologies. The Air Force is currently spending \$13 million for continued development of the Mjolnir weapon. The system will go from a preliminary design review to a critical design review to a fully realized demonstrator. It will be the Department of Defense's first Exportable High Powered Electromagnetic-based Directed-Energy Weapons.

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) works with other Services through the joint Counter-small UAS (C-sUAS) Office to prioritize C-sUAS developmental efforts, including potential directed energy capabilities. The DAF can also defend against Group 3 and larger UAS using fighter aircraft, as recently demonstrated in the Middle East. The DAF is also investing in enhancements to lower-cost munitions, such as 2.75-inch rockets, to provide more affordable air-to-air engagement options.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS (UAS) AND COUNTER UAS

28. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, three American soldiers were killed at a United States military installation in Jordan by air attack. It is my understanding that many United States forward bases, including the largest in the Middle East, are Air Bases. So, what changes to base protection and defense did the Air Force make after Iranian proxy groups attacked our servicemembers?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force has fielded tailored systems-of-systems to seven (7) Air Bases throughout the Middle East that include radars, electronic warfare systems, radio frequency (RF)-based library jamming, library-based detection, and library-based defeat systems.

Additionally, the Air Force deployed a small number of Air Battle Managers to air bases in the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility to support local battle management, airspace deconfliction, and counter-drone operations. The Department of the Air Force is working closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Combatant Commands, and the Services to find and pursue joint solutions that are quickly scalable for forward bases and installations in the Homeland to further fielding efforts.

29. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, public reporting now indicates that Langley Air Force Base Virginia was swarmed by drones for weeks back in December 2023. NORTHCOM Commander, General Guillot, testified in March 2024 that he was still studying this problem. What is the Air Force role in defending Air Bases at home from air attacks?

General ALLVIN. Langley was not attacked, but its airspace was violated by drones. The Air Force, through its Installation Commanders, is responsible for protecting and defending the personnel and assets within our Air Bases. We retain the authority under the Department of Defense's Standing Rules of Force to apply the necessary force to protect those personnel and assets from immediate hostile threats. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force has the role of defending our bases from small-unmanned aircraft system (sUAS) threats at all locations in conjunction with Joint operating doctrine.

30. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, does the Air Force have a validated requirement and sufficient resources to defend bases against drones where we stage stealth fighters and bombers?

General ALLVIN. The Air Force has validated requirements for countering small drones in the 2021 rapid prototyping requirements for counter-small unmanned aircraft systems (C-sUAS) and larger threats in the 2022 strategic requirements document for Air Base Air Defense (ABAD).

As envisioned, this counter small-unmanned aircraft system (sUAS) capability will provide a tailorable, layered defense that, based on risk analysis, may be scaled, to protect a single asset up to and beyond airfield approach and departure corridors, across the full spectrum of the counter-sUAS engagement sequence.

Competing threats and requirements have resulted in stark budgeting decisions that limit the program office to sustaining currently fielded systems only and lim-

ited research and development of new systems in coordination with the Army's Joint Counter Small Unmanned Aerial Systems Office. The program is developing the capability for scalable C-sUAS solutions but cannot currently field increased capacity or capability due to a lack of dedicated funding for increased investment in procurement, sustainment, and research, development, testing, and evaluation.

Air Base Defense remains a problem within the larger Joint Integrated Air Missiles Defense (IAMD) architecture. The ongoing IAMD mix study and the Air and Cruise Missile Defense of the Homeland Analysis of Alternatives are expected to yield valuable insights into the appropriate mix of capabilities relevant to air base defense at home and abroad. The Air Force will continue contributing to this architecture using existing counterair tactics, fighter aircraft, and air-to-air munitions to contend with larger Group 3–5 unmanned aircraft systems and drones.

31. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, are you in the process of updating Air Force policy to address the growing threat from drones?

General ALLVIN. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) expects to release an updated policy by the end of fiscal year 2024. This publication will clarify many processes and procedures for counter-small unmanned aircraft systems (C-sUAS) operators focused on base defense. As always, the Air Force will update relevant policies as the DAF releases new or updated policies and guidance.

The DAF 2050 analysis, as directed and outlined in Section 923 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, is ongoing, with a report due later this year. Part of that analysis includes examining the Air Force's future roles and intent for the full range of air and missile threats. The Air Force is examining its future role in the Joint Force solutions against challenges that UAS pose to airbase defense. UAS will continue to proliferate and challenge the Air Force. Those challenges will be met by an ever-evolving Air Force.

FORCE DESIGN AND DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE PLANS

32. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, does the United States Air Force have enough aircraft and weapons to establish Air Superiority in a defense of Guam scenario?

General ALLVIN. The threat to Guam is largely cruise and ballistic missiles launched at long range. This is a joint problem that goes well beyond local air superiority or Air Force capabilities alone. The Air Force must continue to evolve its force to meet the pacing challenge posed by the National Defense Strategy to meet worldwide capability and capacity demands today. Extensive gaming and analysis using the most challenging and complex scenarios show that the Air Force must adjust the future force structure by changing investment priorities to provide the capability, capacity, and affordability required to defeat any peer threat.

Retaining and modernizing our current fleets alone will not achieve air superiority in defense of Guam. While we have and will continue to modernize the air defense capabilities of the island, there will always be a cost imposition due to the sheer scale and flexibility of adversary attacks in multiple domains that can be amassed on the island of Guam. For air superiority, we will have to continue developing and fielding capabilities that can deny enemy long-range kill chains to reduce the ability to target U.S. Forces and territory. The right balance of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities will have to be pursued to provide air superiority in the defense of Guam sufficiently. A more complete answer would require a classified discussion.

33. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, does the United States Air Force have enough aircraft and weapons to establish Air Superiority if we aid the defense of Taiwan?

General ALLVIN. Our study of future conflict with the People's Republic of China suggests that the Joint Force will achieve and leverage transient superiority in all domains differently than in past conflicts, including the air domain. Based on updated threat assessments and capability determinations, we will continue to assess future requirements for sensing, battle management, platforms, weapons, and enablers like electronic warfare. A more complete answer would require a classified discussion.

34. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, if Air Superiority options are limited in the Pacific, then what resources would help the Air Force decisively win an Air Superiority fight in a highly contested environment?

General ALLVIN. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) Operational Imperative investments directly address these needs. To stay ahead of our pacing challenge, it is a DAF operational imperative for the Air Force and Space Force to integrate and

modernize Command, Control, Communications and Battle Management (C3BM) to provide operational forces key data and decision support with greater speed, adaptability, and resilience. The DAF must develop and migrate to an architecture that includes resilient, distributed battle management, as well as the operational ability to disaggregate C3BM execution to reduce or eliminate single points of failure for optimal survivability against emerging threats. These efforts must be performed at speeds and scales never before achieved.

Moving target engagement at scale must provide identification, tracking, and engagement support of numerous moving or mobile targets simultaneously in a highly contested time compressed multi-domain Joint environment. To accomplish this, a mix of resilient air and space-based capabilities will be necessary to conduct long-range, beyond line-of-sight sensing, and support integrated beyond line-of-sight fires against moving air, land, and sea surface targets in a Joint and combined environment. Developing these critical capabilities are the heart of our Operational Imperative and Cross-cutting Operational Enabler efforts to eliminate these future capability gaps.

35. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, I understand that some of my colleagues received a briefing on the force design of the Air Force in December; the overall number of fighter aircraft were discussed. Does the Air Force want to decrease the number of mission ready fighter aircraft below the current floor of 1,145?

Secretary KENDALL. Current plans would reduce fighter inventory temporarily during the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). Our fighter capacity recommendation for the 2030's is classified, but the total aircraft inventory in that timeframe is above 1,145. The mix of capabilities is also classified.

In realistic budget projections, we must balance the need for high-end technology with affordable capacity. To attain the desired fighter fleet, the Air Force must continue to right size current aircraft inventories to expedite the transition from less capable, aging aircraft and emphasize investment in future capabilities such as Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) and F-35 modernization. As part of its force structure change over the next decade, the Air Force must transition its fighter fleet from seven (7) platforms (F-35, F-22, F-16, F-15E/EX, F-15C, A-10) to four (4) (F-35, F-15E/EX, F-16, plus CCA.) The Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) platform, which had previously been considered a follow-on to the F-22, is under review. The NGAD Family of Systems is continuing.

On the path to achieving the desired future fighter fleet, the budget continues to seek opportunities to divest systems inconsistent with pacing challenges and focus on the key capabilities required to execute the National Defense Strategy. Moving away from outdated and less capable legacy platforms allows us to redirect the workforce to our newest aircraft and platforms, many of which require experienced maintainers and pilots to maintain our competitive edge. These divestitures are critical to building a relevant future force that meets the pacing challenge. Modernization programs cannot transform our current fourth-generation fighters into fifth-generation fighters. Resourcing those future capabilities and modernizing our remaining force requires funding and a workforce currently tied up in our legacy systems and platforms.

36. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, is divesting current capabilities like the F-15E the right call after what they were able to accomplish defending Israel on 13 April?

Secretary KENDALL. I agree that the F-15E is a competent platform, which is why the Air Force is transitioning to a fighter enterprise that includes F-15Es with the more capable PW-229 engine, modified with the Eagle Passive Active Warning and Survivability System (EPAWSS), complementing F-15EX, F-35, F-22, and F-16 to provide the Joint Force with a capable, sustainable, and affordable force that can operate across the entire range of mission sets. To pivot to operations in the highly contested environment, we must transition the mix of our fighter fleet.

The United States Central Command team's defense of Israel was a tremendous achievement. However, that operation was conducted in a permissive environment without the highly advanced technological threats we expect to face in deterring or defeating our pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China (PRC). While the F-15E capability is significant, it is the future mix of systems that will make our force effective in a highly contested environment, compared to the PRC.

37. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, would you consider reversing your position on divesting the F-15E and F-22 if funds were available to keep these aircraft long term?

Secretary KENDALL. We must continue to pivot to the future. The F-22 Block 20 and F-15E with the older PW-220 engines have served us well over the years, but it is time to transition away from these aging and less capable platforms. Maintaining our current force structure while pursuing modernization creates an unsustainable drain on our resources, including money and our airmen. To meet our pacing challenges and focus on the key capabilities required to execute the National Defense Strategy in a fiscally responsible way, we must pursue a capable, sustainable, survivable, and affordable force that can operate across the range of mission sets needed to meet those priorities.

PLATFORM MODERNIZATION AND MUNITIONS

38. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, will the budget request for this year ensure sufficient funds to deliver key capabilities as quickly as possible such as the CCA we discussed last year?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force is committed to fielding an operational Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) capability as quickly as possible. Fielding the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) Family of Systems, particularly CCA, will allow the Air Force to augment current and future platforms with lower-cost complementary systems that can cost-effectively increase air control in highly contested environments. The Department of the Air Force is expecting the Experimental Ops Unit to stand up this year and the first CCA deliveries in fiscal year 2027.

39. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, are you having to source funds within your own budget from other major fighter programs to pay to keep the CCA on time?

Secretary KENDALL. Our plan is highly sensitive to changes in our topline. The budget caps approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act's topline limit required us to make some tough, responsible choices. We are working within our budget to modernize while remaining compliant with restrictions related to the size of our force.

40. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, will you having to source funds within your own budget from other major fighter programs to pay to keep the NGAD on time?

Secretary KENDALL. Our plan is highly sensitive to changes in our topline. The budget caps approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act's topline limit required us to make some tough, responsible choices. We are working within our budget to modernize while remaining compliant with restrictions related to the size of our force.

41. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, if you're relying on space-based battle management then how has the Department moved beyond conceptual demonstrations within the budget constraints that have delayed the E-7 in the first place?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) delivers a distributed, multi-domain command and control architecture by developing the DAF Battle Network, which integrates 50 acquisition programs of record to provide decision superiority. We use an incremental delivery model, leveraging agile acquisitions authorities such as software pathway programs to rapidly prototype and deliver operational capability. In fiscal year 2024, we delivered 16 tactical operations center—light prototypes to Air Combat Command. We are on track to deliver cloud-based command and control software to five (5) air defense sectors for North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), with more incremental deliveries planned for fiscal year 2025 and beyond. Recognizing the challenges of contested environments, the DAF is adding space-based ground moving target indication capability to the suite of sensors that feed data into the DAF Battle Network.

42. Senator COTTON. Secretary Kendall, if your plan is to offboard significant air-to-air capability to CCA and for battle management to space, then what is the fielding timeline for a resilient network in accordance with fiscal year 2024 NDAA section 1527 for all these things to talk together?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) has developed an aerial networking roadmap that aligns with our architecture for the DAF Battle Network. This roadmap includes enhancements to existing legacy datalinks, the development of an advanced tactical datalink, and beyond-line-of-sight satellite communication capabilities. Incremental fielding of capability will begin in 2027. Additional details can be provided in a classified setting.

43. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, I noted \$1.0B less in Air Force missile procurement compared to last year even though we know our munitions stockpiles are not where they need to be. Was this decrease a result of insufficient top line available?

General ALLVIN. The decrease is a result of the fiscal year 2024 initiation of multi-year procurement for joint air-to-surface standoff missiles and long-range anti-ship missiles. \$870 million of funding for these programs was pulled from fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2028 into fiscal year 2024 to accommodate advanced procurement of missile material and components to gain economy of scale buying power under the multi-year procurement construct. When controlling for this factor in comparing the fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025 funding levels, there is a net increase of more than \$350 million in fiscal year 2025.

44. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, since the Air Force is using multiyear procurement for critical munitions like AMRAAM, LRASM and JASSM, can the Air Force buy more of these munitions with additional fiscal year 2025 funds?

General ALLVIN. The advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM) and joint air-to-surface missile (JASSM) programs are at capacity and cannot increase in fiscal year 2025. A small amount of additional capacity is available in the long-range anti-ship missile (LRASM) program, for approximately 37 missiles. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is coordinating with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to leverage fiscal year 2025 excess facilitization capacity via the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) replenishment funding process based on the recently passed supplementals. In coordination with the Department of the Navy, the DAF proposes maximizing the fiscal year 2025 Lot 9 production for LRASM via PDA replenishment. If approved, there would be no excess capacity for LRASM procurement in fiscal year 2025.

45. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, what do you need to scale up production of missiles and munitions in fiscal year 2025?

General ALLVIN. In line with the National Defense Strategy, the Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget munitions portfolio prioritizes lethal weapons mix that provides "anti-access/area-denial-insensitive strike capabilities that can penetrate adversary defenses at range." Key munitions include advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM), joint air-to-surface standoff missiles (JASSM), long-range anti-ship missiles (LRASM), and stand-in attack weapons (SiAW). In fiscal year 2024, Congress appropriated \$77 million for the Department of the Air Force (DAF) and \$53 million for the Department of the Navy requests for JASSM and LRASM facilitization to increase total missile production. AMRAAM is currently at maximum procurement, and the Program of Record will be completed in 2027–2028. SiAW is in the rapid prototyping phase and is scheduled to finish prototyping in the fourth quarter of CY26. Therefore, the DAF does not require additional resources to scale up the production of missiles and munitions in fiscal year 2025.

46. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, if survivability of 4th generation platforms is a problem, and the Air Force isn't fully funding survivability programs like electronic warfare suites on the F-16 then how are you changing doctrinal mission sets for the F-16 while they remain in the inventory?

General ALLVIN. The Air Force must evolve its fighter force to meet the threat posed by China and Russia and to provide the capability and capacity to meet worldwide demands. The F-16 will be the Air Force's affordable capacity for the next decade at least in competition, homeland defense, and more permissive combat environments.

The Air Force budget request reflects tough, responsible choices. The Air Force seeks to preserve the substantial advances in modernization and procurement in previous years. Still, the survivability of older platforms is limited, regardless of the amount of modernization. However, survivability is not determined only by a platform's mission systems, such as electronic warfare suites, or by a platform's characteristics, such as stealth, range, or payload. Survivability also depends on the environment and family of systems in which each platform intends to operate.

The National Defense Strategy lays out the defense of our Homeland as the number one Department of Defense priority. The F-16 has and will continue to play a key role in this mission set, and in less contested environments, and the Air Force will continue to support the F-16's ability to execute those mission sets.

47. Senator COTTON. General Allvin, we can't afford to make everything exquisitely survivable and stealthy, so what is the place of force multipliers for survivability like the new Compass Call electronic warfare aircraft?

General ALLVIN. To be successful in future conflicts, we must be able to disrupt and confuse adversary kill chains while securing and scaling our own. We will need to leverage force-multiplying capabilities like uncrewed Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA), electronic attacks, and counter-targeting capabilities. The EA-37B Compass Call brings such capabilities, but to win in a contested environment, we will require a systems-of-systems approach that includes affordable mass, like CCA.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

JPARC AND JOINT INTEGRATED TEST AND TRAINING CENTER

48. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, what advantages does JPARC provide for live-fly training compared to other live-fly locations across the U.S.?

General ALLVIN. The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) is one of the Air Force's premier training ranges for live air combat training and one of only two ranges that the Air Force is modernizing to a Threat Matrix Framework Level 4 peer adversary capability. With approximately 70K+ square miles of airspace, JPARC provides an environment unavailable at other Air Force primary training ranges for large force exercises such as Red Flag-Alaska and Northern Edge while supporting the daily training requirements of numerous 4th and 5th generation squadrons at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base. Investment in replicating peer-adversary capabilities and the continued modernization of the legacy airspaces will offer the best possible live-fly training environment at JPARC for modern fourth-generation+, fifth generation, and anticipated sixth generation aircraft and their weapon system capabilities.

49. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, can you explain what advantages integrating training between the virtual training at JITTTC and the live-fly training at JPARC will provide the Air Force and the Joint Force?

General ALLVIN. Air Force and adversary capabilities have advanced to a point where we must leverage a combination of live and synthetic training to adequately prepare for the Great Power Competition. Locating a Joint Integrated Test and Training Center at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson provides the Joint Force with the best synthetic and unique live training opportunities in the same location. It will allow crews to optimize the strengths of each environment for more relevant and realistic high-end training.

18TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

50. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, what is the Air Force resourcing plan to upgrade the F-16s in the squadron with newer AESA radars, avionics, and sensor pods?

General ALLVIN. At Eielson Air Force Base, the Alaska-assigned F-16s (18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron) are not programmed to receive active electronically scanned array (AESA) radars or modernized avionics. They are equipped with five (5) two-way down link sniper pods and six (6) enhanced listening digital port advanced targeting pods, representing the most capable targeting pods compatible with their Block-30 aircraft. Further modernizing these aircraft does not fit within Air Force priorities.

51. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, the squadron requires more pilots and maintainers with its new designation. What is timeline to get those personnel to Alaska?

General ALLVIN. The unit's current pilot manning is at 96 percent. Due to the mission change, the Air Force continues to identify the necessary talent. However, six (6) pilots have been identified for assignment to the squadron by early 2025. No additional maintenance manning requirement is associated with this redesignation.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, is the Air Force considering upgrading the aircraft to a newer F-16 model?

General ALLVIN. The Air Force does not currently intend to replace Eielson Air Force Base assigned F-16s with a newer F-16 model.

RE-OPTIMIZING FOR GREAT POWER COMPETITION

53. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall and General Allvin, unlike most locations in the continental United States, Alaska routinely conducts real-world homeland defense missions. How has the Air Force factored balancing the training aspect

and mission readiness in Alaska within the construct of the Air Force's Reoptimization for Great Power Competition?

Secretary KENDALL and General ALLVIN. Alaska and its enduring real-world homeland defense (HD) mission will not be impacted by the Department of the Air Force's Great Power Competition reoptimization efforts. Units with an in-place real-world mission, like the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, help us highlight tensions between the HD mission and other deployed missions. The work we are doing in reoptimization will help the Air Force ensure we provide the appropriate resourcing for those units to continue training and executing effectively.

54. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, in the event of a Taiwan invasion or other large-scale event in INDOPACOM, the 100 fifth generation fighters in Alaska would likely flow into theater to support combat operations. That means that the experience those units have with operating in Alaska's challenging environment to defend the Homeland will be lost as units from the lower 48 states will have to flow to Alaska to fill the gap. How are you ensuring that the units that would flow to Alaska are trained to deal with cold weather maintenance and operations?

General ALLVIN. In the event Alaska-based fighter squadrons are pulled further into the Pacific, it would be done in full coordination with the Secretary of the Air Force and the Commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command. If backfill to Alaska is warranted, we have Northern Tier Reserve component fighter squadrons and Active component fighter squadrons that train in Alaska at the Joint Pacific-Alaska Range Complex in large-force exercises and have basic training for operations in cold weather conditions.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD PROPOSED PEC-LEVELING IMPACT ON ALASKA MISSIONS

55. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, was the Air Force consulted on the impact of the Air National Guard's proposed PEC-leveling effort on Alaska-based air refueling and combat search and rescue missions?

General ALLVIN. Under the authority of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the Air National Guard Director directed a "Full-Time Leveling" initiative to distribute full-time funding equitably across like units throughout the Air National Guard. The National Guard Bureau has operated under a congressional cap on Active Guard Reserve personnel for three (3) years, each year substantially below the President's Budget request. The National Guard Bureau has frequently messaged the States about the implications of this continuing limit. Furthermore, over the past 30 years, unit conversions and Defense Department programming choices resulted in an imbalance of funded, full-time percentages across units funded under the same program type. The National Guard has agreed to delay Alaska's full-time leveling actions for one (1) year to conduct an internal review. Any discrepancies found during the internal review will be addressed and implemented with a new effective date of October 1, 2025.

56. Senator SULLIVAN. General Allvin, can you describe how Alaska Air National Guard personnel support Air Force missions in Alaska?

General ALLVIN. Alaska Air National Guard personnel conduct aerospace warning and aerospace control, personnel recovery, air refueling, and finally, space warning at Clear Space Force Station.

E-7 WEDGETAIL PROGRAM

57. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, we need to field the E-7 as rapidly as possible but there is a limit to what the Air Force can spend on these airframes. It is my understanding that with a \$2.4 billion investment over the next 2 years, Boeing can deliver four aircraft, in addition to the two already ordered, by 2029. If the Air Force considering making this financial commitment?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force plans to define the E-7 rapid prototyping contract in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024 and make a production decision in fiscal year 2026. As such, the Air Force has not released a request for a proposal for E-7 Production or received an unsolicited E-7 Production proposal from Boeing. We plan to pursue production details after we define the development contract.

58. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, is the Air Force considering a block-buy or multi-year procurement for the E-7 program?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force plans to define the E-7 rapid prototyping contract in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024 and make a production decision in fiscal year 2026. As such, the Air Force has not released a request for a proposal

for E-7 Production or received an unsolicited E-7 Production proposal from Boeing. We plan to pursue production details after we define the development contract.

59. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, has the Navy's E-2D Hawkeye been considered as a potential stop gap given the delays in the E-7 production?

Secretary KENDALL. Our prior market research considered L3 Harris, SAAB, and Northrop's E-2D Hawkeye potential options to fill the capability. Each has limitations, and none are as capable as the E-7 solution we are currently pursuing. The E-2D Hawkeye was assessed as an alternative but failed to meet various mission requirements, including the radar detection range, overall mobility and reach, and aerial refueling configuration. The E-2D is optimized for protecting the carrier battle group instead of battle management command and control of a massive force engagement. Also, the E-7 service ceiling is over 5,000 feet higher than the E-2D, directly affecting the maximum radar detection range. We can provide additional details regarding the radar at the classified level.

60. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, what does the Air Force view as the most significant issues affecting the timely production of the E-7?

Secretary KENDALL. The Air Force's E-7A Rapid Prototyping Program will design the U.S. system and build two (2) operationally representative E-7A prototype aircraft. The Air Force plans to define the E-7 Rapid Prototyping contract in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024 and is preparing for a follow-on production decision in fiscal year 2026. Execution challenges as part of a production program include the approximately 4-year lead-time to deliver each production aircraft. It will take two (2) years to get the "green" 737 host aircraft and two (2) years to convert it to an E-7A, including concurrent lead-time for the multi-role electronically scanned array sensor.

LONG RANGE DISCRIMINATION RADAR

61. Senator SULLIVAN. General Saltzman, did the MDA's canceled test flight numbered FTX-26 for the LRDR at Clear Space Force Station delay the transfer of the LRDR to the Space Force?

General SALTZMAN. The transfer of LRDR to the Space Force is still planned for fiscal year 2025 after LRDR is added to the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Operational Capability List in December 2024 and the completion of Flight Test Other-26a (FTX-26a) in June 2025. Due to the Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) target anomaly, FTX-26 was a no test event. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) is conducting another operational test, FTX-26a, in June 2025 to complete transfer requirements to the Space Force. Flight Test Other-26 (FTX-26) remains within the Missile Defense Agency's (MDA) funding and control.

62. Senator SULLIVAN. General Saltzman, can you explain how the LRDR will enhance the missile defense mission while simultaneously helping the Space Force track a rapidly proliferating number of objects in orbit?

General SALTZMAN. The long-range discrimination radar (LRDR) provides persistent long-range midcourse discrimination, precision tracking, and hit assessment to support the ground-based midcourse defense capability against long-range missile threats. The LRDR also supports the Space Force Space Domain Awareness mission by providing operationally relevant space surveillance (metric observations) in Missile Defense System Increment 6B.1. The LRDR will provide Space Object Identification data by September 2026 in Missile Defense System Increment 6C/7.

63. Senator SULLIVAN. General Saltzman, what is the manning composition between Active, Reserve, and Guard personnel required to operate the LRDR?

General SALTZMAN. The long-range discrimination radar (LRDR) is government-owned and contractor-operated, reducing the personnel needed to operate and maintain the weapon system.

Manning composition:

AD: 0

Reserve: 0

Guard: 25 (Security Forces)

DAF Civilians: 2 (Quality Assurance & Oversight)

Contractors (in AK, CO & CA): 88

Total: 115

64. Senator SULLIVAN. General Saltzman, did the Air National Guard consult you about the impact of its proposed PEC-leveling program on the Space Force missions at Clear SFS?

General SALTZMAN. The Air National Guard is not required to consult with me on aligning State National Guard manpower resources. I understand that the Director of the Air National Guard, under the authority of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, directed a full-time leveling initiative to equitably distribute full-time funding across like units throughout the Air National Guard. All full-time leveling initiatives within Alaska are on hold until October 1, 2025, further permitting the Air National Guard staff to coordinate with Alaska National Guard leadership to address their concerns on the proposed manpower changes.

EIELSON HOUSING

65. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, does the Air Force want to build additional on base housing at Eielson Air Force Base to alleviate what it describes as a shortage of suitable housing in the surrounding community?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) policy is to rely on the private sector as the primary source of housing. The recent Housing Requirements Market Analysis from 2022 concluded that there is a current shortfall in family housing, and the KC-135 beddown would exacerbate the issue. The Eielson commander is working with the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska Commander and local officials to advise the community on the types and quantities of additional housing required to address the DOD family housing shortfall.

66. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, if the Air Force is considering building additional on base housing at Eielson, when can we expect to see that request in the Air Force budget?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force and the privatized family housing company on Eielson are not planning to build additional family housing.

67. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, can you explain what housing criteria must be met for the first KC-135 to arrive at Eielson?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) will reassess housing availability to meet KC-135 beddown requirements when the community communicates new housing development and can ensure an availability timeline when vacancy rates consistently exceed 10 percent over consecutive quarters. The DAF is currently tracking two proposed housing developments in the North Pole, Alaska area.

The DAF continues to track new housing construction and vacancy metrics through engagement with the Fairbanks North Star Borough Housing Task Force and the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska. The DAF must ensure that we have enough affordable market-comparable housing for the aircrew and the support staff to provide the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families that we need to be able to retain those families.

68. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, are any personnel associated with the four additional KC-135s slated to arrive at Eielson already on base?

Secretary KENDALL. There are no Department of the Air Force (DAF) personnel assigned to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to support the addition of four (4) KC-135s, pending a solution for adequate housing at Eielson and in the Fairbanks area. The DAF must ensure we have enough affordable market-comparable housing for the aircrew and the support staff to provide the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families that we need to be able to retain those families.

69. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Kendall, what is the current timeline for each of the four KC-135s to arrive at Eielson?

Secretary KENDALL. A timeline has yet to be established for the arrival of the four (4) KC-135s, and a solution for adequate housing at Eielson and in the Fairbanks area is pending outcome of discussions with the community and the U.S. Army Garrison Alaska.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

HOMESTEAD AIR RESERVE BASE

70. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Kendall, we have a real, underutilized asset in South Florida—Homestead Air Reserve Base. Last week, Secretary Austin told me

that “Homestead Air Reserve Base is strategically located and provides valuable contributions to our efforts in the SOUTHCOM AOR.” General Richardson, the SOUTHCOM Commander, talked about the value of Homestead and how it was used as a staging base for humanitarian efforts after the earthquake in Haiti in 2021. Additionally, during General Brown’s confirmation hearing last year he talked about the importance of Homestead and told me he was committed to having a platform operate out of Homestead. Secretary Kendall, this time last year you said and I quote “I’m not aware of any desire to close Homestead”. I appreciate all the positive commentary, but that doesn’t mean a thing when there’s nothing in the budget and the Air Force has not provided an update on the plan or even a future plan for Homestead. Secretary Kendall, what is the Air Force’s plan for a flying mission at Homestead and what are the future plans for the base?

Secretary KENDALL. The Department of the Air Force has no force structure changes in fiscal year 2025 for Homestead and no plans to close Homestead Air Reserve Base. Homestead will continue to be considered as a candidate in future strategic basing actions, as applicable, based on specific mission beddown requirements. Due to its strategic location, Homestead Air Reserve Base will remain Active.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE SPECTRUM DOMINANCE

71. Senator SCOTT. General Allvin, during your confirmation hearing last year, I asked you about the importance of the 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing at Eglin. You said “spectrum warfare is really integrating with the other traditional parts of warfare and ensuring that we can have our air superiority, we can support our strike missions, all those by not just managing spectrum but protecting our own vulnerabilities and exploiting those of our adversaries.” Do we need to dominate the Electronic Warfare spectrum to win a war with Communist China?

General ALLVIN. Yes, the United States needs to dominate the Electromagnetic Spectrum at times and places of our choosing to win. The Electromagnetic Spectrum is a maneuver space and physical environment linking all military operations in and across the air, land, maritime, cyberspace, and space warfighting domains. We need the spectrum to deny adversaries long-range kill chains and enable ours. We must be able to operate in the spectrum without prohibitive interference while also denying our adversaries’ ability to operate effectively.

72. Senator SCOTT. General Allvin, I believe we do need to dominate the spectrum to win a war against any adversary and I want to protect servicemembers. I don’t see anything in the budget this year for the 350th to build the Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Superiority Complex. I also don’t see anything in the budget for the Electronic Warfare Center of Excellence, these are also not on the unfunded priorities list. If we have to dominate the spectrum to win, shouldn’t we invest in the infrastructure and the people that we need to dominate the EW spectrum?

General ALLVIN. The 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing’s (SWW) Electromagnetic Superiority Complex is moving forward. The SWW received \$8 million in fiscal year 2023 to reach 35 percent of the design milestone, the initial requirement for consideration of military construction funding. The Army Corps of Engineers awarded the 350 SWW MILCON 35 percent design contract on 24 Jul 2024; the 35 percent design is expected to take approximately 120 days. After 35 percent of the design is accomplished, we expect to fund the construction of the Electromagnetic Superiority Complex.

The 350th SWW is the focal point within the Air Force for curating, developing, testing, integrating, and promulgating algorithms and techniques for Electromagnetic Warfare across the force. The Department of the Air Force is committed to funding the necessary infrastructure, people, and capabilities. In addition to money from classified programs, the Fiscal Year 2025 President’s Budget invests \$55 million directly into the 350th SWW.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

AIR FORCE FIGHTER PLAN

73. Senator BUDD. Secretary Kendall, section 148. of fiscal year 2024 NDAA requires the Secretary of the Air Force, in consultation with the Director of the Air National Guard and the Commander of the Air Force Reserve to develop a long-term tactical fighter force structure, recapitalization, training and sustainment plan for the Active and Reserve components of the Air Force and submit a report to Congress no later than April 1, 2024 that includes this plan. This plan is 15 days past due. What specific date can we expect this report?

Secretary KENDALL. The Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act unclassified fighter report has been delivered to Congress. The classified annex is awaiting clearance for submission.

F-15EX FLEET

74. Senator BUDD. Secretary Kendall and General Allvin, the Air Force claims it is replacing its aged F-15C fleet with F-15EX, and that is reflected in the budget documents. However, the F-15EX is built as a two-seat, multirole platform. It also appears that the fighter roadmap is projecting an air to ground role for F-15EX in the future. Which one is it? Air superiority, or multi-role? Will there be Weapons Systems Officers (WSO, or “wizzos”) in the backseat?

Secretary KENDALL and General ALLVIN. The F-15EX is a short-duration procurement to rapidly recapitalize the F-15C/D airframe for air superiority and homeland defense missions. Unlike the F-15E, it is engineered to be fully operated single-seat, with an optional second aircrew member. The Department of the Air Force (DAF)’s plan for the F-15EX is to provide air superiority capability in contested environments and outsized weapon support to the long-range kill chain. We will continue evaluating future modifications and resources required to field and employ multi-role capabilities like the F-15E.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL NU-
CLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION ATOMIC ENERGY
DEFENSE ACTIVITIES**

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 8:59 a.m., in room G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Peters, Manchin, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Scott, Tuberville, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Let me call the hearing to order. Just for my colleague's awareness, so we intend to conclude today's hearing, as we did yesterday, by 12 noon due to Senate floor business.

This will require us ending the open session by 11 a.m. and then moving immediately to the closed session in SVC-217. As such, I would ask that members adhere to the 5-minute rule. I will enforce it.

Then, I will waive my opening statement, and I—Senator Wicker also has graciously agreed to waive his opening statement. So, with that, let me recognize Secretary Granholm for her statement, and then Administrator Hruby. Madam Secretary.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM,
SECRETARY OF ENERGY**

Secretary GRANHOLM. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and I will be quick about my opening statement to try to be in the spirit of moving with alacrity.

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, of course, esteemed Members of the Committee, honored to be here representing the Department of Energy before you today. I thank this committee for the strong, consistent, bipartisan support the committee has shown the Department of Energy, the NNSA on our collective mission.

For the past 3 years, Congress has entrusted DOE with significant resources to buildup America's manufacturing capacity, to create jobs, to lead global clean energy markets, and those endeavors are critical to energy security and economic competitiveness in the 21st century, and at the same time, the American people have long counted on the Department to meet essential National Security missions.

The geopolitical shifts around us have made clear that those missions are urgent as ever. The growing cooperation between Russia, China, Iran, North Korea has created a more unstable and less predictable international environment, increased saber rattling aggression against our allies, and cyber-attack threats reinforce the imperative to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

Meanwhile, more and more countries around the world are embracing the potential of civil nuclear power for sustainable development, for zero carbon energy, and for climate security.

In fact, in December, 22 nations pledged to triple civil nuclear generation capacity by 2050, and interest is only set to grow as these small modular reactors and advanced reactors continue to progress.

All of this underscores a need for deeper investment and innovation in nonproliferation and counterterrorism measures, and as nuclear technology continues to develop, we must uphold our pledges to the communities that have lived alongside those programs for decades.

So, the Department has worked urgently to deliver on each of these priorities over the past year, and the President's Budget Request for 2025 will empower us to make even greater progress. I just want to detail quickly some of the key elements, starting with the NNSA. The fiscal year 2025 budget calls for \$25 billion, which is a 3.6 percent increase over the 2024 enacted level.

That includes a roughly 4 percent increase for weapons activities, which will allow us to move more swiftly toward modernizing the nuclear stockpile and restoring production capacity. This request would also empower the NNSA to respond to new threats and opportunities under nuclear nonproliferation and counterterrorism.

It will allow us to continue providing the Navy with nuclear propulsion systems, while developing the next generation of nuclear powered warships. Both are vital to our technological advantage over our adversaries and preserving free global oceans.

Importantly, the budget will also allow the NNSA to build the Federal workforce that is needed to meet our increasing mission requirements. Further, the President has requested \$8.2 billion for our Office of Environmental Management, which oversees the largest environmental cleanup operation in the world.

Last year, our teams across the country made great progress on key demolitions and treating and relocating millions of gallons of tank waste, addressing contamination issues across our sites.

The fiscal year 2025 request will allow us to build on those results and deepen our engagement with tribes and communities as they plan for the future of those sites, and it will help us recruit and train a new cohort of legacy management workers and leaders.

Over the past 3 years, we have made important progress on each of these crucial missions, yet challenges do remain. This budget request prepares us for the depth of the work that is still ahead.

I am proud to lead such a gifted and dedicated teams, starting with the great leader to my left, Dr. Jill Hruby, who heads the NNSA and who is here to answer questions about the weapons program.

We are both grateful to have your partnership and support on these indispensable matters, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. Administrator Hruby, please.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JILL M. HRUBY, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Ms. HRUBY. Thank you. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker—

Chairman REED. Can you bring that microphone as close as possible?

Ms. HRUBY. Thank you, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you with Secretary Granholm to discuss the Department of Energy's enduring National Security missions.

NNSA appreciates the consistent, strong support for our work and our workforce from the Secretary and from the Committee. In today's complex and dynamic security environment, NNSA is delivering.

Last year, we provided the Department of Defense over 200 modernized weapons on schedule. The life of ship nuclear reactor for the *Columbia*-class submarine is on track for lead ship delivery.

Our nuclear nonproliferation and counterterrorism programs are advancing technologies and partnerships that are responsive to the evolving global environment. In all our programs, we are preparing for the future by revitalizing our infrastructure and staying at the cutting edge in select science and technology areas.

NNSA's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request of \$25 billion reflects these priorities. The nuclear weapons program of record grew from five to seven systems this past year. The B61 and the W88 Alt 370 programs are in production.

The W80-4 remains aligned with the Air Force schedule for the long range standoff missile, and we expect a first production unit in September 2027. The W87-1 is currently scheduled to begin production in fiscal year 2031 or 2032, and the W93 remains on track for production starting in the mid 2030's.

With the fiscal year 2024 budget enactment, NNSA began working on the B61-13 program, with the first production unit expected in fiscal year 2026. Although the nuclear sea launched cruise missile, or SLCM-N, is not in the budget request for fiscal year 2025 due to the timing of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, NNSA is committed to fulfilling this requirement.

These seven systems represent modernized weapons for all three legs of the triad and new capabilities responsive to today's security

environment. NNSA is also modernizing our infrastructure alongside our programs.

We have prioritized investments to deliver the most urgently needed capabilities, while pursuing a longer term strategy of responsive, flexible, and resilient enterprise. Tangible progress on both large and smaller scale projects is being made.

A milestone anticipated this year is the first diamond stamped war reserve W87-1 plutonium pit from the Los Alamos pit production facility. In short, NNSA is delivering on programs that holistically support nuclear deterrence and strengthen relationships with our allies and partners.

There is much work ahead. We are fully committed, and we appreciate your support. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Secretary Jennifer M. Granholm and Ms. Jill M. Hruby follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY SECRETARY JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM AND
ADMINISTRATOR JILL M. HRUBY

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and esteemed Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). We recognize and appreciate the Committee's consistent support for DOE's enduring national security missions.

As the Secretary of Energy and Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, we recognize the unique challenges posed by a deteriorating international environment and remain committed to strengthening our nuclear deterrent while reducing global nuclear and cyber risks, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology to combat climate change, strengthening the cybersecurity of our critical energy infrastructure, and engaging in responsible environmental stewardship and cleanup.

The Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile remains the cornerstone of our strategic deterrent and a key tool in reassuring our allies. The Department is aware that we have no margin for error and that we must remain committed to our nuclear modernization efforts. This commitment must be paired with further progress on non-proliferation and counterterrorism measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear and radiological material and expertise. This is especially significant as the global civilian nuclear power sector expands, and new nuclear technologies are introduced as a means of providing secure, clean power and fighting climate change. Additionally, the Department will continue to provide the U.S. Navy's submarines and aircraft carriers with militarily effective nuclear propulsion plants and is looking forward to being an effective contributor to the new trilateral Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership.

We are also actively addressing the increasing cyber threat to U.S. energy infrastructure. The recent cyber activity called "Volt Typhoon" conducted by state-sponsored cyber actors from the People's Republic of China (PRC) should alarm all of us. The United States Government assesses that PRC state-sponsored cyber actors are seeking to pre-position themselves for disruptive or destructive cyberattacks against United States critical infrastructure in the event of a major crisis or conflict with the United States.

The fiscal year 2025 Budget reflects the Administration's commitment to these priorities, allowing the Department to enhance our national security, engage in cleanup from our legacy nuclear activities, and promote American leadership on the safe and peaceful use of clean energy.

NNSA'S FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The fiscal year 2025 budget request reflects the urgent demands on the nuclear security enterprise to deliver and adapt while exercising fiscal restraint and increasing efficiency. NNSA's fiscal year 2025 budget request is \$25 billion. The fiscal year 2025 budget request prioritizes executing the nuclear weapon program of record, including the development of the B61-13, advancing naval nuclear propulsion systems, and revitalizing the infrastructure across the enterprise. In addition, our requested budget supports development and application of emerging technologies such as digital engineering and artificial intelligence (AI) that will increase our efficiency and innovation. The fiscal year 2025 budget request affirms the Administration's

steadfast commitment to a strong national defense and NNSA's critical and evolving missions.

WEAPONS ACTIVITIES APPROPRIATION

The Weapons Activities fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$19.8 billion, supports stockpile management; production modernization; stockpile research, technology, and engineering; infrastructure and operations; defense nuclear security and secure transportation; and information management and cyber security.

Stockpile Management

The Stockpile Management budget request of \$5.14 billion, supports stockpile modernization, stockpile sustainment, weapons dismantlement, production operations, and nuclear enterprise assurance.

The stockpile modernization program budget request of \$2.84 billion supports six systems in the expanded program of record: B61-12 LEP, B61-13, W88 Alt 370, W87-1, W80-4, and W93. Although SLCM-N is not in the budget request due to the timing of the fiscal year 2024 NDAA and fiscal year 2024 budget enactment compared to the development and submittal of the fiscal year 2025 budget request, NNSA will continue to work with DOD and Congress to assure accordance with fiscal year 2024 NDAA Section 1640.

NNSA has achieved 100 percent on-time delivery of the W88 Alteration (Alt) 370 Program and B61-12 Life Extension Program (LEP) to DOD. This represents consistent production progress since our announcement of First Production Units (FPU) in fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022, respectively.

Starting with the fiscal year 2024 budget enactment, NNSA began the B61-13 program in response to the decision to strengthen deterrence and assurance by providing the President with additional options against certain harder and large-area military targets. In coordination with DOD, NNSA will decrease the number of B61-12s built by the number of B61-13s manufactured, resulting in no change to the number of weapons in the stockpile. NNSA appreciates Congress' authorization and appropriation of \$52 million in fiscal year 2024 for the B61-13, allowing us to take advantage of active B61 production capabilities. In fiscal year 2025, the B61-13 program will progress into Phase 6.4, Production Engineering, with FPU expected in fiscal year 2026.

The W80-4 warhead for the long-range standoff missile entered Phase 6.4, Production Engineering, in fiscal year 2023 and remains on track for FPU in September 2027, aligned with the Air Force schedule for initial and final operational capability dates.

In fiscal year 2023, the W87-1 entered Phase 6.3, Development Engineering, a major milestone. The W87-1 will replace the aging W78 warhead, one of the oldest in the stockpile. The FPU for the W87-1 is currently scheduled for fiscal year 2031-32. The W87-1 is the first modernized weapon that will have a newly manufactured pit, which will be built at Los Alamos National Laboratory and certified by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

In May 2022, the W93 entered Phase 2, Feasibility Study and Design Options, and remains on track for production starting in the mid-2030's. The Nuclear Weapons Council has directed effort to accelerate the W93 FPU and the fiscal year 2025 budget request supports this effort. The W93 is a new warhead program based on existing designs that will not require new underground nuclear explosive testing. The W93 will meet DOD requirements to enhance operational effectiveness of the U.S. ballistic missile submarine force. The W93 will have new pits produced at Savannah River. The program is being undertaken in parallel with the United Kingdom's Replacement Warhead program continuing our coordination through the United States-United Kingdom Mutual Defense Agreement.

The fiscal year 2024 NDAA required a SLCM-N as part of NNSA's program of record. As mentioned earlier, NNSA is coordinating with DOD to determine warhead requirements and meet congressional direction for this new program. We will continue to keep Congress informed as program offices in NNSA and the Navy are stood up and requirements are better defined.

In addition to the seven modernization programs mentioned here, NNSA has also requested \$69 million in the Stockpile Research, Technology, and Engineering program to support two "Phase 1" system studies for early exploration of hard and deeply buried target defeat and non-ballistic reentry systems.

In order to continue to increase efficiency and enable future on-time delivery of weapons, NNSA has initiated two efforts: digital engineering and agile product realization. It is our intent to lower the time and cost to deliver a new weapon as we improve our processes and increase the experience level within the enterprise.

The Stockpile Management budget request for Stockpile Sustainment and Production Operations reflects the increased demands of the existing and modernized stockpile efforts. The Nuclear Enterprise Assurance budget request reflects a response to growing threats associated with cyber and digital advances. NNSA has requested over a 50 percent increase since fiscal year 2023 to respond to this growing reality. Last, the fiscal year 25 budget request for Weapons Dismantlement balances the needs of the enterprise.

Production Modernization

NNSA's \$5.9 billion budget request for production modernization reflects disciplined priority decisions in the portfolio and the overall Weapons Activities budget, as well as the availability of carryover to address fiscal year 2025 requirements. The FYNSP includes production modernization budget requests that grow at a faster pace in future years to meet stockpile modernization demands as the program spends down excess carryover, particularly in major projects.

NNSA's highest production modernization priority is re-establishing the capability to produce new plutonium pits that was lost in 1989 when production at Rocky Flats was halted. The pit production plan includes a redesign and refurbishment of Los Alamos plutonium facilities to support a production capacity of 30 pits per year (ppy) while simultaneously establishing the processes to achieve war reserve (WR) qualified pits for the W87-1.

As work continues at Los Alamos, the building designed and constructed to house the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at Savannah River is being modified and re-purposed to manufacture at least 50 ppy. The W93 pits will be the first manufactured at Savannah River. Although the W87-1 and W93 programs are setting the quantity and schedule of pit production now, other future weapons will also require newly produced pits. Pit production will be needed to support the stockpile as long as nuclear weapons exist.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for plutonium modernization is \$2.89 billion. The request for Los Alamos reflects the use of carryover funding to support increased activity in fiscal year 2025. The budget request for Savannah River offsets the decreased request for Los Alamos. Additionally, the request for Infrastructure and Operations supports increasing operations and maintenance requirements associated with the pit production mission.

The fiscal year 2025 \$1.5 billion budget request for Los Alamos pit production and the associated line-item projects reflects the use of carryover balances and consistent with projected execution rates of the line-item projects.

In fiscal year 2023, more development pits were produced at Los Alamos than ever before—nine full W87-1 development pit builds, with five more partial builds. Los Alamos is on track to “diamond stamp” the first fully qualified WR pit in the second half of this year. The budget request supports the increased pace of manufacturing work associated with the ramp from FPU to rate production, as well as the increased pace planned for equipment installation. It is expected that Los Alamos will achieve the minimum capability needed to produce 30 ppy in or near 2028 with increasingly dependable capability attained each year through 2032.

The requests for Savannah River Pit Production and Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) sum to \$1.28 billion. The request for SRPPF supports the increasing pace of work to support completion of construction and turnover to operations in 2032. We thank Congress for the strong support of this critical project. Fiscal year 2023 funding was used for contract awards for the first set of gloveboxes on the critical path for construction, as well as significant early site and building preparation work. Fiscal year 2024 funding will be used for contract awards for additional long-lead critical-path procurements and preparations. SRPPF's Process Design is now 90 percent complete with the 60 percent overall project Preliminary Design completion anticipated before the first quarter of fiscal year 2025.

Last year NNSA committed to generating an updated SRPPF cost and schedule estimate, recognizing that there would be large uncertainties because the 60 percent design is not yet complete. Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) has produced a “bottom-up” cost and schedule estimate based on information that was available near the end of fiscal year 2023. SRNS estimates turnover to operations will occur in 2032 or 2033, with a total project cost of \$18.5 billion. NNSA's cost range for Savannah River based on the SRNS estimate, an independent estimate from our Cost Estimating and Project Evaluation (CEPE) office, and our Office of Infrastructure cost review is \$18 billion to \$25 billion. These figures represent the macrolevel results of the review. The details continue to be refined and will be briefed to the Nuclear Weapons Council in the coming months.

Finally, the successful transition of SRS management to NNSA is important to our efforts on SRPPF. NNSA is working closely with our colleagues at the Depart-

ment of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, the Savannah River Field Office, the SRNS leadership team, and local stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition.

The NNSA Integrated Master Schedule (NIMS) has been updated and improved as requested by Congress. Additional logic and linkages are included for LAP4, schedules between LAP4 and SRPPF are better integrated, and the paths to FPU and rate production at SRPPF are incorporated. The NIMS contains integrated detailed site schedule logic from Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore, and the Kansas City National Security Campus (KCNSC) for program scope focused on pit manufacturing and production efforts to attain first production unit at Los Alamos. There is less detail in the schedule for SRPPF projects and the later phases of equipment installation at LAP4 since equipment and system designs for this work are less mature. NIMS will continue to integrate higher fidelity schedule logic for those programs and projects as their designs and schedules mature. The current NIMS makes it an effective management tool for the program and continuous updates will allow NIMS to continue to be an effective tool.

Additionally, NNSA has directed an external review of our Plutonium program by the Advisory Committee for Nuclear Security, a Federal Advisory Committee Act group reporting to the Administrator. The initial report from this committee is expected in May 2024.

Alongside pit production, the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) at Y-12 is a top priority. The fiscal year 2025 budget request for UPF is \$800 million. We greatly appreciate congressional actions to support reprogramming in fiscal year 2023.

The construction of the overall UPF project is now over 60 percent complete. Gloveboxes are installed in the main process building, and over 97 percent of all procurements have been delivered. The current focus of work is bulk electrical installation, with over 60 miles of electrical conduit and cable installed in the last half of calendar year 2023. However, due to a variety of issues, including direct and indirect impacts from COVID, deficiencies in contractor performance and planning, overly optimistic assumptions on productivity, repeated delays on procurements, and funding uncertainties, the most current UPF project cost estimate is \$10.3 billion and the estimated date for construction completion is late fiscal year 2027 with beginning of operations expected in October 2031.

In addition to making progress on UPF, NNSA is advancing its development of centrifuges and cascades for domestic uranium enrichment and its production of tritium with a fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$662 million.

Other large-scale projects are either starting or moving forward in line with NNSA's weapon modernization and/or safety and security needs. In late calendar year 2023, NNSA broke ground on the Lithium Processing Facility (LPF) at Y-12 with construction expected to start in fiscal year 2026 and a fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$260 million. The High Explosives Science and Engineering facility at Pantex continues construction with a fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$15 million, and the Power Sources Capability at Sandia has a budget request of \$50 million. The Kansas City Non-Nuclear Expansion Transformation (KCNEXT), a new real estate acquisition approach to meet NNSA's space needs that will break ground in Summer 2024. KCNEXT is critical to increase capacity of the non-nuclear components. Each of these projects is key to modernizing facilities to avoid infrastructure failure and to increase capacity.

NNSA recognizes the fiscal year 2024 NDAA statutory language for completion of the High Explosives Synthesis, Formulation, and Production Facility (HESFP) at the Pantex Plant, and the Tritium Finishing Facility (TFF) at SRS. Funding for these project schedules was not factored into the fiscal year 2025 request as NNSA's strategy was to prioritize funding of a reduced number of critical projects, and both HESFP and TFF are of a lower priority.

Science, Research, Technology, and Engineering

The Stockpile Research, Technology, and Engineering (SRT&E) portfolio develops and delivers the tools used every day for design, certification, and assessment of the stockpile without underground nuclear explosive testing; evaluates and accelerates future concepts; improves understanding of weapon response to environmental conditions; and matures technologies for warheads and manufacturing processes. The SRT&E budget supports the infrastructure and workforce to deliver scientific and engineering advances, including both experimental and computational capabilities. The fiscal year 2025 budget request for SRT&E is \$3.17 billion.

In fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024, Lawrence Livermore repeated its 2022 fusion ignition breakthrough at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) four times, improving gains and achieving a yield of 5.2 MJ in February 2024. We were excited to have the first NNSA Ignition result highlighted by Google as the "most searched

breakthrough” in the past 25 years. Also, in In fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024, NNSA started significant efforts to mature technologies to manufacture radiation cases, evaluate new explosives formulations, implement AI in science and engineering programs, and establish AI models and testbeds for unclassified and classified work.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$880 million for Advanced Simulation and Computing enables transitioning LANL’s Crossroads system to classified service for weapons assessment and certification, bringing on line the first exaflop computer El Capitan at Lawrence Livermore, and expanding the application of Artificial Intelligence to stockpile stewardship.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Inertial Confinement Fusion (ICF) program of \$683 million will allow NNSA to address near-term weapons physics challenges and build on its repeated success of reaching fusion ignition in the laboratory. The ICF program gives NNSA experimental access to extreme temperature and pressure regimes characteristic of nuclear weapons to support design, certification, and assessment of the stockpile without resuming underground nuclear explosive testing. NNSA is currently recapitalizing and sustaining existing facilities in line with the ICF 10-Year Facility and Infrastructure Plan delivered to Congress in March 2023. The highly visible successes of the ICF program enhances the deterrent by demonstrating world-leading expertise in high energy density science and technology and providing experimental access to weapons-relevant physical conditions previously unattainable in the laboratory.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Enhanced Capabilities for Subcritical Experiments (ECSE) of \$240 million coupled with the \$73 million U1a Complex Enhancements Project (UCEP) request will support expansion, construction, and system installations at the Principal Underground Laboratory for Subcritical Experimentation (PULSE) at the Nevada National Security Site. ECSE includes development of the Z-pinch Experimental Underground System (ZEUS) and Advanced Sources Detectors (ASD) Scorpius instruments. Experiments with these tools at PULSE will provide capabilities for system-level plutonium aging experiments at the end of the decade and will provide an important capability to assess system designs for ongoing modernization programs.

Academic Programs and Community Support

The budget request for Academic Programs and Community support is \$128 million. It is critical for NNSA to support external mission-relevant research, generate a talent pipeline in key areas of science and engineering, and support our communities. This funding is targeted at workforce needs projected to be the most critical.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The NNSA budget request for Infrastructure and Operations is \$3.3 billion, including \$3.16 billion for operations and \$144 million for a portfolio of smaller infrastructure projects. The Operations request, which includes operations of facilities, safety and environmental operations, maintenance and repair of facilities, and recapitalization, is essential to be able to deliver our stockpile program from our legacy infrastructure base, especially while revitalization and new construction are underway. As noted above, significant investments in both operations of facilities and maintenance and repair of facilities are tied to increased requirements associated with plutonium pit production. The Operations request also reflects the transition of management of the Savannah River Site from Environmental Management to NNSA. Funding throughout operations of facilities, maintenance and repair of facilities, and recapitalization is critical to ensure that NNSA can transition SRS to an enduring missionsite to support pit production and the broader nuclear modernization program. Additionally, \$240 million of the \$778 million requested for Recapitalization will fund the second phase of KCNEXT, including real estate acquisition of the first manufacturing facility in the KCNEXT portfolio.

NNSA continues to innovate on mission-enabling construction of commercial-like projects to save time and taxpayer dollars while upgrading key capabilities. In calendar year 2023, NNSA successfully completed the final three projects initiated under the 2019 Enhanced Minor Construction and Commercial Standards (EMC2) pilot project: new emergency operations centers at Y-12 and Sandia National Laboratories and a new fire station at Y-12. NNSA experienced up to a 30 percent cost avoidance on these pilot projects. In August 2023, NNSA established a new policy institutionalizing the streamlined oversight and management practices from EMC2 for line-item construction projects up to \$100 million, opening the door for future cost and time savings in smaller-scale non-nuclear construction.

To better understand, synchronize, and communicate the enterprise’s infrastructure needs, NNSA is developing an Enterprise Blueprint. The Blueprint will de-

scribe in detail the facilities needed across the enterprise and their ties to mission needs. This will help reinforce NNSA's underlying philosophy of responsiveness, flexibility, and resiliency required to meet dynamic demands. A fully developed Enterprise Blueprint is expected in the latter half of 2024. The Blueprint will guide future investment priorities and budget requests.

DEFENSE NUCLEAR SECURITY AND SECURE TRANSPORTATION

The fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$1.18 billion for Defense Nuclear Security reflects both the transition of responsibility for safeguards and security at the Savannah River Site from EM to NNSA, as well as the need to keep pace with new threats, particularly uncrewed aerial systems. The budget request also includes funding for the West End Protected Area Reduction (WEPAR) project.

NNSA is transitioning to a next-generation counter uncrewed aerial system (CUAS) that will employ an open architecture systems-based approach to address the evolving threat uncrewed aircraft systems present to NNSA facilities and personnel. Open architecture provides the data fusion and integration of open and proprietary sensors to allow NNSA to select the best available mitigation capabilities: radio frequency, directed energy, kinetic, and radar. Combining these approaches will prevent NNSA from relying on a single capability and allows for swift adjustments to incorporate advanced technology. The flexibility gained by this approach allows security planners to customize systems for each management and operating contract mission partner lab, plant, or site, based on unique location conditions. In fiscal year 2025, NNSA will finalize the development of a permanent facility at the Idaho National Laboratory for CUAS testing and evaluation to help security planners identify possible next-generation solutions, outline continuous testing requirements, and improve NNSA's existing CUAS platform.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Secure Transportation is \$371 million. NNSA's Secure Transportation is essential to assure the security of weapons during delivery and return from the DOD and to meet our schedule commitments.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND CYBERSECURITY

The fiscal year 2025 budget requests \$646 million for Information Technology (IT) and Cyber Security recognizes the increasing threats to cyber security and the ever increasing needs to improve information technology, including technology to support our digital engineering initiative. This request is 45 percent above the fiscal year 2023 enacted to provide increased security to this high security enterprise.

NNSA faces an increasingly sophisticated and targeted cyber threat environment. We are recapitalizing our information technology (IT) and cybersecurity environments to provide a more resilient and flexible set of capabilities. The fiscal year 2025 budget request prioritizes investments in the IT and cybersecurity workforce, enterprise-scale cyber infrastructure, implementation of zero trust architecture, digital transformation, classified and unclassified commercial cloud-based technologies, and classified wireless systems to improve mission outcomes across the nuclear security enterprise. NNSA is also conducting cyber exercises, including red teaming, to stress test NNSA's cybersecurity posture. We are making these investments to remain poised to address any cyber threat.

DEFENSE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

The Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation budget request of \$2.46 billion continues critical investment for our nonproliferation, counterterrorism, and emergency response programs at this difficult time in global strategic stability.

The Material Management and Minimization fiscal year 2025 budget request is \$377 million. The budget reflects the decision to delay the design and construction of a Pit Disassembly and Processing (PDP) Facility as part of the Surplus Plutonium Disposition (SPD) program. The PDP delay, to be re-evaluated in 10 years, allows us to prioritize the removal of material from South Carolina. Real progress in SPD has been made. We are especially pleased that, following years of extensive planning and coordination, last year the first shipment of down-blended surplus plutonium was transported from K-Area at the SRS in South Carolina to Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for final disposition, and shipments have continued regularly. A total of 111.6 kgs of NNSA surplus plutonium was dispositioned during fiscal year 2023.

Another key activity over the past several years has been assisting the final major global producer of the medical isotope molybdenum-99 to convert from using highly enriched uranium (HEU) to low enriched uranium, helping to ensure a stable supply of a critical medical isotope while eliminating an associated proliferation risk. A related effort to establish a reliable supply of domestically produced Mo-99 in the

United States received a one-time increase in fiscal year 2024, and a plan to execute is being established in consultation with Congress.

NNSA continues to work with partners who have converted research reactors and medical isotope production processes by supplying the high-assay, low-enriched uranium (HALEU) they need to operation. This increasingly includes countries that are looking to wean themselves from Russian supplies of HALEU.

In fiscal year 2025, we plan to use the Mobile-Melt-Consolidate system developed by NNSA to begin to eliminate inventories of excess HEU in Norway that previously lacked a disposition pathway. To date, NNSA has eliminated over 7,340kg of HEU and plutonium globally; the material equivalent to eliminating hundreds of nuclear weapons.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Global Material Security is \$544 million. The GMS request prioritizes funding for the nuclear smuggling detection and deterrence portfolio. NNSA has increased focus on Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa to counter Russian and Chinese activity and influence in those regions. NNSA began cooperation with 16 new partners in the past 2 years, and by the end of fiscal year 2025, NNSA will deploy 78 new counter nuclear smuggling systems.

NNSA also remains on track to meet the congressionally mandated deadline to replace all cesium-based blood irradiators in the United States by 2027. NNSA's success here goes beyond just cesium-based blood irradiators. In fact, NNSA removed over 100 devices in fiscal year 2023, with another 85 removals expected by the end of fiscal year 2024. NNSA has expanded its work to find technical capable tools to replace those materials posing the greatest risk of radiological terrorism with a greater focus on alternatives to cobalt-60 replacements.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Nonproliferation and Arms Control is \$225 million. The budget request will support new activities to improve safeguarding uranium enrichment plants and develop policy and technical solutions to address risks associated with the global expansion of nuclear energy.

The budget includes funding for Project Carousel, a unique multilateral capability that will allow the IAEA to test and validate technologies and train safeguards inspectors.

NNSA personnel have been closely involved in efforts to counter Russian and Chinese disinformation and illegal actions while promoting United States and allied interests. This includes working with the Department of State (DOS) and other inter-agency partners to counter Chinese disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining the AUKUS security partnership. NNSA will continue collaborating with the DOS and DOD to advance the goals of the partnership while adhering to our obligations as both a responsible nuclear power and under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. NNSA has also lent its expertise to the Global Export Control Coalition to improve the detection of Russia's attempted sanctions evasion to acquire war material to support its ongoing invasion against Ukraine.

NNSA supports the expansion of civil nuclear energy to responsible partners globally. Last year, NNSA was instrumental in forging a civil nuclear cooperation agreement between the United States and the Philippines and provides support to DOS on the negotiation and implementation of these agreements. NNSA also helps U.S. companies manage their international engagements without sharing sensitive technology. Finally, NNSA is working directly with nuclear reactor developers to build in international safeguards concepts from the beginning, lowering the costs to long term deployment, increasing safeguards effectiveness and improving the competitiveness of American industry for foreign deployment.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request for Nuclear Nonproliferation Research and Development is \$803 million.

The fiscal year 2025 request will continue to support the Nonproliferation Stewardship Program and the Forensics R&D research life-cycle plans

NNSA delivered to the U.S. Space Force (USSF) the first newly completed next-generation Global Burst Detector (GBD IIIF) payload for space-based nuclear detonation monitoring. This new sensor will provide an order of magnitude increase in capabilities at reduced size, weight, and power.

Building from this sensor capability, the R&D budget in fiscal year 2025 request includes support for monitoring and verification capabilities for space situational awareness to reinforce arms control and verification missions in support of current treaties, like the Outer Space Treaty. This work protects our national interests and assets, providing information on activities all the way to the lunar surface and beyond.

While Russia routinely violates its arms control commitments and exhibits norm-violating behavior and China has been unwilling to engage in meaningful bilateral or multilateral arms control, NNSA continues to invest in developing infrastructure, human capital, and advanced technologies to meet current and future monitoring

and verification needs and prepare for potential future arms control negotiations. Last year, NNSA reached an important scientific and engineering milestone by successfully conducting a chemical explosive test in P Tunnel at the Nevada National Security Site. This experiment advanced our ability to detect very low-yield underground nuclear explosive tests around the world.

The R&D request also includes \$15 million for developing capabilities to produce assessments of how AI models may present nuclear proliferation risks and provide recommendations for mitigating the potential AI threats to national security in light of the rapid pace of rapid technological advancement and innovation.

NUCLEAR COUNTERTERRORISM AND INCIDENT RESPONSE

Counterterrorism and Counterproliferation's (CTCP) core capabilities are to counter nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation and respond to any nuclear or radiological incident or accident worldwide. The fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$536 million for the Nuclear Counterterrorism and Incident Response program supports planned investments for the second phase of the Capability Forward initiative by developing a standardized Nuclear Emergency Support Team technical training program focused on actions to secure and defeat weapons of mass destruction (WMD) devices for Federal Bureau of Investigation field office responders. The fiscal year 2025 request also supports technical and policy solutions to counter nuclear proliferation, capability enhancements to counter nuclear and radiological threats—including improved tools to locate, characterize, defeat and conduct forensics on these threats—and training delivery and capacity building for domestic and international partnerships on nuclear counterterrorism and emergency preparedness and response.

NNSA is advancing the Administration's Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence. As outlined in the Executive Order, NNSA is working with our colleagues across DOE to tools to better understand and mitigate the risk of AI being misused to assist in the development or use of CBRN threats. As Russia's full-scale invasion against Ukraine enters its third year, DOE/NNSA's Ukraine Task Force, comprised of experts from DNN and CTCP, is working to reduce nuclear risks in Ukraine. This includes providing equipment, training, and technical guidance to enable the safe and secure operation of Ukraine's nuclear power plants remaining under its control, protect its critical infrastructure, particularly the electric grid, provide situational awareness of any nuclear emergency that occurs in the country, and enhance the emergency preparedness and response capacity of our Ukrainian partners to respond to a nuclear event.

NAVAL REACTORS APPROPRIATION

The Naval Reactors budget request of \$2.1 billion supports NNSA's close partnership with the U.S. Navy in key areas. The agency is advancing naval nuclear propulsion capabilities to keep the U.S. nuclear fleet on the cutting edge of warfighting capability, maintaining the assured second-strike capability of the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad, and building the next generation of infrastructure to enable continued operational success.

With 78 warships, or more than 40 percent of the U.S. Navy's major combatants,¹ maintaining and expanding the United States' competitive edge in the field of naval nuclear propulsion remains critical to our national security. Providing the Nation's submarines and aircraft carriers with unparalleled mobility, flexibility, responsiveness, and endurance is vital in today's geopolitical environment. Continued support for the Naval Reactors program in the fiscal year 2025 request enables the Navy to project robust fleet capabilities on long-term missions that are essential to the security of the nuclear triad, continued global presence, and the security of global trade and free navigation of international waters.

The fiscal year 2025 request supports technology development work critical to delivering improvements in reactor performance and reliability, and to support in-service and future submarines and aircraft carriers' obsolescence and capability needs. The fiscal year 2025 request for Naval Reactors Development is \$868.4 million.

The fiscal year 2025 request supports the continued safe and reliable operations, maintenance, and oversight at Naval Reactors' four Naval Nuclear Laboratory sites and the associated contractor workforce. The fiscal year 2025 request for Naval Reactors Operations and Infrastructure is \$763.2 million. Funding also supports requirements for major initiatives: Columbia-class reactor systems development; de-

¹ "Major combatants," in this instance, include aircraft carriers, submarines, and surface combatants based on the "Active in Commission" column from the Naval Vessel Register

velopment of future advanced submarine technology to support next generation designs; and continued progress on base technology development, infrastructure recapitalization at program sites, and decontamination and decommissioning efforts.

Finally, Naval Reactors continues to support the trilateral AUKUS partnership with work through reimbursable agreements with Australia and the U.K. NNSA will continue its collaboration with DOS and DOD to advance the goals of the agreement while adhering to our obligations as both a responsible nuclear power and under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

NNSA WORKFORCE

The Federal Salaries and Expenses budget request of \$565 million, supports the recruiting, retention, and development of high-quality Federal staff required to meet NNSA's growing mission requirements and commitments, maintain the overall health of the Federal workforce, and ensure NNSA is able to provide effective oversight, which is essential to controlling costs and schedule. The increased request helps address the perennially lowest score that NNSA receives in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey question that states "my workload is manageable."

A portion of the increased request is associated with the SRS landlord transition from DOE Environmental Management (EM) to NNSA. We anticipate the SRS transition will include a transfer of 85 FTEs.

NNSA aims to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce by offering a compelling mission, collaborative work environment, and incentives to compete with the private sector for a limited pool of in-demand talents. NNSA is adjusting its hiring practices to be more proactive to get the right people in the right timeframe.

NNSA appreciates Congress's support to raise the Excepted Service cap in the fiscal year 2024 NDAA.

STEADY PROGRESS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT MISSION

As important as the missions of today and tomorrow are, the cold war left an indelible mark on America. It is the mission of the Office of Environmental Management (EM) to address the legacy of nuclear weapons development and government-sponsored nuclear energy research that has played a significant role in domestic security and prosperity.

As the largest environmental cleanup program in the world, EM plays a key role in the Department's overarching mission to protect the planet. The Department's fiscal year 2025 budget request of \$8.2 billion will help EM continue to make progress in fulfilling the government's responsibility to clean up the environment in communities that supported nuclear weapons programs and government-sponsored nuclear energy research. EM's vital mission also helps to support and enable DOE's ongoing national security and scientific research missions. For nearly 35 years EM has achieved significant progress for the environment, completing cleanup at 92 out of a total of 107 sites. That progress continues today. In 2023, EM teams across the country crossed the finish line on key demolitions, treated and relocated millions of gallons of waste, and deepened our engagements with local Tribes and communities all while curbing pollution.

Deactivation and demolition work at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 National Security Complex is reducing environmental risks and enabling research and national security missions. In Washington State, EM has treated radioactive and chemical waste from large underground tanks at the Hanford Site where work is progressing toward startup of a system that will convert this waste into glass for disposal. Both Waste Treatment Plant melters have been successfully heated to operational temperature and the first container of nonradioactive test glass has been poured. The Integrated Waste Treatment Unit has treated over 68,000 gallons of tank waste in Idaho since the start of operations in 2023. At the Savannah River Site in Aiken, South Carolina, EM is processing record amounts of tank waste and continues to construct the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative facility which will help meet the needs of the Department's cleanup mission and help develop a diverse and talented next generation workforce.

More than 400 transuranic waste shipments were received last year at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico, double the amount from 2022. Demolition of the West Valley Demonstration Project's Main Plant Process Building is underway, will continue this year and will further advance under the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request. The Nevada National Security Site completed demolition of four buildings that supported development and testing of nuclear rocket engines during the cold war Era and will continue to reduce the cleanup footprint there in Fiscal Year 2025.

The fiscal year 2025 request includes \$7.1 billion for defense environmental cleanup activities, which covers most major EM sites, and \$385 million for the Uranium

Enrichment Decontamination and Decommissioning Fund contribution. The request builds on recent progress, reflects the Department's strong commitment to protecting the environment, enabling national security and scientific research missions, as well as delivering for communities most impacted by the legacy of the past. The request supports a ramp up in EM's ability to tackle tank waste—one of the Department's largest environmental challenges and financial liabilities. The request will also enable continued progress in infrastructure improvements at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and support waste shipments from across the EM program. In addition, EM will continue to advance facility demolition and risk reduction projects across the program.

The request of \$2 billion for the Office of River Protection will enable EM to advance commissioning and startup of the Direct Feed Low Activity Waste system and includes a \$608 million investment to ramp up work on the Waste Treatment Plant's High Level Waste facility. Also at Hanford, the request of \$1.1 billion for the Richland Operations Office will enable continued risk reduction activities including advancing the transfer of cesium and strontium capsules to dry storage and treating another 2 billion gallons of contaminated groundwater.

At the Savannah River Site, the request of \$1.6 billion supports continued efforts to fully utilize capabilities to advance the tank waste mission. The request also supports continued progress in disposition of nuclear materials stored at the Site and maintains a high State of readiness for H Canyon, the only chemical separations facility remaining in operation in the United States. In recognition of the maturation of cleanup at the Savannah River Site and the increasing role the Site will play in ongoing national security missions, EM will transfer Site responsibilities to the National Nuclear Security Administration in fiscal year 2025, while remaining focused on completing the remaining legacy cleanup activities there. At the Idaho Cleanup Project, the request of \$471 million supports the Department's continued commitment toward operations of the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit which will ultimately treat about 900,000 gallons of liquid waste by turning it into a granular solid. Along with providing for continued Waste Isolation Pilot Plant operations, the budget request supports key modernization and infrastructure recapitalization priorities. Shipments of defense transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant will progress from sites across the DOE complex, including the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

EM's fiscal year 2025 budget also facilitates the Department's broader national security and scientific research missions. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in Tennessee where large-scale cleanup operations are firmly underway at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12). Building on previous demolition work, EM transferred the Biology Complex at Y-12 to NNSA which is using it to build a new Lithium Processing Facility. In 2023, EM tore down the Low Intensity Test Reactor located in ORNL's central campus. This year EM will initiate demolition of Y-12's Alpha 2 Building. With \$658 million for Oak Ridge, the fiscal year 2025 budget request supports additional cleanup of high-risk excess facilities at the ORNL and Y-12. This steady progress is part of a broader vision focused not only on cleaning up the past, but also helping prepare for expanding national security and research missions in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

In addition to enabling impactful progress at EM sites, the fiscal year 2025 request helps position EM for the future. Recognizing the EM mission will span several decades at some sites, the budget request invests in building a workforce for the future that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. That includes high quality jobs in environmental cleanup where workers from all backgrounds can make a living and make a difference. The budget request includes \$56 million to continue EM's Minority Serving Institutions Partnership Program. The budget request also supports science-based advancement that provide opportunities to meet the Department's cleanup commitments safely, quickly and efficiently. The request supports an integrated approach to EM technology development, targeted R&D investments, the continued evaluation of additional waste treatment options, and partnerships with regulators and engagement with communities to apply effective solutions.

While the mission is rooted in the environmental legacy of the past, EM is also focused on the possibilities for the future. As cleanup progresses, EM is opening up possibilities for a clean energy future, good paying jobs and thriving communities and Tribal Nations. The fiscal year 2025 request represents a significant investment in helping these communities grow and thrive. The budget request includes support for the Tribal Nations, Alaska Native communities, and communities near EM sites ensuring they are safe, providing opportunities for local input into clean up priorities and helping build a vibrant future. The request includes Payment in Lieu of Taxes funding for communities near Hanford and Savannah River to support

schools, roads and other local priorities. A \$40 million investment is also included for the Community Capacity Building Grant initiative. The Department will continue to work hand-in-hand with workers, unions, Tribal Nations, local communities, and Congress to protect the environment, plan for continued cleanup and foster successful visions for the future.

CONCLUSION

At DOE, we continue to make progress in fields that enhance American national security during a time of significant global challenges. NNSA's weapons activities, nonproliferation and counterterrorism, and naval reactors programs all play key roles in reducing global nuclear threats and supporting our nuclear deterrent which remains the cornerstone of our national defense. The Department faces an expanded mission at a time of supply chain disruptions, inflation, great power competition, and increased impacts from climate change. We are determined to succeed and continue providing for the American people. We appreciate the trust and resources the Committee has placed in us to meet this moment and are thankful for the continued support of the public and the rest of Congress.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Administrator Hruby. As I indicated before, my statement and Senator Wicker's statement will be put in the record, without objection.

Secretary Granholm, the construction programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration and the clean-up programs at the former defense sites have been faced with large increases in cost due to shortage of skilled workers and especially materials. You, like everybody else, have been caught up in the post pandemic supply disruption.

What we are seeing now, however, is the effects of the last several years seem to be spreading to the workforce where there is indications that people are leaving faster than normal retirements suggest.

Last year, as you know, we provided special authorities for the Department to hire engineers and scientists. Can you fill us in on how serious this problem is, and if you need additional help?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. Thank you for the question, and thank you for the ability to use that flexibility, 400 additional accepted service hiring positions allowed us to be much more flexible.

We have been focusing on bringing aboard the additional 500 Federal employees over the last 2 years that we have been able to hire, but unfortunately, double digit attrition has eaten up those gains.

That is largely due, as I am sure you can imagine, to incredible competition from the private sector and salaries from the private sector, remote work that the private sector is able to offer that we are not able to, but also because the employees feel—many employees have reported that they feel overworked because of the loss of fellow employees.

So, to answer your question, yes, support for what we have requested in our budget, which is the full Federal salaries and expenses appropriation request of \$564 million in fiscal year 2025 would be most welcomed. Because the appropriations for NNSA, as measured by enacted appropriations have really—the National Security program has really doubled in size, we have not been able to keep up in terms of hiring.

The STEM workers are obviously very special and very, well-educated. We have got to do everything we can to keep the greatest minds in the Federal Government, and so, the ability to hire and

through—as evidenced through support for that appropriation would be much appreciated.

Chairman REED. Do you need additional support in that exemption from government rules?

Secretary GRANHOLM. You are good right now, right?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. We appreciate what you have done to date, and when we—if we get a budget appropriated—we also have made changes to our hiring practices to lean forward more, so we are hopeful we can help solve this shortage.

Chairman REED. Director Hruby, many of your production facilities date from 1940's and 1950's, and you are still relying on, for example, for the production of depleted uranium, World War II era rolling mill. What, and more importantly, when will you bring modern production capabilities and methods into your complex to save time and money?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Thank you, Senator Reed. Our production facilities are, in fact, very old, and we are making great strides in replacing them, but we have a lot of work to do.

I want to talk about, in particular, modernizing our capabilities and not just our infrastructure. I am sure we will get lots of questions on infrastructure, but this issue of what our production capabilities are is really important, because any change we make in the manufacturing process changes the microstructure of materials and we need to make sure that that is okay through our science programs.

But we have some great examples. In fact, we have a special polymer part that we produce using additive manufacturing for the W80-4 that is making a huge difference in that program. We have a current pilot project for new manufacturing technologies for radiation cases, which is a collaboration between our design and production agencies.

We have asked our advisory committee to look at—it is called the Advisory Committee for Nuclear Security, to study materials and manufacturing and look for other places that we can make changes in our processes and our materials.

Of course, as we build new facilities, we are looking to put modern new equipment in those facilities. We have a lot of work to do. It is, in fact, true that we have very old equipment and very old facilities, but we are very focused on changing that.

Chairman REED. I can't resist. If you watched the movie Oppenheimer, did you recognize facilities that are still working?

[Laughter.]

Ms. HRUBY. Yes.

Chairman REED. Thank you. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Madam Administrator, how many times did you see Oppenheimer?

Ms. HRUBY. Three so far.

Senator WICKER. Okay.

[Laughter.]

Senator WICKER. On the SLCMs, the NDAA was passed in December. It signed into law immediately. That didn't give you time to put the SLCMs in the budget?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. We—that is exactly right. We intend to resolve this problem with Congress. It is in our unfunded requirements let-

ter. But we didn't get the—we submitted the fiscal year 2025 budget before the NDAA and before the enactment of the 2024 budget.

Senator WICKER. So, you don't mean to slow this down another year?

Ms. HRUBY. Absolutely not.

Senator WICKER. Okay.

Ms. HRUBY. We have established a program office. We are working with the Navy—

Senator WICKER. Good. Well, that is very positive news. Now, I bet you read this congressional Strategic Posture Commission Report more than three times. Studied it thoroughly. Is that right?

Ms. HRUBY. That is correct.

Senator WICKER. Indicates to some of us that our nuclear forces are undersized, under prioritized, and incapable of adapting to modern times. What do you say to that? Undersized is right.

Ms. HRUBY. Well, I believe that the Strategic Posture Commission Report is right on the fact that we have to prepare for two near peer adversaries or two peer adversaries, and we need to do it with a sense of urgency. We have taken steps already. In fact—

Senator WICKER. Undersized right now, seriously.

Ms. HRUBY. What the report said, and I think this is important, is we need more and, or different kinds, and I agree with that. I don't think just more is going to solve the problem. So, I think it is the combination of those two things.

Senator WICKER. What about incapable of adapting to modern threats?

Ms. HRUBY. We—there is lots of evidence that we are slow to adapt to modern threats. But I think we are proving we are capable, and we are making some changes now to do that.

I think the insertion of the two programs within the program of record in the last 8 months shows that we are able to do some adaptation, but we do need a stronger industrial base, and we need a stronger government base in the NNSA to enable us to do more as we go forward.

Senator WICKER. Well, amen to that. Do you worry that tardiness on our part might encourage our allies to move forward independently of us and that would have a negative effect?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, I would say I do think about that, and I worry about that. So far we—I mean, we are actually modernizing. The first program, you know, off the block since we started re—doing life extension programs is the B61-12, a forward deployed weapon, which is being placed in Europe now.

But we need to keep up with—we need to take to address our allies' concerns. I think we have, and we will continue to. But yes, we ought to be watching it closely.

Senator WICKER. Thank you. Madam Secretary, you agree that making nuclear power part of the solution is a priority, do you not?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I do.

Senator WICKER. To make this work, we need to rebuild the domestic nuclear fuel cycle. What steps can we take to accelerate our efforts to restart a uranium enrichment capability that can meet our civilian energy and military requirements?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Thank you for the question, and I am so grateful to Congress for supplying \$2.7 billion that has been repurposed from the civil nuclear credit part of the bipartisan infrastructure law for the buildup and the creation of a uranium cycle in the United States, a fuel cycle.

But we can't access that funding unless there is a ban on import of Russian uranium into the United States, and so, to the extent that Congress can adopt a ban, I think, one has been passed in the House and hopefully the Senate can take that up as well. That will enable us to access that funding to create a domestic supply.

Senator WICKER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and it is good to see both of you. Secretary Granholm, I always enjoy our opportunities to do events in Virginia together. We have had some good ones.

I want to ask about a topic that you raised in your joint written testimony, and that is trying to develop strategies to counter uncrewed aerial systems. We have had testimony in this hearing, public testimony from General Guillot of NORTHCOM about the drone swarms around Langley, which are troubling.

Those have been publicly reported and discussed in open session. But I noticed in your joint written testimony that you talked about NNSA trying to kind of up its game in developing counter UAS strategies. Can you talk to the Committee a little bit about that?

Ms. HRUBY. Absolutely. Thank you for that question. This has been an issue at some of our sites. We have identified the UASs near areas where—that are sensitive. Here is what we—we have UAS detection systems deployed at all of our sites. They have some limited capability to counter those systems.

We are updating the current systems, and we are evaluating a new system that has much more counter capability. We are testing that. We are establishing a test site at Idaho so that we can keep up with the threat.

My intention, and I have been very clear about this, with the complex is as soon as a UAS crosses the line that we have declared as this is dangerous, we need to counter it. We can't just say we see it. We have to counter it.

We are positioning ourselves in this budget request and in the work that we are doing to make sure we can do that.

Senator KAINE. Can I ask you, as we are trying to grapple with this threat, I have sometimes not been satisfied as I have asked questions about sort of who is in charge of this. I mean, on domestic soil, the FBI is involved, and DHS is involved, but then DOD is involved.

You have to work with, you know, the cities and towns and counties where facilities are located. Is the NNSA sort of at a table of stakeholders with others trying to figure this out from a whole of government standpoint?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, we do work closely, especially with the FBI. I will say that we benefit from having large remote sites. So, again, we have clearly delineated where the lines are in terms of our sensitivities, and so, we are working toward policies that allow us to take action without needing to get—we need that policy approved

by everybody, but once we have the policy approved, we can take action without getting additional approvals. That is the end goal that we are looking for.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Switching gears, this Committee and the Foreign Relations committee have been pretty involved in putting into law the AUKUS framework, both pillar one and pillar two.

Talk to me about NNSA's involvement in working with the Australians on the pillar one, equipping them with the capacity to operate and maintain and eventually construct nuclear subs.

Ms. HRUBY. Well, we have two activities in NNSA on pillar one. There is the activities that we do in naval reactors, and there is the activities we do in nonproliferation. In the Naval Reactors Program, they—we have Australian sailors now taking nuclear reactor training.

That is the—for us, for our role, that is the most important thing is to make sure that the Australian navy has the capability and the complete thorough training that we enjoy in the United States to operate these boats effectively.

On the nonproliferation side, our goal is to have this be a model program for nonproliferation. We have lots of work with the Australians to help them understand what that is and to work with the IAEA to create systems to make sure that there could be absolutely no diversion.

We are going to—we are going to deliver sealed nuclear reactors that power these boats, but still we will need to make sure there is no material diversion, no potential for any material being stolen in any way.

We feel very confident that the Australians are taking those seriously and are working very closely with us.

Senator KAINE. Excellent. Well, I don't want to exceed my time after having been warned by the chair that we are going to try to move quickly. But Secretary Granholm, I am going to ask you a question for the record.

Last year you talked about some initiatives the Department of Energy is doing to find talent at HBCUs and minority serving institutions, and partnership you are creating. I will ask for the record, and we will look forward to seeing what is the progress on that front. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Chairman Reed, and thank you, Ranking Member Wicker. Nuclear deterrence is the backbone of our National Security. It underpins every operational plan that we have, and every Administration since 1960's has validated the need for our nuclear triad.

While the Air Force and the Navy are responsible for the bombers, ICBMs, missiles, and submarines, it is the NNSA and the Department of Energy who are responsible for the designing, manufacturing, and certifying of the nuclear weapons themselves.

Transitioning back toward a production mindset has its challenges, but I understand NNSA delivered over 200 modernized nuclear weapons last year, and I am glad to see that progress is being

made, Administrator, and that NNSA is reprioritizing the production and delivery of nuclear weapons.

Administrator, how would this budget request help NNSA to meet their requirement to increase the number of modernized nuclear weapons produced and delivered in fiscal year 2025 and beyond?

Ms. HRUBY. Thank you, Senator Fischer. We appreciate your recognizing that we have made significant accomplishments. I would—this budget request for fiscal year 2025 has about—has actually more money for production modernization than it has for stockpile modernization in it.

That is not because we are not doing stockpile modernization. We are very focused on that. But we recognize to meet the demands over the next decade and beyond, we really have to get after our production enterprise.

In particular, a lot of the emphasis is on making sure we can bring up pit production at both Los Alamos and Savannah River, complete the uranium processing facility, and other high priorities in the system.

So, I think that the most important thing that NNSA can do to secure the future for the nuclear enterprise is to develop success like we are in modernizing weapons and then modernize our infrastructure.

Senator FISCHER. When we visited before this hearing, we talked about balancing those seven modernization programs and how we really can't afford any further delays on any of those.

To avoid similar boom and bust cycles in the future, we have to have that groundwork laid now, the foundation laid now. Can you tell me how NNSA is working with STRATCOM to assess future threats in the late 2030's and beyond, to be able to identify the likely requirements for future nuclear weapons programs?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, Senator. Thank you. This is one of the things I am very proud to say that we have made a significant—working with General Cotton, we have agreed that we really need to define those needs beyond the mid 2030's, which is where the program of record today. We have got seven things going on between now and the mid 2030's, but we have—we know we have needs beyond that.

We have reestablished a process that had gone—that used to exist, it had gone quiet, to have STRATCOM staff who understand and think about deterrence needs on a daily basis to work with our staff, who think about and understand capabilities on a daily basis, to work together more closely on—to meet regularly, to define, hey, what is the gap and what is the best way to fill it that will exist in the late 2030's and 2040's.

Senator FISCHER. You know, I really appreciated our discussions on how we can accelerate the delivery of SLCM, and I have appreciated that you have that request in the unfunded priority list for \$70 million for SLCM.

I think that does demonstrate a really clear commitment to meeting the requirements that are now set in law. Administrator, can you provide us with an update on how the NNSA is moving forward with the development of the warhead?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. We are looking, working very closely with the Navy as they define their delivery platform, to define the warhead that will match well to that.

Our objective, because we are trying to do this in the program of record, we are trying to, you know, squeeze it between some programs that we are already working on, is to find the most effective and simplest way that won't disrupt the rest of the program of record to meet the requirements for SLCM-N.

So, we are looking at the W80-4, as was in the authorizing language. We are also looking at other options that might, we don't know yet, be simpler to do in terms of disrupting our current production flow.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. Senator Manchin, please.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for your service and for being here. I appreciate it very much. Secretary Granholm blessed us yesterday with her presence and we had a good meeting, except for a little interruption. But other than that, it was good. But I want to thank you all.

I have been a long supporter and a fan of nuclear—and basically with nuclear propulsion has been used in nuclear—in weapons, but mostly in propulsion for our military fleet, Department of Defense, and how we have done in such a safety record for many, many, many, many years.

But yet we haven't been able to get it right in the private sector, or we haven't been able to employ it with the same—I think, the same veracity and also the assurance from the public that we can do it in a very safe manner, and I think that has been a mistake on our part. I am concerned really, and to both of you, how you might feel about this, the production of highly enriched uranium, and its primary fuel source for the Navy submarines, aircraft carriers, as we know. According to the NNSA, enriched uranium stockpile run out in 2040. Is that accurate? Is those timelines accurate and are you concerned? What do you plan to do to, make sure that we don't have a deficiency there?

Ms. HRUBY. Thank you, Senator Manchin. Let's see, we have two needs in NNSA for enriched uranium. We have the need for low enriched uranium to make tritium. That is a focus for the 2040's.

We that have a need for highly enriched uranium for naval reactors and weapons, which is out beyond the 2040's timeframe. We do not have the capability to enrich uranium for defense purposes in the U.S. today.

Senator MANCHIN. Can I—for a little bit of history, it might help us out a little bit of history here. Why did we allow ourselves to get in a situation that we were dependent upon Russia, or we went to that? That was after the cold war.

I have heard different scenarios. In the cold war they were trying to all just kind of work together, but why did we believe—was it basically from an environmental standpoint, or do we have a lot of advocates who were opposed to nuclear, and we thought, well, out of sight, out of mind, we will go somewhere else and get it.

They didn't want to produce it here and enrich it. What was the purpose? What was the problem?

Ms. HRUBY. Well, I think there are a couple of issues. So, with respect to defense needs, we have a lot, and we had a lot—you know, we had a stockpile of 30,000 weapons. In the nuclear weapons stockpile, highly enriched uranium doesn't get used.

So, it stays highly enriched. It has very long lifetime. So, we felt there was plenty of highly enriched uranium that could be used, and in fact, even down blended to low enriched uranium to use for other purposes. That is what we have been doing now for many decades. In the civil sector, of course, it is a different issue, which is cost competition and environmental issues. It was hard to create a steady base for civil nuclear LEU.

But on the defense side, we have been using our stockpile of HEY for weapons, and it is just now as we plan out that we feel like we cannot continue to do that forever and that we need to think about reestablishing these capabilities.

Senator MANCHIN. Senator Granholm, if I may ask you on this, from this Administration standpoint and where you all stand, DOE, are you all concerned about our ability to get back into production or be able to do it in a sufficient way that the public will support it, but also know the needs that we have for defense of our country?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I think we can definitely do it, and we are grateful for Congress's support on creating a uranium strategy inside the United States by repurposing some of the civil nuclear credit to get \$2.7 billion to create our own fuel cycle here. However, as I was mentioning to Senator Wicker earlier, the only way that we can access that funds is if Congress passes a ban on the import of Russian uranium, and we are hoping—

Senator MANCHIN. We are trying very hard.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Very good. That is great. I will say one other thing, on the civil side, the high assay, low enriched uranium, of course, is necessary for the small modular reactors and the advanced reactors, and that is a very important part of our cycle and our strategy to be able to have more nuclear power, in addition to—

Senator MANCHIN. My final question would be along those lines. With the onslaught, basically, and we have the development of SMRs and micros, to be coming into the workforce, if you will, into the production of the private sector. Is that taking into consideration, by 2040 we are running in a depletion or basically in the need, or it would be accelerated like 2030 maybe, or 2035—

Secretary GRANHOLM. We need to accelerate. We need—there is no doubt that the development of these—

Senator MANCHIN. There is a concern—the number we are using, 2040, does that take in consideration what we are talking about here?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I think that is mostly on the defense side.

Ms. HRUBY. It is.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. On the civilian side, I mean, these reactors are being developed right now.

Senator MANCHIN. Very, very quickly. Rapidly.

Secretary GRANHOLM. They have access to Russian HELU, and we need that capability here, which is why we have to act with urgency.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you so much, Senator Manchin. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you both for being here today to testify in front of the Committee. Secretary Granholm, we will start with you. Secretary Granholm, should taxpayer dollars be granted to U.S. sanctioned countries or institutions, yes or no?

Secretary GRANHOLM. You mean through the buy—through the DOE?

Senator ERNST. Through DOE.

Secretary GRANHOLM. No.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Thank you. Because, as you know, the Department of Energy distributes billions of dollars in grants and awards. In February, a magazine published a research article acknowledging support from a taxpayer funded DOE award.

The same article credits an Iranian researcher employed by Iran's State linked Sharif University of Technology. U.S. authorities have sanctioned multiple Sharif University entities due to their ties to Iran's nuclear program.

Britain and EU have also sanctioned the university due to similar concerns. So, Secretary Granholm did taxpayer dollars in this grant to support the Iranian researcher?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I am not familiar with this grant, but perhaps you can share that article and I can followup.

Senator ERNST. We will definitely do that, and thank you for that response. We will share that because this is of great concern to us.

The reports are cause for concern, no matter how those grants are distributed, because Iran builds up their nuclear—as they are building up their nuclear arsenal, we must be absolutely certain that taxpayer dollars are not funding a researcher working for a university linked to Iran's nuclear program.

We just witnessed, of course, Iran attack our ally Israel and their proxies have taken American servicemembers' lives. At tower 22, here within the last several months, we lost three American servicemembers, members of the 718th engineer company of Georgia. They were U.S. Army Reserves.

They were—their lives were lost at the hands of Iranian proxies. So, the capabilities cannot even remotely be strengthened by American taxpayer dollars, and so, those answers will matter. Secretary Granholm, we will provide you with that information and will expect a response back. Thank you, Secretary, and kind of on that same theme then. Do you know what safeguards the Department has in place to ensure that our Department of Energy funded American researchers do not share sensitive information about technology with academics working for sanctioned university located from adversaries?

Secretary GRANHOLM. We have a very robust counterintelligence strategy inside of the Department, which is, looking both at lab research, partnerships, et cetera, to ensure that we are securing American IP.

That we are not endangering, obviously, by releasing certainly any sensitive information from our—from the defense side of our operation. We have also set up a whole strategy inside the Depart-

ment for vetting requests coming in from those whom—from companies who might want to access DOE grants or loans.

It is research, technology, and economic security effort that is similar to CFIUS inside the Department. We have beefed up our efforts on that to ensure that we are being extra cautious on both, making sure that we are not—that we are not partnering with entities that will create a problem for the United States, but also that we are viewing those who with whom we are working to ensure that sensitive information is not going in the wrong direction.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. I appreciate that. We have seen other Departments that have, through contracts and subcontracts, sent dollars overseas to other entities.

So, all we have to do is look at the COVID-19 issue that we had and how American taxpayer dollars were funneled to China for research. So, as you know, talking through this, is it your view then that taxpayer dollars are not going to those areas that might be benefiting our adversaries?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Well, you know, you have to sort of carve this with a scalpel and not with an ax when you are talking about the civilian side, because supply chains in the manufacturing base have been so intertwined, for example, with China that it—that to say that a supply chain in an EV company that has a component that may have been re-shored from China, that may have actually started with the United States, but we get it back, but there may be some kind of connection.

What we want to do is to mitigate the potential damage to the U.S.. We do want to re-shore, obviously, IP and companies that were sucked overseas with intentional industrial strategy by other countries to be able to get that.

So, we try to really balance what is going to be in the interests of America and security, to ensure that both taxpayer dollars are spent for—in a way that will serve American interests. That is very important.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Secretary, and thank you so much for the time, Mr. Chair. I do think it is important that we acknowledge that we need to bring that supply chain back to the United States of America, but especially sensitive research. We need to ensure that no taxpayer dollars are going to entities that we would consider adversaries. Thank you, Secretary.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Rosen, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed. I really appreciate the hearing. I want to thank Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, of course, for your service, for your hard work, and your knowledge.

Of course, I am going to talk a little bit about Nevada, because Nevada has, of course, played a critical role in nuclear weapons development, but often at a very high cost. From 1951 to 1992, 928 nuclear weapons were actually detonated in Nevada.

It is causing people and land to be exposed to toxic levels of radiation, and it is why I firmly oppose any policies that would put Nevadans at risk again, from returning to the days of explosive testing, nuclear testing, out to the shipping of nuclear waste to be stored at Yucca mountain, and a dangerous—Yucca mountain is a

dangerous and misguided proposal that some of our colleagues in the House, well they just raised it again last week.

That is one of the reasons why, of course, I strongly support the mission of the Nevada National Security Site, which verifies the reliability and the effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile through advanced scientific experiments and modeling so that nuclear weapons will never have to be tested again.

So, to both of you, as you know, mining and construction continue at the principal underground laboratory for subcritical experimentation, or PULSE, formerly known as the U1A complex. This expansion is going to allow the lab to house two machines that will improve our ability to assess performance, safety, and reliability of our nuclear stockpile.

So, Secretary, can you provide us an update, and then Administrator, on the project and speak to some of the other key projects currently underway at the site, please.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Great. Thanks. I think I am going to defer the question to the Administrator since she has got her finger on the pulse of all this.

Senator ROSEN. Okay. Perfect. All Righty, thank you.

Ms. HRUBY. Thanks, Senator Rosen. We enjoy a great relationship with you and the State of Nevada, and we are grateful for the work that is being done there. Let's see, you referred to the PULSE facility, formerly known as the U1A, and the things we are doing there, which is extremely important to our stockpile.

So, this concerns subcritical testing that are consistent with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty but retain our knowledge of how to work underground and how to work at NNSS. These experiments are—will allow us to look at aging of plutonium materials and plutonium pits, both aged ones and then new ones to verify that they perform as we would expect them to perform from our previous test, so that we will never have to test again.

That is our goal. Other important things we are doing at NNSS are these tests, the chemical explosive tests, that simulate very low yield nuclear explosive tests that might be done by others that we want to detect the seismic signatures so we can be sure that all countries around the world are—that say they are Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty compliant are in fact complying with the Test Ban Treaty.

We are doing some very important work at Nevada, and that has become a very key facility for us.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Well, we are very proud of what we do, and we are proud of the remote sensing lab that helps with that as well. But of course, we need the workforce to work out there.

So, there has been a steady rise in the workforce requirements in the Department of Energy and more specifically at the NNSA, and the recurring challenge has always been the development of that skilled workforce, particularly in critical fields like physics, mathematics, computer programming, and chemistry.

So, I am excited about the proposed Nevada National Security Site Fast Start Program and its potential for recruiting, educating, and training these entry level technicians to begin careers in nuclear security related jobs right at home in Nevada.

So, the Fast Start Program is going to support the NNSS, which has identified, of course you know this, the growing need to have skilled technicians, really skilled employees from diverse background to work on our National Security programs, even in construction, maintenance, business operations, as well as the science and technology.

So, Administrator, given these dynamics, how is the Department of Energy, and of course, Secretary, you can answer too, and the NNSA actively engaging with our academic institutions to grow the future workforce?

Can you talk about the Fast Start Program and how our local students might begin careers working at the Nevada National Security Site—or we still call it the test site in Nevada?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, we try to call experiments now. It is an important distinction, but here is what we do. We work intensely on our pipeline. We have university programs that are for recruiting.

We have university programs that are for research. Both are great pipeline programs for us, and we have extended those two programs for our technologist and for craft workers, and others that we need desperately in our complex as well, to be very highly skilled workers.

What we do is we identify skills that are needed across the complex, and we have national programs for that, and we have—we identify skills that are needed locally, and we have local programs for that, that we support.

The program, the Fast Program in Nevada is one where it is aimed to support the needs of that site locally, where people tend to—we tend to recruit people from the region. We would like to keep them in the region, and that program is aimed to do just that. So, thank you for your nice words about it.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Ms. HRUBY. Can I just jump on that?

Senator ROSEN. Yes, yes.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Because of course, once we recruit—once we recruit and train, we don't want to lose them.

Senator ROSEN. Right.

Secretary GRANHOLM. We were just discussing a little bit earlier, and I just want to foot stomp the need for NNSA and the whole scientific enterprise of the United States, so much of which is embedded in the Department of Energy, to have the ability to compete with the private sector by ensuring that we have got decent work conditions, not overloaded folks, the ability to pay what they are worth, et cetera.

So, the support that this Committee can offer to our appropriations request to hire additional people so that we don't have burn-out and attrition before retirement would be greatly appreciated.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chair. Thank you all for being here. Secretary Granholm, the Biden administration announced that they were going to pause pending LNG export projects, which seems like the stupidest decision I could imagine. So, in my State, we export LNG. We have through our ports.

We put a lot of money when I was Governor into our ports. We export it, and so, if you look around the world, they want our LNG. We have got a war going on in Europe. We don't want people dependent on Russia.

So, we are exporting to Europe. We are exporting to Asia, right. The people, the bad guys are the ones that produce the oil, a lot of them, Russia, Iran, right. So, if we don't do the exports, right, so where do our allies buy it?

They have to buy more from Russia. They have to buy more from Iran, okay, so, Iran has invaded Ukraine. Iran is trying to destroy Israel. So, this makes it, one, economically, it hurts my State. But number 2, from the standpoint of what is going on in the world, this is the stupidest decision ever. So, can you explain it to me?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. Just to clarify a point, this is a pause, it is not a halt.

Senator SCOTT. Why did we pause?

Secretary GRANHOLM. So that we can evaluate as we do, and are required to do, what is in the public interest. We do a study every few years, and right now is when we are doing the study, to determine whether the enormous increase in—

Senator SCOTT. Did Russia pause in Ukraine?

Secretary GRANHOLM.—authorizations—

Senator SCOTT. Did Russia pause going into Ukraine? Has Iran paused?

Secretary GRANHOLM. All of the current exports are still happening. All of the current authorizations, which goes up to 48 billion cubic feet, are all proceeding—

Senator SCOTT. Did you pause the new pending exports project?

Secretary GRANHOLM. We did. But everything that is—we are currently the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, and we will remain the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. It is a temporary pause—

Senator SCOTT. Do you understand what you are doing to our allies?

Secretary GRANHOLM.—solely to understand the impacts.

Senator SCOTT. Secretary, what are you doing to our allies?

Secretary GRANHOLM. We have talked with our allies about this. They very well understand that this is a temporary pause while we do an analysis of what the impacts are in the United States—

Senator SCOTT. What would the analysis be? I mean, what do you have to—

Secretary GRANHOLM. I am happy to tell you.

Senator SCOTT. I mean what is—just stop and think about it for just a second.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Let me—

Senator SCOTT. The world is at war. They need our energy.

Secretary GRANHOLM. They will continue to get it, sir.

Senator SCOTT. You are telling them, no, we are going to slow it down.

Secretary GRANHOLM. No, that is not what we are telling them.

Senator SCOTT. That is what a pause means.

Secretary GRANHOLM. No, a pause means on future approvals. We have so much approved that we are well saturating the globe if those authorizations are built out. We have 14 billion cubic feet

of capacity right now. That makes us the largest in the world right now. Another 12 billion cubic feet that are under construction.

Senator SCOTT. What do you have to study?

Secretary GRANHOLM. None of that is stopping.

Senator SCOTT. What do you have to study?

Secretary GRANHOLM. It is only a pause for a study.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. What do you have to study?

Secretary GRANHOLM. That will be completed in months.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. What do you have to study? What is there to study? We want to do—we want to sell LNG—

Secretary GRANHOLM. There are four things we are studying. To be able to answer your question, there are four things we are studying. One is what is the impact domestically on our manufacturers if we export almost half of our capacity for producing natural gas. What is the impact in terms of cost, number one.

Number two, what is the impact the life cycle analysis on the export of LNG. number three what is the impact on our allies overseas? What is the demand we are going to be seeing to make sure that they are well supplied and that they have the energy that they need. And—

Senator SCOTT. Have you heard any manufacturer call you and say, gosh, I am worried because we are selling LNG overseas?

Secretary GRANHOLM. There are a lot of domestic concerns. In fact, we have gotten letters on both sides of the aisle here about what does it mean for costs at home if you export almost half of what you currently produce. What is the impact from a supply and demand point? It is a question, and that is—we are only—

Senator SCOTT. We should export nothing?

Secretary GRANHOLM. We are going to—no, I am saying—

Senator SCOTT. Should we do that we all—everything we export?

Secretary GRANHOLM. As we authorize massive amounts of exports, we need to know what is the impact on America, on our American manufacturers, on our homeowners. What is the cost—

Senator SCOTT. Secretary, with that analysis, do you think we ought to put pauses on exporting anything else we manufacture in this country?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The reason why we are doing this is because there has been such an extraordinary increase in authorizations. When we did our last study, we were only exporting 4 billion cubic feet. Now we have authorized 48 billion.

Not all of that will be built, but the point is, we need to go eyes open to see what is the impact on us at home, as well as on our allies, and to have our labs do a modeling to make sure that we follow the science and understand what the impacts are before we start to approve a whole bunch more.

Senator SCOTT. So, if you were head of Commerce, then you would start—you would start pausing exports of manufacturing goods because you think, man, that is going to cause the cost of manufacturing goods for Americans to go up. That makes—it makes zero sense, and it is having a dramatic impact on my State. So, I think you made a horrible decision and I hope you will change.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Granholm, good to see you again.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Good to see you, Senator.

Senator PETERS. Administrator Hruby, welcome to the committee. My first question is to both of you. As you both are well aware, the availability of low cost drones has dramatically increased the risk of weaponizing unmanned aerial systems being used against our critical infrastructure.

This threat is unfortunately particularly acute at our national laboratories, plants and installations responsible for both maintaining as well as sustaining our nuclear stockpile. So, my question for both of you, I understand you have been working to mitigate threats by drones and UAS to our nuclear infrastructure.

As these risks continue to evolve, what enhanced authorities do you need to protect that critical infrastructure? Administrator Hruby, we will start with you.

Ms. HRUBY. Okay. Thank you, Senator. We do already deploy UAS detection and counter UAS systems, but they are not good enough for the future threats that we are already beginning to see.

So, we are upgrading those, and we are upgrading also—so we are going to upgrade our systems, especially to help us counter threats that are evolving. In addition, we are looking at our policies and we are creating a new test range.

So, the test range will be in Idaho, where we can make sure that we fully understand the systems, the counter UAS system, and we can train people to do that. Then we are updating our policies that will be—we will we will get a look across the interagency in the U.S., and there are a lot of people who have impact on policy, but that we will change—we are trying to change our policy so that our protective forces, as they detect a UASs that cross a line to the things that we are really trying to guard, our crown jewels, if you will, that they can counter those systems without additional approvals.

Senator PETERS. Right. Secretary Granholm.

[Technical problems.]

Senator PETERS. Very good. Since the beginning of the unprovoked invasion by Russia, Russia has targeted Ukrainians' energy infrastructure, including its nuclear power plants.

In the process, they have deprived millions of Ukrainians of heat, as well as electricity. In response, DOE and NNSA have assisted our Ukrainian partners in stabilizing their energy markets and safeguarding their nuclear infrastructure.

So, my question for the both of you is, how has DOE and NNSA support allowed the Ukrainians to continue their resistance against Russia? Do your organizations have the resources that you need to continue these efforts, specifically in support of Ukraine's nuclear power plants?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Thank you for this question and for recognizing that we are partners with Ukraine in trying to preserve and rebuild their energy infrastructure.

NNSA, and I am sure Dr. Hruby can say a word about this, has been an incredible partner in providing, for example, radiation detection technology training on that.

The Department of Energy has also identified where the gaps are in their electricity system, for example, transformers, et cetera, what do you need, and we have delivered, scores, hundreds of components that we have actually gotten donated from either around the United States or our allies so that their grid can be rebuilt.

We are also focused on war proofing the existing grid and the future grid as well. So, what are the ways to harden the existing grid? We have worked with them on connecting their grid to the EU.

So, it is now connected to the EU and not reliant upon Russia. But clearly we also have to pursue President Zelensky's goal of being much—having a much more distributed and clean energy system, which is less vulnerable to attacks. So, planning for that future is part of what we are engaged in now.

Hopefully, you know, this conflict gets resolved in Ukraine's favor soon, but we want to be partners with them in building the grid of the future there as well.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you.

Ms. HRUBY. Just let me say a few words about the nuclear side.

So, we have installed, since the start of this conflict, many radiological and nuclear detectors in Ukraine and the surrounding areas to make sure that we can detect as soon as possible independently any radiological or nuclear release from an incident at a nuclear power plant or any other kind of incident.

We have spent a lot of time training our Ukrainian colleagues so that in the event of an incident, they would have a proper—an effective response, a public health response to that incident.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you. Thank you to both of you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, both, for being here.

In Alabama, we are the fifth largest producer of nuclear with two nuclear plants and five nuclear reactors. I know a lot of people in our neck of the woods are very concerned about our power grid in the future.

Just a quick question about building new nuclear plants. The Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, you know, if we are looking to build a nuclear plant, just a review has lasted four to 7 years.

We should probably take about one to 2 years, and if we are going to combat China, if we are going to build a new power grid, Secretary, do you see the average timeline to complete these environmental studies as normal? How can we go around this?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Well, I am not sure about normal, but I do agree with you. At least what I assume you are getting at, which is that we need to speed up times for permitting, both nuclear as well as transmission, as well as other energy generation, including clean energy.

Senator TUBERVILLE. How do we get bogged down in this? I mean, it just doesn't make any sense to me because we are getting overrun, you know, by other countries.

Secretary GRANHOLM. I know our office would be eager to work with you or anyone on the committee, and I know a number of people have been working on permitting reform to accelerate, because we believe that that is important for the reliability of our grid.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Over 40 percent of our U.S. Navy's combat capable warships are nuclear powered.

The Office of Naval Reactors has a cradle to grave responsibility for designing, maintaining, and disposing the spent fuel from vital nuclear reactors.

But much of these facilities and infrastructures the Navy is using is aging. I know for a fact we are spending tens of millions of dollars with ships that are at dry dock that we are having to pay just to have them dry docked instead of taking the fuel off, having it replenished, or disposed of.

So, we are having delays in the spent fuel handling recapitalization project, and it is affecting all of our nuclear plants. It is my understanding from the Navy—what do you see as a problem, and how do we fix that, Secretary? Either one of you, if you want to answer that.

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Senator, thank you for that question. We are building a new spent fuel handling capability in Idaho.

It is sized so that it can handle all nuclear reactors on all of our Navy ships, which today's facilities can't, and it is very old. We had a lot of, honestly, we had a lot of trouble post-COVID with this construction project, just like we did with many of our other construction projects, but it has really turned around.

I was there not too long ago. All the concrete is in, rebar is going up. It is really coming along, and I think we are on a path now that will get this facility built and operational, just as we—you know, we intend to.

We are working this problem hard, and our naval reactors folks, I think, have done a really good job of taking a project behind schedule and trying to catch up as much time as possible.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Am I correct, it is costing us millions of dollars just to drydock these to store?

Ms. HRUBY. Senator, I don't know the cost of the dry docking, but I can talk to my colleagues in naval reactors—

Senator TUBERVILLE. I would love to get some kind of report on that, because my understanding is, it is costing tens of millions just to have them parked and not anything done to them.

We don't have the capabilities of dispensing or doing whatever we do with this fuel on, whether it is a flattop, whether it is a submarine. We need to figure this out if it is costing us that much money.

Ms. HRUBY. Right. Understood. We will get back with you on the cost, but you can—you have my word that we are working as hard as possible to get this new facility up and operating so that—

Senator TUBERVILLE. We only have one that we are working on?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, sir. Yes,

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. I know we have a shipyard in Mobile that is looking to do the enterprise in the very near future. Hopefully that happens, but you can imagine how old the enterprise is, how long it has been setting dry docking, and the money that it costs the country and the taxpayers for—you know, to be just sit-

ting there. Nothing done with it. So, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to both of you today, Secretary Granholm, Administrator Hruby. It actually feels more comfortable to say Governor Granholm, but, those are the good old days, but thanks for both for being here.

Secretary Granholm, before we move on to the matters pertaining to nuclear deterrence, I would like to briefly discuss the Sanford Underground Research Facility in Lead, South Dakota, its relationship with Fermi Laboratory.

This facility has been an important partner for the Department of Energy in conducting critical research in the fields of particle physics and dark matter. Sometimes I think people wonder what in the world we are doing in the Department of Energy in working on these particular areas of expertise, but this is a pretty important deal for our Nation.

Can you talk a little bit about the importance of the funding for this type of a facility in terms of our long term strategies?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. Thank you so much for that. We are very proud of this, too. It is the deepest lab in the United States, and in the experiment with Fermi—

Senator ROUNDS. Four thousand, eight hundred fifty feet. Underground.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Amazing, and of course, trying to understand the secrets of the universe, the secrets of matter, the secrets of neutrinos in this case, is super important to basic fundamental science.

The thing we say about basic research is that you may not know where it leads, but when you look back, you realize that so much, whether it is in materials science or, you know, medicine, et cetera, has—stems from the research that is being done in these massive user facilities, like at SURF.

I am pleased to say that, and you probably know this, but that in July of this year, that the excavation sub project is going to be completed. The outfitted portion will be done by September 2026.

The cosmic rays in the first sight detector at SURF will be in 2029, and first neutrinos in 2031. So, we are going to continue to support this. Hopefully, Congress will continue to support it with your leadership as well.

Senator ROUNDS. I totally agree, and I just think the message that we need to be sending is, neutrinos are very important.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Neutrinos are very important.

Senator ROUNDS. Great. Thank you. Administrator Hruby, can you update us on the current issue, and this may be getting into the weeds a little bit, but I think it is important to bring it to our attention, the current issue with the availability of high explosive binders and how this could affect our current modernization plan.

Specifically, it is a chemical that binds these high explosives together, and apparently it is associated, those that are available to us, have a PFAS component to them. Since we are trying to eliminate PFAS, we really have a problem when it comes to this type

of a product which needs that particular component in it. Can you talk a little bit about that and what our plans are?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Thanks, Senator Rounds. Let's see. It is true that we buy a PFAS binder from the commercial sector, and this product is no longer going to be made by the primary manufacturer.

It does then mean that we need to develop another binder or another source for this binder, and we are working hard on that. So, we have several lines of effort. The first and most important, I think, is that we are going to recycle as much as we can the current binder that we have in this system to stay on schedule for our weapon delivery programs.

We are looking at also potentially—well, we are going to buy as much binder as we can from the supplier before they stop making it.

Senator ROUNDS. The reason why they are stopping making it is because we have all identified that PFAS is really dangerous to the environment, but most of that is from firefighting, not necessarily from a plastic component that we would be using in this type of a binder. Correct?

Ms. HRUBY. That is right. This is a complicated environmental issue. The particular PFAS material involved in the binder that we care about has not been shown to have an adverse effect on human health. However, it does last a long time, and as a result, the EPA is, you know, lumping these together into a system that they don't want in the environment.

So, we have to find an alternative and we have to use all the things that we currently have to get through our current program. We have a very active group of people who are working this intensely, so that we can stay on schedule. But obviously we can't have nuclear weapons without effective explosive.

Senator ROUNDS. Or perhaps, as an alternative, getting an exception for this type of a use for a PFAS that is not hurting the environment.

Ms. HRUBY. Yes—that—

Senator ROUNDS. I know it gets into policy areas, but it is a real problem for you—

Ms. HRUBY. It is in the policy area, correct.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Nice to see both of you this morning. Administrator Hruby, some questions.

I am worried about pit production and the capacity to meet increasing demand for weapon grade material given the fact that we are refurbishing the entire triad, plus AUKUS. Tell me where we are in terms of pit production at the two facilities.

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Thank you, Senator King. Let's see, just to level set, we are reestablishing pet production, which was stopped in the United States with the closure of Rocky Flats.

We are doing that at two locations, Los Alamos National Laboratories, and the Savannah River site. Los Alamos already had an existing facility to work with plutonium, but it is limited in size, and it was that making pits.

That is moving along nicely. We expect that our first fully certified, war reserve pit will be produced at Los Alamos in this year. Then we are working toward a goal of 30 pits per year at Los Alamos.

Those pits will be in the W87-1 warhead, which is for the Sentinel. We expect to be getting 30 pits per year by 2028, with do reliability by 2030.

Senator KING. Is the pit production schedule running in parallel with the renewal of the triad? In other words, you don't see a gap in terms of having the capacity for Sentinel, for example, and not having the warheads?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, we have a plan that is fully consistent with the schedule with the Department of Defense to put new pits in our warheads. Now, in some cases, the Savannah River is—we are targeting completion of construction of the Savannah River plutonium processing facility in 2032.

Then we have to introduce plutonium. We have to introduce the processes and the rate production. That will take a few more years. But our plan is to be able to produce pits for the new W93 warhead, and we are targeting at least half of that population.

We don't think we can get that facility up in time to do all of the W93 builds, but it is important that we have a fair number of those new pits, because our option is to reuse pits, which introduces some uncertainty, but more importantly, we just—it limits what else we can do in our stockpile when we reuse those pits.

Senator KING. So, do you feel we are on a reasonable, predictable schedule at Savannah River? Are you confident that we have—you know, the contractor and the plans are moving forward adequately?

Ms. HRUBY. I am increasingly confident. You know, we have a lot of work in front of us. But we—I feel much better about where we are. I think we have turned the corner in terms of what we are doing at Savannah River, and we have a good team in place.

Senator KING. Let me change the subject for a moment. One of my nightmares is a terrorist organization getting a hold of a nuclear weapon, and we have got North Korea, Iran. North Korea would probably sell anything if they can get cash for it. Talk to me about the technology of detection.

Deterrence doesn't work with 15 people who don't care about dying and don't have a capital city. In other words, the whole theory of deterrence doesn't work with terrorists. So, the first line of defense has to be detection and understanding what is going on.

Do we—are we working in that direction? How do we know that there might be a nuclear device in a container that is on its way to Miami?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Well, a lot of the responsibility for detection is also with the Department of Homeland Security. But we develop technologies, and we place those technologies around the world.

We have a lot of those in place. They are operating and we are increasing the countries that we are working with because of their neighborhood, and because we want to make sure that the U.S. is their go to partner for that. So, we have increased the number of countries we are working with in terms of detection.

Senator KING. Well, this should be a very, very high priority because there are people—if those people on September 11th could

have killed 3 million people instead of 3,000, they would have. As sure as we are sitting here, there are people that are adversaries that are thinking about how to acquire a nuclear weapon.

Ms. HRUBY. I agree, Senator. It is a very high priority for us.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Granholm, last September, President Biden said, “the only existential threat humanity faces, even things more frightening than a nuclear war, is global warming.” Do you agree?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I strongly believe that climate change is an existential threat to the planet.

Senator COTTON. Okay, so that is not exactly my question. President Biden said the only existential threat humanity faces, even things more frightening than a nuclear war, is global warming. Do you believe that nuclear war is an existential threat?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Of course.

Senator COTTON. Okay, so that is not what the President said. What is more frightening about global warming than nuclear war?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Well, I am not in a position to compare the two, but I can say that climate change is having a dastardly impact across the globe, particularly in areas that are subject to heat. We have had record heat years now, consecutive year after year, which has devastated that—

Senator COTTON. Do you agree—sounds like you don’t agree with the President that global warming is more frightening than nuclear war?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I am not in a position to characterize what the President was saying. I am just saying that it is an existential threat.

Senator COTTON. Okay. So, as the Secretary of Energy, your most important job is our Nation’s stockpile of nuclear weapons, which is the backbone of our entire national defense. Every military operations by the Department of Defense is underwritten by that strategic deterrent.

But last year, you testified that ensuring we have enough lithium for electric vehicle batteries is more urgent than ensuring the Nation’s stockpile for nuclear weapons—that nuclear weapons are adequate.

Do you still believe that our lithium supply, as important as that is and I grant you, is more important than the Nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I don’t recall saying that.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Do you believe that?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I believe that the lithium supply is important, but the Nation’s nuclear stockpile is very important as well.

Senator COTTON. Is it the most important thing you do in your job?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I don’t rank things in my job.

Senator COTTON. Not at all? So, making sure that the annual picnic comes off well is as important as the Nation’s nuclear stockpile?

Secretary GRANHOLM. That I would rank lower, yes.

Senator COTTON. All right. Ms. Hruby, can you discuss what you are doing to recruit agents to the Office of Secure Transportation? Do you have enough agents to accomplish your current nuclear weapons transportation requirements?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes, thank you for this question, Senator.

We are—this is a very important function that we have that a lot of people don't understand that we do transport nuclear weapons that are still in the custody of the Department of Energy or when they are coming back to the custody of the Department of Energy, and these agents are amazing.

They have a hard job, and they do it very well, and they do it—they have done it safely and securely for a long period of time, and of course, we have a great training facility at Fort Chaffee. We are always trying to recruit people.

This is—we have enough. We do our job. But we have to work hard to recruit, and as importantly, train the agents as we get them. So, it is a constant concern for us, but we are paying attention to it.

Senator COTTON. These are highly specialized roles and equipment, right? You can't just throw a nuclear warhead in the back of your F-150 and drive it between military bases.

Ms. HRUBY. Not in the United States of America. We have very specialized trucks, vehicles, convoys that transport materials that these agents are responsible for. They go through rigorous testing, both physically and mentally, to be capable of doing these jobs. They are a hugely important part of our workforce.

Senator COTTON. Okay. I believe you have 370 positions authorized. You know how many currently you have filled?

Ms. HRUBY. I don't off the top of my head. I can get back to you—

Senator COTTON. My understanding, it is only about 280, and with the upcoming modernization plans, I have concerns about the office's ability to fulfill its mission and the strain it is going to put on those agents.

So, I would encourage you and the Department to look at what you can do to recruit more folks into that office. I see that the clock has disappeared, so I guess I have an indefinite amount of time to ask as many questions as I want, but I will yield back to the Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Cotton, and let me recognize for 5 minutes, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here today and for your very extensive public service.

I would like to ask Secretary Granholm, the standards for PFAS that you have adopted, the Department of Energy, and that you now implement, are they different from the standards that the EPA just announced as applicable to municipalities and the major initiative that President Biden has started to rid our Nation's water serving citizens around the Nation of this really dreaded threat?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I would have to get back to you on that. Obviously, we don't want to see different standards being applied

across Departments differently. I am sure there will be an effort to realign, if it is, in fact, different.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Yea, I think it is important that the standards be uniform, because—and I frankly don't know the answer to that question myself.

Secretary GRANHOLM. EPA sets this, so we would follow their lead.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Great. Administrator Hruby, I am concerned about—I know you have been asked about, I think, by Senator Kaine about AUKUS and the nuclear reactor program there.

But I am concerned about whether from your perspective, the naval reactors are on track to support the AUKUS commitments that we have made to production delivery of the Virginia Class boats over the next 10 to 15 years relating to Australia. Do you think that program is on track?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. The Naval Reactors Organization has worked very hard to evaluate the options that we provided to the Australians to support, and I am confident with the proposed plan that our Naval Reactors Organization can support that. That is separate, naval reactors are separate from shipbuilding, so really just speaking to, will we be able to provide the naval reactors needed for the AUKUS deal, and I am confident that we can.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I want to ask you and maybe Secretary Granholm on the issue of security for the reactor facilities in Ukraine and the danger that is posed by the Russian aggression there. Have you—do you know whether there is money in the supplemental that is specifically allocated to nuclear safety in Ukraine?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Our requests in the supplemental for an NNSA, Department of Energy is \$149 million, and we very much hope that we get that—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I apologize if you have already answered this question, but in terms of that supplemental request, do you view it as important to the safety of those reactors and of the region from possible disruption?

Ms. HRUBY. I do. I think it is important for the consequences and for the safety. So, we watch for radiological release, so it is important to recognize it immediately. We have trained with the Ukrainians, and we meet with them on a regular basis to make sure that they would know how to respond in the event of a radiological release.

We have ways to help protect, if the Ukrainians adopt them, the important electrical nodes, grid nodes around the reactors. But we can't prevent. We have no role in preventing a drone strike or an attack on the plant.

So, I just—but what—we are trying to lower the consequence in the event that anything would happen or that—and hopefully that wouldn't happen.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. In my trips to Ukraine, I have been there five times over the last couple of years, I have talked to President Zelensky and his energy and his military team about this issue, and you are absolutely right. You can't guarantee the air defense. That is a military function, and obviously self-defense from missile and drone attacks is part of this supplemental, so I think

it is important to energy security as well as other forms of security in the country. I noticed the clock is back on, Mr. Chairman, and my time has expired, so I am going to yield.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Granholm, when was the last time you spoke to a representative from the Chinese Communist Party?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I spoke with a member of the Chinese delegation at the APEC conference last summer.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. A report released in August 2023 mentions that you would consult with your counterpart at the Chinese Communist Party about potential Strategic Petroleum Reserve sales. Is that true?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Oh, yes, I did.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Was your—what was the nature of that conversation?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I tried to, but we couldn't connect. But I was intending to speak with him.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Have you had conversations outside of what—the instance I just mentioned?

Secretary GRANHOLM. When we go to an APEC summit, which is the Asian Pacific Conference where we talk with countries, and of course, China is a member, we often meet with our counterparts. Last, I think, last summer, the APEC conference. I can't remember the exact date. I know that I had a conversation with my counterpart from China on energy.

Senator SCHMITT. Was your decisionmaking process on decisions related to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve influenced by the conversations you had with the Chinese Communist Party—?

Secretary GRANHOLM. That is at a different time.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, I want to get back to 2021.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Okay. So, the International Energy Agency had a global stockpile release in response to the war in Ukraine, and we were all encouraging other countries to release from their stockpiles so that we could replace the barrels that were pulled off the market as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, two things have happened since then. We have not replenished our Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and China has an enormous stockpile now. They have their own strategic petroleum reserve. Do they call you to talk to you about decisions related to their strategic petroleum reserve?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Again, this was just a decision to get a number of countries to release—

Senator SCHMITT. But I am really just curious, why—

Secretary GRANHOLM.—globally—

Senator SCHMITT.—why would you be reaching out to a representative from the Chinese Communist Party about our decision to release oil from the—

Secretary GRANHOLM. It was not about our decision. It was asking them to release, as we were asking other countries to release as well.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. It was our decision to release. We still are governed by—you know, we are not governed by a world gov-

ernment yet. Like we make that—the Biden administration made that decision. So, it was your call to inform them of our decision to persuade them to release their own strategic—?

Secretary GRANHOLM. It was not about our decision. It was about their decision, asking them to release, along with all of these other countries, from their strategic stockpiles, and in fact, a very large release did happen.

Senator SCHMITT. They bought a lot of that oil, didn't they?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I have no idea what—

Senator SCHMITT. You don't know if China bought a lot of our oil from that Strategic Petroleum Reserve release in 2021?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I don't—

Senator SCHMITT. You are the Energy Secretary.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Our release. Obviously releases happen on a global market—

Senator SCHMITT. No, I am talking about our release. They bought from our release.

Secretary GRANHOLM. It is my understanding that China has purchased a tiny amount, like under 3 percent, from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve. That was before the ban. They are no longer purchasing. Again, this is all pursuant to what Congress requires us to do as an agency.

Senator SCHMITT. There was no directive from Congress for you to release that oil.

Secretary GRANHOLM. No, I am talking about who we sell to.

Senator SCHMITT. Right. But you don't need to talk to a representative from the Chinese Communist Party about our decision to release oil.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Perhaps I am not making myself clear. I did not talk to a member of the Chinese Communist Party—

Senator SCHMITT. You tried, though. You tried.

Secretary GRANHOLM.—about our decision to release. It was about encouraging them to release, along with all of these other countries, so that—

Senator SCHMITT. Did they do that? Did they do that?

Secretary GRANHOLM.—we could make up for the Russians barrels that were pulled off the market.

Senator SCHMITT. Did they do that?

Secretary GRANHOLM. They said that they did. I don't have evidence that they did.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, because they have an enormous stockpile now, and ours is at historically low levels.

I want to point out that around 900,000 barrels of oil were sold to Unipet America, subsidiary of the Chinese government owned gas company Sinopec, which in turn had received billions of dollars from BHR Partners.

Who is BHR Partners? BHR Partners is a private equity firm co-founded by Hunter Biden, who held a 10 percent stake. Were you aware that Hunter Biden benefited from the sale of our Strategic Petroleum Reserve by an affiliated Chinese company?

Secretary GRANHOLM. No.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. You have not replenished the Strategic Petroleum Reserve since, right?

Secretary GRANHOLM. We are in the process of doing that. Part of that is to repurchase barrels. Part of that—at taxpayer——

Senator SCHMITT. It is too expensive now, wasn't that your statement?

Secretary GRANHOLM.—at rates favorable to taxpayers. At the moment, it is above what we want it to. We sold barrels at \$95 a barrel. Right now, the price for purchase is around \$90, or maybe a little bit less, if you look at WTI.

Senator SCHMITT. As the Secretary of Energy for the United States of America, do you regret depleting our Strategic Petroleum Reserves to historically low levels, which they currently stand at?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I would like to just set the——

Senator SCHMITT. I would like for you to answer the question because I am out of time. Do you regret that decision?

Secretary GRANHOLM. I am going to set—no, I don't regret doing what is right to be able to help replenish the global supplies.

Senator SCHMITT. What about for the United States of America? I am talking about our country.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator. You are out of time.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can she answer the question?

Chairman REED. Senator Gillibrand, please.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Secretary Granholm, thank you for your testimony today. Despite the FBI's takedown of a Volt Typhoon botnet late last year, says the director, Jen Easterly—said there have been no big changes to the group's activity.

As the sector risk management agency for the energy sector, how is the Department of Energy working to help critical infrastructure providers identify and mitigate threats on their networks?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes, thank you for that question. It is such an important one as we perceive cyber threats to be really increasing.

The Volt Typhoon example is one that we are particularly concerned because Chinese cyber actors are pre-positioning themselves on the networks in order to be ready to strike in case of a conflict.

So, we have, ETEC, which we have set up to be able to work with our partners in the private sector, in the utility space. To be on high alert for these kind of cyber activities. We have set out—we have convened, we send out learnings.

We are in very close contact to make sure that we are providing the best information we have about where one might find some of these pre-position efforts. So, we are—we have set up a whole new infrastructure associated with cyber through our CESER office.

We are really pleased with the coordination that we are seeing as a public, private partnership manner with the private sector and with utilities.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do you believe you need more authorities or resources to do this outreach successfully?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Well, we could certainly always use more resources to be able to do that, but we believe that Congress has sufficiently, at this moment, supplied us with what we need through our CESER budget and our partnership with CISA as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do you believe that there should be a mandatory participation for the private sector with regard to critical in-

infrastructure? Because from your answer and from previous hearings, my understanding is CISA can only provide best practices and encouragement and guidance, but certainly can't mandate anything.

I imagine you are under the same lack of authority. Are you concerned at all that you can't guarantee safety, security, or even best effort by any provider in the energy sector, and that would leave us vulnerable to a cyber-attack, because there is no way for you to make sure that they have the best defenses or have invested the right amount of cybersecurity in our critical infrastructure.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes, we have a very good relationship with all of the major utilities, but there are a lot of smaller utilities, munis, et cetera, and we have relationship with their associations. We send out—we disseminate information and hope that that gets, you know, pressed down through is the system.

Senator GILLIBRAND. So, the word you just use is you hope that they get pressed down. That is a very—

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. That is a very inadequate frame, and I am very concerned about it. So, I am concerned that you don't have the authorities that you need and that you don't have the resources you need to properly safeguard the electric grid in the event of a cyber-attack by China or other adversaries.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Well, mandating would certainly strengthen that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Correct. Can you tell us in this setting about the cyberattack on the electric grid in Guam? Can you tell us about what you would have done differently or what authorities, if you had, could have been implemented because this is the Armed Services committee.

We want to make sure our warfighters have the capacity to defend this Nation in the event of attack and to project our power. Without an electric grid at a base of operations that is owned by the private sector, we can't do our job. So, I would like any thoughts or comments you have on that.

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes, and I would respectfully request that I get back to you on that so that I can have a fulsome response for you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. That would be helpful. Last, do you have any recommendations about what kind of authorities, or can you, for the record, create some recommendations about what kind of authorities would be useful for you if you were given the task of making sure our electric grid does not go down in a cyberattack by China or any other adversary?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Here, too, I would love to get back to you on this, on some specifics.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Recommendations—

Secretary GRANHOLM.—authority wise, that I could consult with CESER to see how we might additionally strengthen, and the resources that it might take to do that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Secretary Granholm and Director Hruby, thank you for being here today. Director Hruby, I would like to ask you two related questions regarding the development of new nuclear warheads. I think this is something that has already been addressed in the committee today.

But so, the National Nuclear Security Administration is developing the W80-4 warhead for the long range standoff munition, LRSO. You have also been tasked to develop the variant, the W80-4 alternate, for the submarine launched cruise missile. I understand the Administration has been reluctant to start the development of a nuclear armed cruise missile for Navy submarines.

I was aboard the USS *Indiana* under the ice just about 6 weeks ago or so, and we discussed some of the challenges, both from an engineering and operational standpoint for them. The Secretary of the Navy has been rather vocal in his opposition to this.

However, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment has issued an acquisition decision memorandum directing the Navy to establish the program and requesting NNSA support for the warhead development. Director Hruby, your Administration has a lot on its plate right now.

You currently have five warhead modernization programs underway and now a potential six with the SLCM-N, and in an open hearing, which we are in today, can you comment on how much extra burden the development of a W80-4 alternate warhead puts on your workforce and budget?

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Thank you, Senator Kelly. We did. Obviously there was NDAA language on SLCM, and there was an appropriation in 2024. So, we are working hard on SLCM-N, in concert with the Navy.

We are looking at W80-4 and potentially other warheads that will be at least disruptive to the program of record and do the job that we need to do, consistent with the Navy's selected platform when that is done.

So, we have established a program office where we are going to work on how to do this so that it will fit in and not disrupt the program of record as best as we can, looking at all options, again, in close coordination with the Navy.

Senator KELLY. Do you, prioritize these programs like——

Ms. HRUBY. Absolutely.

Senator KELLY.—for infrastructure and workforce?

Ms. HRUBY. Well, infrastructure—we have to—we prioritize a lot of things simultaneously. The situation we are in is where modernizing warheads while we modernize our infrastructure side by side, in some cases in the same building.

We worry about it every day. We concentrate on it every day. We are making progress. But it is not an ideal situation, but we are certainly committed to doing it, and it is—and showing progress.

Senator KELLY. Do you have a pits going in new warheads today?

Ms. HRUBY. No. We—the first new pit that will go into warheads is the W87-1, which is for the Sentinel ICBM. It is the system after the long range standoff system. But we are on schedule to make pits for that, and then the following weapon, the W93, also needs new pits.

Senator KELLY. When do you when do you believe—if it is not—if we can say it here in an open hearing, when a pit goes into a Sentinel missile?

Ms. HRUBY. Where are scheduled—well, it depends on the schedule of the—right now, for the W87-1, we will be—yes, 2031 or 1932 is the first production unit for that system. Those should have new pits in them.

Senator KELLY. When will that—and where will that be? Where does that work take place?

Ms. HRUBY. The pits will be produced at Los Alamos. The assembly will be done at Pantex in Texas.

Senator KELLY. Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Kelly. For the second amendment, I will yield for a question to Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Granholm, I want to give you a chance to answer the question from the Senator from Missouri, why was the—why were we working on a worldwide effort to release oil from Strategic Petroleum Reserves after the invasion of Ukraine?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Because after the invasion, and rightfully so, so many countries put sanctions on Russian oil. Their Russian oil was taken off the market, which caused a huge supply crunch.

Senator KING. Which in turn would cause a huge price spike, is that correct?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Which in turn causes a huge price spike, which explains in last—or the June before, in June 2022, why the prices were close to \$5 a gallon, is because, purely because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was happening across the world, and everyone, at least at the International Energy Agency, wanted to see if people who had—countries that had stockpiles could release.

Senator KING. So, this was what the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was for, was to release at a time when there was a worldwide crisis in energy supply in some way in order to stabilize the market. Is that correct?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Precisely.

Senator KING. Thank you. To get back to nuclear power and the NNSA. I am concerned about uranium, and we are still buying uranium from Russia. We don't have much, if any, enrichment capacity for future needs for the submarine fleet, for small modular reactors.

Where are we, Administrator, on developing capacity for uranium supply? If there is anything we have learned in the last 10 years is that we shouldn't be depending on Russia for essential—an essential commodity like uranium.

Ms. HRUBY. Yes. Thanks, Senator. Well, the—we have—we are trying to coordinate across that Department. We have a coordinated plan across the Department for uranium, both for defense needs and for civil needs.

The civil needs are for LEU for our current operating reactors and also for our high assay LEU for the advanced reactor program. Secretary Granholm has mentioned in the hearing that the money that has been allocated to the appropriated to the Department to use to help spur domestic uranium enrichment is dependent on a

ban on Russian uranium. So, as a Department, we are anxious to see that happen.

From a defense needs perspective, if we can start enriching uranium and specifically high assay, low enriched uranium in the U.S. using all domestic supplies, that will become a very important feed material to us for naval reactors to produce highly enriched uranium.

Senator KING. I am going to have to—I am going to move on to another question. But the point is, we need to develop the domestic capacity for the production of uranium and enrichment, not be dependent upon Russia, is that correct?

Ms. HRUBY. Absolutely. Madam Secretary, waste disposal. Not Yucca mountain, just so Catherine Cortez Masto doesn't come down on me.

But on the other hand, we now have what amount to 100 high level nuclear waste sites scattered around the country, one of which is in Maine, where there is stranded nuclear waste from a commercial plant that is there.

This is all over the country. Where are we in the search for a more permanent, secure solution to that problem?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. Thank you for that question. We have begun a consent based siting process across the country.

We have, to that end, funded 12 different consortia who are having conversations with communities that might be willing to raise their hand. Of course, depending on the—how the community is compensated for the service of disposing safely of nuclear waste. So, there is three phases to it.

We are in the first phase. The second phase will be identifying actually and talking to the volunteers. The first phase is sort of laying the groundwork, and the third phase is actually beginning the storage process.

Senator KING. This process is actively underway?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Actively underway right now.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Gillibrand, I will yield for one question.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Granholm, I want to thank you for visiting the Brookhaven National Lab on Long Island, where our new electron ion collider is being constructed.

I think these national labs are playing such an important role for our National Security, and I want to invite you to perhaps come see at the University of Rochester's Laboratory for Laser Energy, the work they are doing there for the National Nuclear Security Administration's inertial confinement fusion program. It has already helped achieve major fusion ignition breakthroughs, December 2022.

As DOE builds off of that historic milestone and continues to work toward a future powered in part by fusion energy, what role do you see labs like Rochester's Laboratory for Laser and Energetics, as well as the Brookhaven National Lab, are playing in your vision for our Department of Energy, but also for our Nation's security?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Yes. Thank you for that, and we have, obviously, a bold decadal vision to achieve commercial fusion within 10 years. The fusion strategy that is being deployed at Rochester is with lasers. Obviously there is others, magnets.

The Los Alamos National—Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore National Lab is the lab. Obviously that did achieve ignition in December 2022 and has achieved ignition multiple times after that, by the way. Thanks for the partnership.

These partnerships are critical. The tools are critical. These user facilities are absolutely fundamental. The electron ion collider is so exciting.

It is the first collider that will be built in the next 10 to 20 years globally to be able to determine what is inside of a proton, and how we can collide, and spin, and create, perhaps, and understand the, you know, the strongest force in physics.

So, it is very exciting what is happening in New York, and thanks to New York State for actually having contributed \$100 million to that electron ion collider as well.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Madam Secretary, thank you. Madam Administrator, thank you for your testimony. We will adjourn the open hearing and reconvene as close to 11 a.m. as we can in SVC-217. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 10:47 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY PFAS STANDARDS

1. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Secretary Granholm, are the Department of Energy's Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) mitigation standards in alignment with the Environmental Protection Agency's National Primary Drinking Water Regulation? If not, please provide the Department of Energy's plan of action to achieve compliance with this rule.

Secretary GRANHOLM. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is committed to protecting human health and the environment by assessing and addressing PFAS at DOE sites while deploying the Department's scientific expertise to solve PFAS challenges. The Department follows all applicable Environmental Protection Agency PFAS regulations, including its primary drinking water standards.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

COST OVERRUNS

2. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm, almost every construction project with a cost estimate of \$100 million is currently facing cost increases and schedule delays. While some of these increases are attributable to COVID-related workforce and supply chain challenges, others are not. Secretary Granholm, what are other reasons for these increases and delays, and what steps is the National Nuclear Security Administration taking to hold contractors accountable for project performance?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Increased cost drivers for Capital Asset acquisition Projects valued at \$100 million and greater include insufficient upfront planning, changes in project requirements, post-COVID supply chain issues, construction escalation, lack of qualified craft workers, poor contractor performance, and funding uncertainties due to continuing resolutions. To improve performance, NNSA is taking the following actions to hold contractors accountable for project performance:

- a. The Management and Operating (M&O) Contractors' Performance Evaluation Measurement Plans (PEMP) are updated annually to provide the criteria to evaluate performance and determine at-risk award fee. The fiscal year 2025

PEMPs are currently in negotiations to include a new goal specifically for infrastructure including Capital Asset acquisition Projects valued at \$100 million and greater. Contractors will be evaluated on project execution, including schedule and risk management.

- b. NNSA has launched Separate Fee Plans for certain key Capital Asset Line Item Construction Projects (i.e., Uranium Processing Facility and Savannah River Pit Production Facility) to further incentivize delivery performance and budget management.
- c. Hybrid Partnering Sessions with NNSA and M&O leadership continue with a focus on key production project delivery and M&O actions necessary to stay on schedule.
- d. NNSA's Integrated Infrastructure Planning (IIP) process connects mission priorities with timely, attainable infrastructure solutions in documented plans. The IIP process is executed through an enterprise-wide team and sub-teams that are focused on early stage line-item project prioritization, modeling and visualization, and cost estimating.

2. Secretary Granholm, the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative was launched in 2022. Have the 21 recommendations been implemented and do you think any have been effective in addressing obstacles in contracting and procurement?

Secretary GRANHOLM. NNSA is actively implementing numerous initiatives as a result of the 21 EMDI recommendations. NNSA has achieved contracting and procurement efficiencies by implementing changes under EMDI. For example:

EMDI recommendations #1 and #2—Award Fee Contracting Model and the Management and Operating (M&O) Contract Base and Extension. On June 13, 2024, NNSA announced the new Pantex contract award to PanTeXas Deterrence, LLC with a 5-year base period, three 5-year options and a hybrid fee structure with both fixed and award fee. This represents an important step toward improving NNSA's M&O contracting to be more strategic, less disruptive to the mission and workforce, and more of a true partnership.

EMDI recommendation #3—Streamlining Contracts. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the Livermore Field Office worked together to revise contract clauses, revise the Statement of Work (SOW), and pilot changes to streamline Emergency Management, Cybersecurity, and Purchasing programs. This has resulted in increased efficiencies to support mission delivery, including:

- Significant savings in emergency management activities, equivalent to ~2 FTEs or nearly 4,300 hours annually.
- Major reductions in approval cycle time for cybersecurity deliverables ranging from 50 percent to 96 percent.
- Substantial reduction in approval cycle time for award of major procurements between \$3 million and \$5 million YTD in fiscal year 2024 of up to 96 total days.

EMDI recommendation #9—Improving M&O Subcontracting Efficiency. NNSA significantly reduced the review and approval time for subcontract consent packages through the Subcontract Consent Pilot. Prior to the pilot, these packages took an average of 8–10 weeks to go through the Federal review and approval process. After implementation of the pilot, the average time decreased to 2 to 4 weeks.

EMDI recommendation #10—Waiving DOE Order 413.3 billion requirements for low-risk commercial-like construction. NNSA streamlined the non-complex, non-nuclear construction process by:

- 1) Completing the final three of four Enhanced Minor Construction and Commercial (EMC2) pilot projects in fiscal year 2023 (i.e. Y-12 Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Y-12 Fire Station, SNL EOC)
- 2) Initiating the construction subcontract consent pilot on August 2, 2023
- 3) Issuing Supplemental Directive 413.3-7 on September 8, 2023, which institutionalizes the EMC2 process based on results from the pilot projects

3. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm, the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative was launched in 2022. Have the 21 recommendations been implemented and do you think any have been effective in addressing obstacles in contracting and procurement?

Secretary GRANHOLM. NNSA is actively implementing numerous initiatives as a result of the 21 EMDI recommendations. NNSA has achieved contracting and procurement efficiencies by implementing changes under EMDI. For example:

EMDI recommendations #1 and #2—Award Fee Contracting Model and the Management and Operating (M&O) Contract Base and Extension. On June 13, 2024, NNSA announced the new Pantex contract award to PanTeXas Deterrence, LLC with a 5-year base period, three 5-year options and a hybrid fee structure with both fixed and award fee. This represents an important step toward improving NNSA's M&O contracting to be more strategic, less disruptive to the mission and workforce, and more of a true partnership.

EMDI recommendation #3—Streamlining Contracts. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the Livermore Field Office worked together to revise contract clauses, revise the Statement of Work (SOW), and pilot changes to streamline Emergency Management, Cybersecurity, and Purchasing programs. This has resulted in increased efficiencies to support mission delivery, including:

- Significant savings in emergency management activities, equivalent to ~2 FTEs or nearly 4,300 hours annually.
- Major reductions in approval cycle time for cybersecurity deliverables ranging from 50 percent to 96 percent.
- Significant savings in emergency management activities, equivalent to a substantial reduction in approval cycle time for award of major procurements between \$3 million and \$5 million YTD in fiscal year 2024 of up to 96 total days.

EMDI recommendation #9—Improving M&O Subcontracting Efficiency. NNSA significantly reduced the review and approval time for subcontract consent packages through the Subcontract Consent Pilot. Prior to the pilot, these packages took an average of 8–10 weeks to go through the Federal review and approval process. After implementation of the pilot, the average time decreased to 2–4 weeks.

EMDI recommendation #10—Waiving DOE Order 413.3B requirements for low-risk commercial-like construction. NNSA streamlined the non-complex, non-nuclear construction process by:

- 1) Completing the final three of four Enhanced Minor Construction and Commercial (EMC2) pilot projects in fiscal year 2023 (i.e. Y-12 Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Y-12 Fire Station, SNL EOC);
- 2) Initiating the construction subcontract consent pilot on August 2, 2023;
- 3) Issuing Supplemental Directive 413.3-7 on September 8, 2023, which institutionalizes the EMC2 process based on results from the pilot projects.

FUTURE OF DETERRENCE

4. Senator HIRONO. Administration Hruby, several countries continue to pursue nuclear proliferation at a rate not seen since the end of the cold war at a time when arms control treaties seem to be falling by the wayside. Administrator Hruby, how is National Nuclear Security Administration working to reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation worldwide?

Administration HRUBY. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) plays a pivotal role in implementing the President's National Security Strategy through its nonproliferation, counterproliferation, and counterterrorism activities. These programs are necessary for reducing nuclear threats and extending U.S. defenses globally. By preventing additional states and non-State actors from obtaining nuclear weapons, materials, technology, and expertise, and by responding to nuclear or radiological incidents domestically and internationally, NNSA significantly enhances global stability. NNSA shares knowledge, accrued through the United States' longstanding experience in managing special nuclear materials, with partners around the world to achieve international nonproliferation and nuclear security goals. Utilizing the technical knowledge from the Stockpile Stewardship Program, NNSA assesses foreign weapons programs, manages proliferation risks from civil nuclear applications, and prevents terrorist access to nuclear materials and technology.

DOE/NNSA collaborates globally to identify and eliminate excess weapons-usable nuclear material, including developing solutions to downblend highly enriched uranium (HEU) in-country. At home, NNSA remains committed to the permanent disposition of 34MT of surplus defense plutonium through the Surplus Plutonium Disposition (SPD) program, despite Russia's purported unilateral suspension of the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement. NNSA also works to minimize the civilian use of highly enriched uranium (HEU) by converting research reactors to high assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU). Collaborations on new and advanced reactor designs aim to reduce special nuclear material production and diversion pathways.

NNSA leads hundreds of technical and policy experts in maintaining high non-proliferation standards and regulating nuclear technology export through 10 C.F.R.

Part 810. As new challenges in the nonproliferation space emerge, NNSA finds creative ways to consider, test, and implement nuclear safety, security, and safeguards technology. The newest example of this is the first-of-its-kind safeguards testing and demonstration facility with the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that will allow safeguards technologies to be practiced and perfected prior to use at nuclear sites around the world.

NNSA's important investments include the Advanced Reactor International Safeguards Engagement (ARISE) program, which provides advice to industry about integrating safeguards by design in new reactors. NNSA strengthens global capacity to detect and prevent weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related transfers, builds capabilities in vulnerable countries, and provides technical measures and policy options for nuclear warhead reductions. NNSA continues investments to develop the next generation of arms control technologies, including space-based monitoring and verification, and experts to help mitigate against emerging and evolving national security risks. It is paramount that the United States is prepared for arms control negotiations in the future, and the NNSA's Arms Control Advancement Initiative (ACAI) works to ensure that the U.S. maintains the expertise and technical capabilities required to address future strategic stability, nuclear deterrence, and arms control issues. A critical piece of ACAI is the Next Generation Arms Control Experts (NextGen ACE) Program. NextGen ACE works to prepare a new generation of experts who are technically trained to support and implement monitoring and verification for both traditional, and potentially novel, arms control and other nuclear threat reduction agreements. Another critical component of ACAI is the development of the Pantex Monitoring and Verification Test Facility (PMVTF). PMVTF is a test bed that supports high-fidelity testing, demonstration, and exercising of warhead monitoring and verification capabilities. Finally, NNSA develops programs and strategies to address emerging nonproliferation challenges, ensures the United States remains a global leader in civilian nuclear cooperation by entering into binding civil nuclear cooperation agreements (123 Agreements), and by contributing to the development and implementation of U.S. nonproliferation policy at the national and international level through technical support to U.S. participation in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

5. Senator HIRONO. Administration Hruby, deterrence is the bedrock of our nuclear strategy. Are there gaps in capability that are not currently addressed that would help maintain deterrence against our nuclear peer competitors?

Administration HRUBY. Although the global security landscape is more dynamic today than in recent years, our nuclear deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. DOE/NNSA's seven warhead modernization programs, along with DOD's modernization programs for delivery platforms across all three legs of the triad, are designed to maintain deterrence effectiveness into the future. As NNSA and DOD execute current modernization programs, we are actively engaged with the interagency to identify deterrence gaps that might arise in the future and are developing plans to close those gaps should they arise. While we remain confident in our capabilities today, we are examining ways to reduce risks that might arise in the future.

NUCLEAR INFRASTRUCTURE

6. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, like much of the Defense Department's infrastructure, our nuclear weapons labs, production facilities, and storage complexes are aging to the point it will now take around \$250 billion over the next 30 years to modernize. Does this budget request buy down enough of this backlog to adequately recoup our nuclear facilities?

Secretary GRANHOLM and Administrator HRUBY. This budget request continues the Administration's efforts to adequately recoup our nuclear facilities by equitably weighing all of the risks throughout the nuclear security enterprise. The Enterprise Blueprint effort underway will lay out a roadmap for future investments.

NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION—ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN UP EFFORTS

7. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, I have worked hard to ensure the Department of Defense upholds its environmental cleanup responsibilities, whether incurred from fuel and chemical spills or unexploded ordnance. Too commonplace in environmental restoration are missed deadlines and unreliable cost and schedule estimates. For both of you, there have been multiple Government Accountability Office reports citing similar obstacles in your department's cleanup efforts as to those embarked by the Department of Defense. What are you

doing to improve the cost and schedule estimates of your environmental restoration projects?

Secretary GRANHOLM and Administrator HRUBY. While DOE's Office of Environmental Management will respond separately, NNSA conducts limited environmental cleanup work. Examples include managing pump-and-treat systems at Pantex in Texas, Y-12 in Tennessee, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California; and post-closure monitoring (groundwater) at all sites. Pursuant to authority provided in the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA, NNSA funds some facility disposition projects (less than \$75 million) of process-contaminated excess facilities to reduce the risk those facilities pose to mission, people, and the environment. So far, those projects have completed successfully.

8. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, what are the largest sources of delays for these projects and how do we solve them?

Secretary GRANHOLM and Administrator HRUBY. While DOE's Office of Environmental Management will respond separately, NNSA is not managing any large cleanup projects. None of NNSA's limited environmental cleanup activities are experiencing delays.

NON-PROLIFERATION INITIATIVES

9. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, the Department of Energy has routinely supported research into new reactor designs for commercial use, many of them for much smaller reactors than those mostly used today. In the near future, do you see national security rationale—in addition to the green energy benefits—to build additional nuclear reactors?

Secretary GRANHOLM and Administrator HRUBY. NNSA believes it is crucial for national security to build additional U.S. nuclear reactors. First, in light of the link between energy security, energy resilience, and national security, ensuring we support secure U.S. Advanced /Small Modular Reactor (A/SMR) technology development and deployment is a national nuclear security imperative to avoid reliance on foreign entities in any part of the A/SMR supply chain, which can impact our own energy security. A/SMRs can provide critical infrastructure resilient energy for several years amid the threat of physical or cyberattacks, extreme weather, pandemic biothreats, and other emerging challenges that can all disrupt commercial energy networks. Second, A/SMRs developed and deployed by the U.S. industry will likely have strong safeguards and security concepts designed into them, creating a national security rationale for deploying as many of these U.S. products globally as possible instead of allowing Russia and China, who are far less likely to consider strong safeguards and security in their A/SMR designs or their supply agreements, to take that market. It also makes the United States a trusted partner in the 100-year relationship that comes with being a reliable supplier of nuclear technology, and to have a leading role within international bodies where controls and guidance are being developed. NNSA has programs and resources supporting all of this now with U.S. industry, the IAEA, and nuclear newcomer countries.

10. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Granholm and Administrator Hruby, what efforts has the National Nuclear Security Administration undertaken to address advanced reactor and fuel cycle technologies in terms of nonproliferation policy and technology?

Secretary GRANHOLM and Administrator HRUBY. In anticipation of the emerging reactor and fuel cycle technologies, NNSA has established two programs focused on the security and safeguards challenges these advancements present. These initiatives also assist U.S. industry in incorporating security and safeguards by design early in the development process, paving the way for future exports. NNSA has the resident expertise to understand novel risks posed by advanced nuclear technologies when it comes to new fuel types, deployment models, and applications, and is working with domestic partners to include industry, the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to help U.S. technology prepare for international requirements in safeguards and security. Many of the countries around the world looking to build advanced reactors have never operated a nuclear power plant and do not have the infrastructure to do so. NNSA is working closely with international partners and the IAEA to promote strong safeguards and security infrastructure guidance as well as building capacity in regulatory bodies and operators in nuclear newcomer countries to strengthen the security and safeguards regimes globally.

The Advanced Reactor International Safeguards Engagement (ARISE) program is a key component of this strategy, addressing the needs of the evolving advanced re-

actor and fuel cycle technology sectors. ARISE works with advanced reactor designers and other stakeholders to combine safeguards by design through both policy and technical support. The program also assists the IAEA in adapting to new safeguards challenges, ensuring future nuclear technologies adhere to the highest safeguards standards and policies. NNSA facilitates regulatory harmonization to improve the “safeguardability” of future U.S. nuclear technology exports, ensuring these advanced technologies remain under U.S. oversight. Within the Nuclear Suppliers Group, NNSA ensures that export controls for nuclear and related technologies are updated to reflect advancements in reactor and fuel cycle technologies. These export controls are vital for preventing the diversion of nuclear materials and technology to weapons programs, ensuring their peaceful use. Through these comprehensive measures, NNSA reinforces its commitment to global stability, nuclear nonproliferation, and the secure development and deployment of advanced nuclear technologies.

NAVAL REACTORS AND COLUMBIA

11. Senator HIRONO. Administrator Hruby, Naval Reactors is leading the effort in the important AUKUS Agreement to train Australia in the handling and operation of naval nuclear fuels and reactors. Administrator Hruby, is there a step-by-step plan for training and certifying Australia for operating nuclear powered submarines?

Administration HRUBY. Working with our Australian and UK partners, the U.S. Navy, in consultation with Naval Reactors, has developed a plan to train and certify the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) officers and enlisted personnel who will operate RAN’s future submarines. Specifically, RAN personnel are enrolled in the U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Training Program in Charleston, SC, where they undergo the same training program required for U.S. naval nuclear propulsion operators and are certified to the same standard. Upon completion of the training, they report to *Virginia*-class attack submarines (SSNs), where they are expected to meet the same qualification and certification standards as U.S. sailors while assigned as augments to the U.S. crews.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

12. Senator KAINE. Secretary Granholm, what progress has your department made with regard to recruiting initiatives?

Secretary GRANHOLM. DOE establishes annual hiring goals for the employment of veterans and people with disabilities, and strongly encourage the use of the non-competitive hiring authority for military spouses. In fiscal year 2024, we have met or exceeded three of our four hiring goals. In addition, we improved the percentage of veteran hires, disabled veteran hires, persons with disabilities, and persons with specific disabilities compared to fiscal year 2023.

In fiscal year 2024, we also established a Pathways Executive Champion who promoted utilization of the Pathways Programs and sent a call to action to departmental elements (DEs) to increase Pathways Intern hiring. We have exceeded the number of Pathways Intern new hires compared to fiscal year 2023. Also, we have exceeded the number of Pathways Program participants onboard compared to fiscal year 2023.

DOE’s Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer spearheaded 5 DOE-wide information sessions in fiscal year 2024 with expanded outreach to diverse potential candidates in mission critical occupations, those who are early in their careers, and those with disabilities. These events had a combined total of 12,601 registrations. We provided job seekers with information on the Federal application and hiring process, pay and benefits, Federal resume writing, and special hiring authorities and initiatives.

Persons with Disabilities Information Session—1,485 registered

- DOE Careers in Engineering & Physical Science—3,565 registered
- DOE Careers in Data & Computing—3,756 registered
- DOE Early Career Programs—1,473 registered
- DOE Careers in Contracting & Grants Management—2,322 registered

In addition, HC attended 52 recruitment and outreach events focusing on the following audiences:

- Veterans & Military Spouses—28 events
- People with Disabilities—7 events

- Diversity & Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) events—17 events

DOE markets vacancy announcements and events widely on social media platforms; diversity associations; professional associations; veteran, military spouse, and disability employment partners; and to colleges and universities, particularly Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). These efforts resulted in thousands of event registrations and a surge in candidate applications to our vacancy announcements in USAJOBS.

In fiscal year 2024, DOE developed a Recruitment Survey that is administered to new hires during their onboarding. The survey attempts to capture the programs and/or events that had the most influence on a new hire's decision to apply for Federal employment with DOE. The survey will help us to better assess the return on investment on specific recruitment and outreach strategies and to make informed decisions on where to best invest in talent acquisition.

DOE has robust recruitment, outreach, and retention programs to attract and retain the next generation of STEM and early career workforce from all segments of society.

We participate in national recruitment events and host our own events focused on STEM professionals. In fiscal year 2024, we hosted and participated in events such as the CyberForce Virtual Career Fairs, National Tech to Gov Virtual Job Fair, Society of Women Engineers Career Fair; National Urban League's Black History Month Engineering, IT, & Cybersecurity Virtual Career Fair; Engineering & Science Virtual Career Fair; STEM Job & Internship Virtual Career Fair; Women's History Month Virtual Career Fair in Engineering & Technology; and the Energy and Environmental Virtual Career Fair.

DOE's CyberForce Program hosts annual cyber defense competitions for collegiate teams to experience the challenge of securing critical energy infrastructure. In addition, the program hosts CyberForce Virtual Career Fairs to provide students and career professionals information on available networking, mentorship, internship, and career opportunities across DOE.

DOE recognized the recruitment, hiring, and retention challenges, and increasing competition with private sector companies for top cybersecurity talent. To address these challenges, the Department developed a retention incentive program that provides an enterprise-wide approach to retaining, developing, and supporting the continued enhancement of DOE's cybersecurity workforce. These incentives allow for qualifying cybersecurity professionals to receive group retention incentives of 10 percent or alternatively, individual retention incentives of 25 percent of their salary.

DOE Departmental Elements continue to develop and maintain strategic partnerships with HBCUs and MSIs across the U.S. to promote numerous non-Federal internships and fellowships in the STEM for students of diverse backgrounds and geographies. The focus of these partnerships is to equip early career talent with the technical and professional experience to excel in successful careers and be able to compete for Federal employment. DOE promotes these opportunities on our various DE webpages on our website, <https://www.energy.gov>. Although these internships and fellowships do not directly lead to Federal employment, DOE provides participants with information on the Federal application process and encourages them to apply to DOE's vacancy announcements on USAJOBS that can lead to Federal employment.

DOE's efforts to improve agency branding and awareness, and recruit, employ, advance, and retain veterans contributed to the Department's recognition as a workplace where veterans can thrive. In November 2023, Forbes named DOE #1 overall in "America's Best Employers for Veterans 2023" list, ahead of publicly traded companies including Google, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, and General Dynamics. DOE also ranked ahead of other Federal agencies including NASA, General Services Administration, Internal Revenue Service, and Department of Treasury.

In May 2024, DOE ranked in the top 10 for the second year in a row among midsize Federal agencies in the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government 2023 by the Partnership for Public Service. In 2023, we landed the number 6 spot, two spots higher than in 2022.

13. Senator KAINE. Secretary Granholm, how is your department partnering with historically black colleges and universities and minority serving institutions to improve recruitment?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The Department of Energy (DOE) continues to design and implement specific engagement and outreach plans in collaboration with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) affiliated organizations and associations to help build awareness of opportunities for HBCUs to engage in programs, projects,

and initiatives across the DOE complex. For instance, DOE has taken the following actions:

- Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) established the Office of Integrated Strategies (IS) which is dedicated to advancing equity for underserved individuals and communities across the country. The work done by EERE and IS provides more pathways for HBCU students to find careers within clean energy industries and serve the communities from which they come.
- Through the MSI STEM Research and Development Consortium (MSRDC) partnership, EERE will continue to look for opportunities to bring all partners to the table in putting together creative research partnerships that will allow HBCUs to grow in their capacity and help their students gain valuable research experiences and potential career options afterwards.
- The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) NNSA Predictive Science Academic Alliance Program (PSAAP) currently has their PSAAP IV Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) out which is requiring that applicants describe how they will attract a diverse group of students and postdocs and make efforts to broaden the workforce pool through outreach to historically underrepresented communities. This has also been a requirement for previous NOFOs for the Stewardship Science Academic Alliance (SSAA) and Joint Program in High Energy Density Laboratory Plasmas (JHEDLP) programs. This means that applicants must provide a detailed plan that describes the activities and strategies they will incorporate to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. As an Equal Opportunity Employer, the NNSA encourages applications from diverse and inclusive groups of Principal Investigators and co-Investigators.
- DOE has incorporated Community Benefits Plans into its funding opportunity announcements. Consequently, in fiscal year 2023, DOE has successfully recruited more reviewers with diverse backgrounds to participate in merit review panels and will continue to make efforts to recruit more HBCU faculty and staff to participate in this process.

NNSA engagement activities and outreach plans in collaboration with HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) builds awareness of opportunities for HBCUs and MSIs to engage in programs, projects, and recruitment initiatives across the NNSA Nuclear Security Enterprise.

Specifically in fiscal year 2024:

- The Minority Serving Institution Partnership Program, (MSIPP) increased the number of funded projects through the Consortia Grants Program. This program expanded academic efforts in STEM capacities, recruits and supports a diverse workforce, provides experiential learning opportunities for students and faculty in MSIs and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and increases collaborations between MSIs, TCUs, and the NNSA national laboratories, plants, and sites from 30 in fiscal year 2023 to 35 in fiscal year 2024. Recipients of this program consist of 20 HBCUs, 26 HSIs, 1 Primarily Black Institution (PBI), and 7 TCUs, in collaboration with the NNSA's nuclear security enterprise. Through collaborative partnerships between the enterprise and TCUs, The Tribal Education Partnerships Program (TEPP) develops opportunities for students to strengthen skills and talents, broadening possibilities for future career paths. TEPP centers on advancing equity and opportunity between Tribal nations and NNSA while upholding and reinforcing the importance of Tribal sovereignty to ensure that Tribal knowledge is valued and protected.
- TEPP efforts at NNSA National Laboratories, Plants and Sites. Engagement activities involve:
- Through the Minority Serving Institutions Internship Program (MSIPP), NNSA provides summer and year-long internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. MSIPP facilitated its annual technical meeting in April 2024, which provided an opportunity for over 160 faculty and staff members from HBCUs, MSIs, and TCUs to collaborate on best practices for student recruitment. The event was held at Florida's largest public HBCU and showcased the White House HBCU Initiative Director as the Keynote Speaker.
- MSIPP increased the number of students supported through the MSI Internship Program from 96 in fiscal year 2023 to 151 in fiscal year 2024. This opportunity is open to all students enrolled in a Minority Serving Institution.
- MSIPP collaborates with National Laboratories Plants and Sites to broaden MSI/HBCU awareness of facility initiatives, including "Securing Top Academic Research & Talent (START) at HBCUs" at Sandia National Laboratories and

the “Underrepresented Minority Partnership Program” (URMPP) at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

- ****Virginia Specific:** In fiscal year 2023, MSIPP’s Consortium for Research and Education in Materials Science and Photonics Engineering sponsored students from three HBCUs, Norfolk State University, Virginia State University, and Elizabeth City State University on a week-long visit at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to increase awareness of summer internship opportunities and the career pathway available at LLNL.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

NUCLEAR PIT PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

14. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, when does the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) anticipate it will be able to produce 80 pits per year? How confident are you in that assessment? What factors could put that timeline at risk?

Administration HRUBY. We expect to achieve the capability to produce 80 pits per year in 2035 or soon thereafter, which is when that capability will be needed to support stockpile plans. The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is projected to achieve a 30 pits per year (ppy) production capability in or near 2028, with equipment improvements continuing after this to provide an increasingly dependable capability through 2032.

Our plan is to complete Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) construction, systems testing, and turnover to operations in 2032. This will require a high rate of work execution in the second half of the 2020’s. After turnover to operations, Savannah River must introduce nuclear material, establish pit manufacturing processes, perform detailed engineering evaluations, work with design laboratories to qualify the processes, and buildup to a 50 ppy “rate production” capability. To minimize time to rate production, NNSA is building a High-Fidelity Training and Operations Center to train employees in a realistic operational environment before occupying the processing facility. At this time, SRPPF is projected to achieve a production capacity of at least 50 ppy between 2035 and 2038.

Factors such as supply chain issues, construction cost growth, underestimates of required construction labor, unexpected problems arising during testing of complex systems, and natural disasters have the potential to impede existing schedules for these ongoing, complex nuclear projects.

15. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, Congress has requested a pit production master schedule for nearly a decade. A 2023 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on this issue found that NNSA still does not have a comprehensive schedule or cost estimate for the pit production program. Does NNSA now have a master schedule for pit production that meets GAO’s best practices? If not, when does NNSA plan to have a master schedule that meets GAO’s best practices?

Administration HRUBY. Yes, NNSA has an integrated master schedule for pit production to address program planning needs while meeting the intent of GAO best practices. The first version of NNSA Integrated Master Schedule (NIMS) on pit production was implemented in October 2021. The NIMS improved on the original milestone schedule by incorporating detailed schedule logic for the First Production Unit (FPU) at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), while retaining all other milestones supporting the full 80 pits per year (ppy) mission.

The current version of the NIMS includes detailed, multi-site schedule logic from LANL, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and the Kansas City National Security Campus for pit manufacturing and production efforts to attain FPU at LANL. Schedule logic with less detail is included for programs and projects at the Savannah River Site and those associated with later phases of equipment installation at LANL. NIMS will continue to integrate higher fidelity schedule logic for those programs and projects as their designs and schedules mature. In this way NIMS capabilities will keep pace as more programs and projects develop detailed schedules, and it will remain an effective management tool for the program, in alignment with GAO best practices.

16. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, does NNSA have the ability to complete an integrated master schedule and lifecycle cost estimate now, with existing information, and update it as higher fidelity information becomes available, as prescribed by best practices?

Administration HRUBY. Yes. NNSA's NIMS was established in 2021 and will continue to integrate higher fidelity schedule logic for pit production program and projects as designs and schedules mature. In past years, NNSA has completed various lifecycle cost estimates for both LANL and SRS pit production. The largest variable of those lifecycle cost estimates has been the capital investments needed to support the pit production mission. The 2024 initial Pit Production Total Acquisition Cost Estimate (PPTACE) was completed to focus on those capital investments that are needed and will continue to be refined as projects are baselined. The remaining elements of our lifecycle cost estimate are the programmatic costs from inception until achievement of rate-production capability at each facility and the annual operating cost once each facility achieves rate-production capability. We are developing these elements now.

PIT PRODUCTION COST

17. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, what does the NNSA estimate as the total life cycle cost of the pit production program?

Administration HRUBY. The 2024 initial Pit Production Total Acquisition Cost Estimate (PPTACE), which includes capital investments (e.g., minor construction, recapitalization) necessary to achieve the 80 ppy capability beyond just line-item projects, forecasts pit production project costs in the range of \$28B-\$37B. The PPTACE continues to be reviewed and will become more precise as facility designs progress, additional scope at the Savannah River Site is identified following transition of management responsibility to NNSA, and the sites' ability to execute pit production scope is factored into the estimates. The remaining elements of our lifecycle cost estimate are the programmatic costs from inception until achievement of rate-production capability at each facility and the annual operating cost once each facility achieves rate-production capability. We are developing these elements now, with the understanding that the underlying information from the sites continues to solidify, and there are large uncertainties in those cost ranges.

18. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, NNSA suggested in its fiscal year 2025 budget request that the Savannah River Pit Production Facility may cost \$18–25 billion to construct. This funding would include multiple line-item construction projects, office space, facility modifications, infrastructure improvements, and over \$1 billion annually in plutonium modernization program funding. Does the NNSA believe this estimate is accurate for the Savannah River site?

Administration HRUBY. Yes, NNSA believes the current estimate ranges bound the likely cost of the SRPPF construction project. These cost estimates will continue to be reviewed and will become more precise as facility designs progress, additional scope at the Savannah River Site is identified following transition of management responsibility from DOE's Office of Environmental Management to NNSA, and the site's ability to execute pit production scope is factored into the estimates. An improved baseline total acquisition cost estimate, expected in 2026, will follow project baseline estimates for SRPPF. NNSA, working with SRS, will continue to refine the cost and schedule for pit production at SRPPF as the design continues to mature. Point of clarification: The estimate of \$18 billion to \$25 billion is for the construction project and does not include plutonium modernization program funding.

19. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, what is the total life cycle cost estimate for the pit production program, including multiple line-item construction projects, office space, facility modifications, infrastructure improvements, and plutonium modernization program funding, for the Los Alamos Site?

Administration HRUBY. We are still developing estimates for the programmatic costs from inception until achievement of rate-production capability and the annual operating cost afterward. These elements will be included in the lifecycle cost estimate when they are developed. Once all major line-item projects included in the PPTACE are baselined, NNSA will complete a more accurate pit production lifecycle cost estimate to include annual pit production operations costs at both LANL and SRS and supporting activities at other sites, expected no later than 2026.

20. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, when will NNSA have a reliable independent cost estimate for the total cost of pit production?

Administration HRUBY. The 2024 initial Pit Production Total Acquisition Cost Estimate (PPTACE), which includes capital investments (e.g., minor construction, recapitalization) necessary to achieve the 80 ppy capability beyond just line-item projects, forecasts pit production project acquisition costs in the range of \$28 billion to \$37 billion. NNSA's cost range was based onsite estimates, an independent esti-

mate from NNSA's Cost Estimating and Project Evaluation (CEPE) office, and NNSA's Office of Infrastructure's cost review. NNSA, working with the sites, continues to refine the cost and schedule for pit production.

Once all major line-item projects that are included in the PPTACE are baselined, NNSA will complete an overall pit production lifecycle cost estimate that will include an independent estimate analysis from NNSA's CEPE and will encompass pit production operations costs at both LANL and SRS and supporting activities at other sites. This more reliable acquisition cost estimate is expected no later than 2026. The remaining elements of our lifecycle cost estimate are the programmatic costs from inception until achievement of rate-production capability at each facility and the annual operating cost once each facility achieves rate-production. We are developing these elements now and will have more reliable versions of them no later than 2026.

21. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, what is the total cost for all pit production activities in NNSA's fiscal year 2025 to 2029 future years nuclear security plan?

Administration HRUBY. The fiscal year 2025 President's Budget included roughly \$18.93 billion for Plutonium Modernization under the Weapons Activities' Production Modernization budget line, which includes operations activities as well as related line items for LAP4, TRP-III, CMRR, and SRPPF. Combined with plutonium production-related line items within Infrastructure and Operations (Operations of Facilities, Maintenance and Repair of Facilities, and Recapitalization) and mission-enabling construction (Plutonium Modernization Operations, Plutonium Mission Safety & Quality Building LANL, Plutonium Program Accounting Building LANL, Plutonium Engineering Support LANL, and Protective Forces Support Facility LANL), the total cost for all pit production activities in fiscal year 2025 to 2029 is \$21.53 billion. These totals do not capture the other costs of ongoing site operations that enable the pit production mission, such as security, information technology, and cybersecurity activities.

PIT PRODUCTION ALIGNMENT

22. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, since at least one of the biggest Department of Defense weapons programs, the Sentinel, which is supposed to be a beneficiary of the pit production program, is being delayed there would presumably be a misalignment with this program's deadline and the pit production deadline. NNSA officials involved in the W87-1 modernization program have suggested that the Los Alamos Site, alone, can meet pit production needs for the program. Would schedule delays or slowing down pit production at the Savannah River site impact NNSA's ability to meet the Sentinel program's requirements?

Administration HRUBY. Pit production efforts and schedules at SRS do not impact NNSA's ability to meet Sentinel program requirements, as LANL will produce the plutonium pit for the W87-1. The Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) will first manufacture plutonium pits for the W93. Schedule delays or slowdowns at SRPPF would seriously degrade NNSA's ability to meet requirements for the W93 warhead and subsequent warheads.

23. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, will new pits be required for the new W93 warhead?

Administration HRUBY. Yes. New pits are needed not only to complete the W93 warhead program but to produce pits for future warhead programs.

24. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, you confirmed in the committee's hearing that the Los Alamos site alone can meet the pit production needs of the W87-1 warhead needed for the Sentinel program. Yet, the NNSA's fiscal year 2025 budget shows a significant ramp up of the Savannah River site. Will this aggressive ramp up of the Savannah River site risk other NNSA infrastructure priorities?

Administration HRUBY. In crafting the fiscal year 2025 to 2029 budget request, NNSA worked to carefully balance risks across programs and projects related to infrastructure, warhead sustainment, warhead modernization, science, engineering, technology, physical security and cyber security. This is a challenge every year, and every year the requested budget carries some mission risks. The budget ramp up for Savannah River Site—which is needed to support pit production for the W93—combined with constraints imposed by the Fiscal Responsibility Act make the fiscal year 2025 budget particularly challenging. NNSA with DOD input has carefully balanced risks across the broad set of weapons activities. While pit production modernization remains NNSA's highest infrastructure priority at present, NNSA con-

tinues to fund and support the full range of infrastructure requirements across multiple mission areas in order to deliver on NNSA's commitments.

25. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, how is NNSA holding maintenance and operations (M&O) contractors accountable for pit-related project performance? Have any contractors' annual performance evaluations been affected by these projects' schedule delays and increasing costs?

Administration HRUBY. NNSA is holding M&O contractors accountable for pit-related project performance through the following:

- a. For fiscal year 2025, NNSA will emphasize project performance by incorporating a new Infrastructure Goal in the M&O contractors' Performance Evaluation Management Plans (PEMPs). This new goal will evaluate progress on Capital Asset acquisition Projects in the contractors' annual Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs). For the LANL/Triad fiscal year 2025 PEMP, this new goal will incorporate a specific objective for pit production projects.
- b. NNSA will continue to hold partnering sessions with M&O leadership with a focus on key pit production project delivery and actions necessary to stay on schedule. The NA-90 partnering session's attendees include leadership from NNSA program and field offices and M&O senior leadership to ensure decision-makers who are directly accountable for cost, schedule, and performance are in alignment and have an open and honest discussion on issues/concerns and accomplishments. During, and in between sessions, actions are taken and followed up on, resulting in quicker communications and holding NNSA and M&O contractors accountable for stated deliverables. The sessions have built up a team synergy amongst pit production locations by sharing lessons learned and expanding the network of subject matter experts.
- c. The PEMP for the M&O contractor at Savannah River includes a standalone NNSA Capital Line-Item Award Fee Plan for SRPPF that holds the M&O contractor accountable for schedule delays and increasing costs. For example, The NNSA Project Management Executive (NA-10, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs) decided on June 21, 2024, to remove the SRPPF Administrative Building (ADMIN) Subproject (baselined at \$92 million) from the M&O contractor and transfer it to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) due to lack of M&O performance.

26. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, Congress has directed NNSA to formulate a "Research Program Plan for Plutonium and Pit Aging." The plan states that in "fiscal year 2023, a lifetime assessment using the updated and advanced age-aware physics models developed within the National Plutonium Aging Plan will be conducted." Has NNSA conducted this study? If so, what were the results of that fiscal year 2023 lifetime assessment? If not, why has NNSA not conducted the study?

Administration HRUBY. NNSA continues to improve our understanding of plutonium and pit aging through multiple research and development activities, and recently completed a lifetime assessment using updated and advanced age-aware physics models developed within the National Plutonium Aging Plan as identified in the Research Program Plan for Plutonium and Pit Aging delivered to Congress in 2021. NNSA would be happy to provide a classified briefing for Members of Congress on a need-to-know basis concerning plutonium aging and NNSA's pit production approach, including the results of the above assessment, which are a vital element of our strategy to modernize the United States' nuclear capabilities.

27. Senator WARREN. Administrator Hruby, the JASON Defense Advisory Group (JASON) concluded, in 2006, that plutonium pits last at least 85 years without specifying an end date. The average pit age is now slightly more than 40 years. In 2019, the JASONS issued a "letter report" that said they were not given time to do a full updated pit aging study and listed the criteria that should be used for one. Will NNSA direct the JASONS to complete a full updated pit aging study before 2030? If so, when will NNSA direct the JASONS to do that study?

Administration HRUBY. Yes, NNSA will ask the JASONS to complete a full updated pit aging study before 2030.

The 2006 JASON report on pit aging was more nuanced than is commonly reported. It did not state that all pits in the stockpile will meet military requirements until they are at least 85 years old. Estimating how long a given pit type will meet requirements, in a given weapon system and environment, is an extrapolatory exercise involving considerable uncertainty. The answer is different depending on warhead designs and environmental factors.

Of possible interest, the NNSA Federal Advisory Committee Act independent review committee (also known as “Advisory Committee for Nuclear Security”) recently completed an evaluation of NNSA’s pit aging research and development efforts. This report is unclassified and was provided to Congress in December 2023.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

BEST PRACTICES TO SHARE WITH AUKUS PARTNERS

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, an October 2023 International Atomic Energy Agency report on Australia’s nuclear and radiation safety that there were areas for improvement, which stands to reason since Australia does not have any nuclear power plants. Recognizing the importance for our AUKUS partners to be successful in all aspects of the program, can you describe the coordination that is happening at the civilian regulatory and oversight levels between the Department of Energy and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency?

Secretary GRANHOLM. NNSA works closely with Australian nuclear regulators and the technical community including the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), the Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office (ASNO), and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). NNSA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enable non-proliferation cooperation with and assistance to ASNO and recently entered into a new MOU with ANSTO to further cooperation in nuclear security and nuclear non-proliferation. The Australian government has authorized ARPANSA to issue required nuclear licenses for AUKUS activities in Australia pending the establishment of a new regulatory body via legislation under consideration by the Australian Parliament. NNSA’s Office of Naval Reactors and Office of Nonproliferation and Arms Control are working with the Australian Submarine Agency to enhance Australia’s ability to effectively ensure the safe and secure operation of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines through the AUKUS partnership.

RECAPITALIZING THE NUCLEAR TRIAD AND SLCM-N

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Administrator Hruby, if authorized, will the \$70 million requested for SLCM-N in your unfunded requirements list allow the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to concurrently work on the modernization efforts across air, land, and sea components of the nuclear triad?

Administration HRUBY. Yes, NNSA will work with the Nuclear Weapons Council to find the most effective solution for SLCM-N requirements so it does not disrupt the rest of the Program of Record, which is currently undertaking the full scope modernization of the U.S. nuclear Triad. NNSA continues to coordinate with the Department of Defense and U.S. Navy to identify warhead requirements as they define their delivery platform. As previously relayed to Congress,

NNSA is evaluating the W80-4, as directed by the initial authorizing language, but is also considering other options that may meet requirements without disrupting current planned production flows.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. Administrator Hruby, do we have the capacity in the United States to recapitalize the sea, air, and land based aspects of the nuclear triad concurrently?

Administration HRUBY. Yes, through our continued partnership with the Department of Defense and consistent support from Congress, NNSA can succeed in modernizing the U.S. nuclear stockpile with successful execution of our ongoing warhead modernization programs, in addition to the recapitalization of our production and design, certification, and assessment infrastructure.

ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Administrator Hruby, NNSA recently reorganized important functions regarding acquisition and project/program management (PM), specifically in July 2022 when it reorganized the Office of Acquisition and Project Management into two offices. Since that time, however, NNSA has witnessed an exodus of acquisition/PM professionals without any apparent replacements. What caused all these acquisition professionals to leave?

Administration HRUBY. Since the reorganization in 2022, the Office of Partnership and Acquisition Services (PAS) has seen a 20 percent increase in staff. It is critical to PAS to recruit and retain stellar acquisition talent. Since the reorganization, PAS has filled many critical positions through internal promotions. This not only retained critical talent and historical knowledge, but also offered growth

opportunities to PAS staff. Acquisition professionals are always in demand and can pursue career opportunities in the government and private sector offering remote work and higher compensation. However, PAS has seen a decrease in attrition by becoming a model for acquisition organizations and being an employer of choice. NA-PAS is committed to staying an employer of choice, offering career development opportunities to retain our workforce. The Office of Infrastructure (NA-90) has experienced 80 vacancies with an 87.5 percent fill rate since the 2022 reorganization, with 27 being internal promotions/reassignments. In the past 12 months, NA-90 has onboarded 32 full-time equivalents and the attrition rate has lowered significantly.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Administrator Hruby, what are you doing to hire replacements to keep NNSA projects on track?

Administration HRUBY. The Federal Salaries and Expenses (FSE) request is \$564,475,000 and supports a Federal staff of 2,084 FTEs to provide appropriate oversight to ensure NNSA can meet growing mission requirements and commitments, including modernizing the nuclear deterrent and recapitalizing the aging infrastructure, while continuing to meet the requirements of nonproliferation and counterterrorism programs.

NNSA's growing mission requirements have mandated an aggressive strategy to monitor and attract the next generation of skilled workers, who are critical to meeting the mission. As our recruitment and succession programs build the workforce of the future, our strategic leadership and workforce development programs are building the next generation of NNSA leaders and working to close the knowledge and skill gaps between our less experienced new hires and our more tenured employees.

Through the NNSA Graduate Fellowship Program (NGFP), the Minority Serving Institution Partnership Program (MSIPP), and the Minority Serving Institution Internship Program (MSIIP), NNSA strives to not only identify and recruit new talent into the enterprise but also to ensure that talent is prepared to meet the challenges ahead of them.

The NGFP hires over 70 fellows annually, serving nearly all NNSA program offices. Of the 700 plus fellow alumni, approximately 85 percent go on to serve in other roles within NNSA or Managing and Operating (M&O), with ties to national security. From fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2023, NNSA hired 89 fellows as Federal employees. Additionally, NNSA's MSIIP plays a pivotal role in cultivating the future workforce of scientist and professionals across the nuclear security enterprise. Eighty-seven interns were part of the inaugural 2022–2023 cohort, followed by 96 interns in the class of 2023–2024. This summer, the cohort totaled 151 interns from minority serving institutions (MSIs).

In addition to being a critical piece of NNSA's succession planning strategy, NGFP and MSIIP place a significant emphasis on training and development to prepare participants for potential careers in nuclear security and as future NNSA leaders. The leadership and career development opportunities include:

- Leadership development courses tailored to aspiring leaders;
- Hands-on experience working on nuclear security and nonproliferation issues;
- Mentorship, professional networking, and extensive interaction with nuclear security professionals and leading researchers;
- Senior leader shadowing; and
- Other specialized training opportunities.

NNSA investment in the MSIPP builds a sustainable STEM pathway that develops a diverse workforce of world class talent through strategic partnerships between MSIs and the nuclear security enterprise. MSIPP supports 35 consortia consisting of 54 Institutions of Higher Education and 14 nuclear security enterprise (NSE) facilities.

To further advance hiring and early career pipeline development within the Federal workforce, NNSA continues to leverage the Presidential Management Fellows Program. NNSA has adopted a strategy of having experienced staff work alongside newer hires to transfer knowledge and ensure a smooth transition. Moreover, we have increased our use of detail opportunities, allowing employees to gain diverse experience and perspectives while fostering a culture of knowledge sharing across generations. By combining these initiatives, we are effectively preparing our workforce to manage attrition and meet the demands of an increased workload in our enterprise.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Administrator Hruby, of NNSA's major line-item projects, how many have a fully qualified, Federal project directors in a permanent capacity?

Administration HRUBY. All major line-item projects (100 percent) in design or construction phases have a qualified and/or highly experienced FPD assigned in a permanent capacity.

STRATEGIC & CRITICAL MINERALS

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, do you agree that one of America's greatest strengths over our adversaries is our energy and critical mineral resources?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The United States possesses a wide variety of energy and critical mineral resources. These resources, combined with the extraordinary talent and imagination of the domestic workforce, will allow the United States to prosper and thrive.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, does an increased proliferation of electric vehicles require increased critical mineral production?

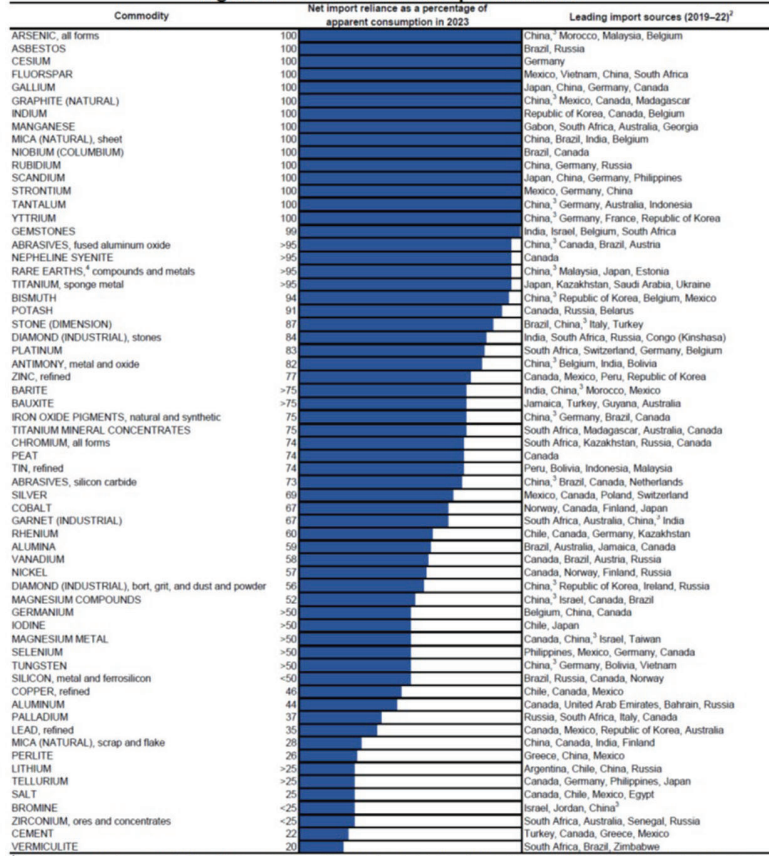
Secretary GRANHOLM. Increased adoption of electric vehicles will require greatly increased supplies of certain critical materials, including graphite, lithium, neodymium, and copper. For example, it is estimated that the domestic demand for graphite could increase by a factor of eight by 2030 in order to meet the needs of the electric vehicle market. According to the IEA's Global Critical Minerals Outlook, battery demand is expected to increase fivefold by 2030, driven by EV sales and growth in deployment of electric trucks. There is currently overcapacity of battery manufacturing. There is some uncertainty on which battery critical materials will be needed. The use of lithium iron phosphate (LFP) cathodes, manganese-rich chemistries, and silicon-doping of graphite anodes may reduce the demand for materials like cobalt, nickel, and graphite in batteries.^{1 2}

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what critical minerals does the United States currently import, particularly from China?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The United States imports many metals, minerals, and materials, from various countries including China. The annual Mineral Commodities Summaries from the USGS (U.S. Geological Survey, January 31, 2024, Mineral commodity summaries 2024: U.S. Geological Survey, 212 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/mcs2024>) is a reference detailing production, imports, exports, and uses of metals, minerals, and materials. The net import reliance, as well as the leading import sources, is summarized by the USGS in the Mineral Commodities Summaries and is shown below:

¹Argonne National Laboratory estimates there is ample mineral resource globally to meet future electric vehicle demand. <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/ee01701d-1d5c-4ba8-9df6-abeec9de99a/GlobalCriticalMineralsOutlook2024.pdf>

²<https://www.osti.gov/biblio/2319240>

Figure 2.—2023 U.S. Net Import Reliance¹

¹Not all mineral commodities covered in this publication are listed here. Those not shown include mineral commodities for which the United States is a net exporter (abrasives, metallic, beryllium, boron, cadmium, clays, diatomite, gold, helium, iron and steel scrap, iron ore, kyanite, lime, molybdenum, rare earths, mineral concentrates, sand and gravel, industrial, soda ash, titanium dioxide pigment, wollastonite, zeolites, and zinc, ores and concentrates) or less than 20% net import reliant (feldspar, gypsum, iron and steel, iron and steel slag, nitrogen (fixed)—ammonia, phosphate rock, pumice, sand and gravel, construction, stone, crushed, sulfur, and talc and pyrophyllite). For some mineral commodities (thallium, mercury, quartz, high-purity and industrial cultured crystal, thallium, and thorium), not enough information is available to calculate the exact percentage of import reliance.

²Listed in descending order of import share.

³Includes Hong Kong.

⁴Includes lanthanides cerium, dysprosium, erbium, europium, gadolinium, holmium, lanthanum, lutetium, neodymium, praseodymium, samarium, terbium, thulium, and ytterbium.

China is a major supplier of many critical materials to the United States, including but not limited to graphite, gallium, antimony, germanium, arsenic, rare earth elements, and rubidium.

37. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, do you believe that the Administration's denial of Federal permits for mining projects will lower our dependence on foreign adversaries like China?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE does not permit mining projects. There are many factors that contribute to the long times often needed to start production at a domestic mine, including thorough characterization of the mineral deposit, which involves collecting and characterizing numerous samples; obtaining the financing; construction of the mine and processing facilities; obtaining the trained workforce as well as acceptance from the local community; and obtaining the necessary permits for both the mining and processing. DOE collaborated with the Department of the Interior (DOI) as part of the DOI-led Interagency Working Group on Mining Laws, Regulations, and Permitting to release a report, "Recommendations to Improve Mining on Public Lands."

38. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how impactful would producing 1.9 billion pounds of copper, 2.3 billion pounds of zinc, 388 million pounds of lead, 386,000 ounces of gold, and 40.6 million ounces of silver be in bolstering our domestic critical mineral capabilities?

Secretary GRANHOLM. According to the USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries (U.S. Geological Survey, January 31, 2024, Mineral commodity summaries 2024: U.S. Geological Survey, 212 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/mcs2024>), the United States consumed approximately 1.8 million metric tons of copper; 970 thousand metric tons of zinc; 1.6 million metric tons of lead; 250 metric tons of gold; and 6,700 metric tons of silver.

1.9 billion pounds of copper represents a 6-month supply of copper for the United States at the current rate of consumption.

2.3 billion pounds of zinc represents a year supply of zinc for the United States at the current rate of consumption.

388 million pounds of lead represents a 40-day supply of lead for the United States at the current rate of consumption.

386,000 ounces of gold represents a 9-day supply of gold for the United States at the current rate of consumption.

40.6 million ounces of silver represents a 26-year supply of silver for the United States at the current rate of consumption.

These are significant quantities of the metals, especially for silver.

39. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what are the Federal regulatory barriers hindering domestic critical mineral projects?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE is not a regulatory agency. There are many factors that contribute to the long times often needed to start production at a domestic mine, including thorough characterization of the mineral deposit, which involves collecting and characterizing numerous samples; obtaining the financing; construction of the mine and processing facilities; obtaining the trained workforce as well as acceptance from the local community; and obtaining the necessary permits for both the mining and processing. The recent incorporation of critical minerals projects into the FAST-41 program, administered by the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC), may help alleviate permitting delays for some critical mineral projects.³[1]

40. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, would having access to a domestic source in one of the largest copper and zinc belts in the world help decrease our dependence on foreign adversaries like China?

Secretary GRANHOLM. In 2023, the U.S. net-import reliance of refined copper was 46 percent with leading import sources being Chile, Canada, and Mexico. In 2023, the U.S. net-import reliance of refined zinc was 77 percent with leading import sources being China, Belgium, India, and Bolivia.⁴ Diversification and expansion of critical materials is one of four pillars that provide the foundation for DOE's Critical Materials Strategy. New domestic sources of metals can be very helpful in securing

³Permitting Council Moves to Designate the Critical Minerals Supply Chain as a FAST-41 Sector—Permitting Dashboard

⁴<https://pubs.usgs.gov/publication/mcs2024>

supplies, especially if they can be produced economically and responsibly from these sources.

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what are the national security implications of the Biden administration halting critical mineral projects throughout the country?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Critical material research projects are being supported by the Department of Energy, the Department of Defense, and the Department of the Interior, with many projects proceeding from lab through commercial scales. DOE maintains a project data base of DOE-supported critical minerals and materials projects that span research, development, demonstration, and commercial deployment.⁵

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what is this Administration doing to encourage private investment in domestic critical mineral projects?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE's Loan Programs Office (LPO) greatly facilitates private investment in domestic critical material projects. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have supercharged DOE investments in critical materials, expanding the Department's critical materials work to include commercial deployment, including at LPO. A key part of LPO's focus on critical materials and the EV supply chain is the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing (ATVM) Loan Program. Under the ATVM program, as of the end of October 2024, LPO has approximately \$45.3 billion in authority to provide direct loans for commercial-scale facilities involved in vehicle supply chains.⁶

In July 2022, LPO issued a \$102 million ATVM loan to Syrah Technologies LLC to expand its facility in Vidalia, Louisiana, which processes natural graphite-based active anode material (AAM) used in lithium-ion batteries. This is the only vertically integrated, large-scale AAM manufacturing facility outside China, making it a supply chain trailblazer for U.S. clean energy technologies. At the time of closing, the direct loan to the Syrah Vidalia Facility was estimated to support 150 construction jobs and nearly 100 permanent jobs. The facility's expanded capacity is expected to produce natural graphite-based AAM for enough EVs to save 52 million gallons of gasoline per year.

The ATVM program has issued conditional commitments or closed loans to another \$5.4 billion to four other critical minerals and materials (CMM) projects. This includes up to \$700 million for Nevada-based Ioneer Rhyolite Ridge LLC to develop onsite processing of lithium carbonate for EV batteries.

In addition to ATVM, LPO has approximately \$67.2 billion in authority under the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program-Innovative Energy Projects, Innovative Supply Chain Projects, and State Energy Financing Institution (SEFI) Projects to guarantee loans for commercial-scale energy projects, including critical minerals projects.

DOE's Critical Materials Program funds numerous public-private partnerships and consortia such as the CORE-CM Initiative, Critical Materials Innovation Hub (CMI Hub), and ReCell Center. Such partnerships increase the likelihood that industry will bring innovative technological solutions to market. For example, Momentum Technologies licensed a CMI Hub-developed technology for efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly recovery of battery critical materials from end-of-life batteries. Momentum Technologies have successfully attracted private capital investments to deploy the technology. The partnership with Cirba Solutions, funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, has accelerated their pace of deployment.

The Office of Manufacturing & Energy and Supply Chains supports projects mid- and downstream. Midstream and downstream investments can provide demand certainty for upstream operations. For example, DOE recently announced \$3 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which will spur more than \$16 billion in total investment, to boost the domestic production of advanced batteries and battery materials nationwide. DOE, in partnership with the U.S. Treasury and Internal Revenue Service, administers tax credits for investments in advanced energy projects, including critical materials projects. Six critical materials and minerals project have been disclosed by applicants.

⁵ <https://www.energy.gov/cmm/critical-materials-project-search>.

⁶ <https://www.energy.gov/lpo/articles/updates-estimated-remaining-loan-authority-lpo-programs>

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, do you acknowledge Alaska's potential to ensure the United States has a robust, secure supply chain that doesn't rely on foreign adversaries with little environmental protection?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Alaska has extraordinary critical material and talent resources. The DOE has recently organized three well attended workshops on Alaska's critical material resources in 2023 and in 2024 and supports projects in Alaska on critical materials through the Fossil Energy and Carbon Management CORE-CM Program and the Arctic Energy Office.

44. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, given the clear national security implications, do you acknowledge the need for a resilient, domestic critical mineral supply chain as a priority?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Critical Minerals and Materials is a crosscutting budget priority for DOE. DOE established a Critical Materials Program with the vision to build resilient, affordable, diverse, sustainable, and secure domestic critical mineral and materials supply chains that support the clean energy transition and decarbonization of the energy, manufacturing, and transportation economies while promoting safe, sustainable, economic, and environmentally just solutions to meet current and future needs.

45. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what is the Department of Energy doing to ensure that national security considerations remain paramount in your critical mineral strategy?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The Critical Minerals Subcommittee (CMS) of the National Science and Technology Council coordinates Federal science and technology efforts to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals to the United States. DOE co-chairs the CMS in partnership with USGS and OSTP. The CMS focuses on key issues including R&D, strengthening supply chains, international engagement, mapping and quantifying domestic resources, permitting and standards, and education and workforce development—with the lens of national economic and security interest.

The Department of Energy collaborates closely with the Department of Defense in developing strategy on critical materials, with frequent regular meetings between the DOE and DOD arranged through the DOE Critical Materials Collaborative, as well as holding regular joint seminars on critical materials.

46. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how does the Department of Energy work with other agencies, particularly the Department of the Interior, to ensure coordination to develop critical mineral projects?

Secretary GRANHOLM. DOE established the Critical Materials Collaborative (CMC) in September 2023 to accelerate DOE's critical materials applied research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) and achieve domestic clean energy manufacturing, climate, and national security goals by: building a robust innovation ecosystem; enabling industry adoption of novel, cutting-edge technology; training the critical materials leaders and workforce across multiple sectors; and laying the scientific and technological groundwork needed to address emerging challenges. DOE is in the process of inviting other Federal agencies and departments including DOI, DOD, and the National Science Foundation to engage in the CMC. DOE collaborated with DOI as part of the DOI-led Interagency Working Group on Mining Laws, Regulations, and Permitting to release a report, "Recommendations to Improve Mining on Public Lands."⁷ The report identified 60 recommendations to reform and improve the way mining is conducted on Federal lands to increase domestic supplies of critical minerals and uphold the strongest environmental, labor, and community engagement standards.

47. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, China processes 75 percent of the minerals used in batteries for electric vehicles; what is this Administration doing to ramp up domestic processing capabilities?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE recently developed a critical material list for clean energy technologies, including batteries for electric vehicles. These materials, called the electric eighteen, include graphite, nickel, and lithium required for batteries in electric vehicles, and are detailed in the report titled "Critical Materials Assessment", USDOE, July 31, 2023, available on-line https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/doe-critical-material-assessment_07312023.pdf. The

⁷ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/mriwg-report-final-508.pdf>

DOE has many projects, including some at pilot and commercial scales, for production of graphite, lithium, and nickel from domestic sources.

DOE's Loan Programs Office (LPO) finances next-generation U.S. energy infrastructure, serving as a bridge to bankability for breakthrough projects and technologies and de-risking them at early stages of investment. LPO can finance critical materials projects through several avenues including the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Program, the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program—Innovative Energy and Innovative Supply Chain, the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program—Energy Infrastructure Reinvestment Program, and the Tribal Energy Finance Program. Several awards for battery processing have been made, as described in the response to Question 43.

DOE's Office of Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains (MESC) has stewarded the "Battery Materials Processing and Battery Manufacturing" funding opportunities, which support BIL Sections 40207 (b) and (c).

- Funding Opportunity DE-FOA-0002678 "Battery Materials Processing and Battery Manufacturing"
 - o Round 1 specifically focused on commercial and large-scale demonstration applications to address priorities in the BIL regarding battery material processing and battery component manufacturing and recycling.
 - o Of the 21 projects selected in Round 1, 12 were awarded and are moving forward to build production capacity for battery-grade materials, such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, cathode active materials (NMC and LFP), electrolyte salt, silicon anode materials, and PVDF.
 - o These 13 awarded projects represent a combined \$1.7 billion in Federal dollars and \$3.5 billion in cost share provided by industry for 12 companies to build and expand commercial-scale facilities across 10 states.
- Some additional highlights of these award projects include:
 - o Developing enough battery-grade lithium to supply approximately 1.3 million EVs annually
 - o Developing enough battery-grade graphite to supply approximately 600,000 EVs annually
 - o Producing enough battery-grade nickel to supply approximately 400,000 EVs annually
 - o Installing the first large-scale, commercial lithium electrolyte salt (LiPF₆) production facility in the United States
 - o Developing an electrode binder facility capable of supplying 45 percent of the anticipated domestic demand for binders for EV batteries in 2030
 - o Creating the first commercial scale domestic silicon oxide production facilities to supply anode materials for an estimated 390,000 EV batteries annually
 - o Installing the first lithium iron phosphate cathode facility in the United States

48. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, is it logical to add more hurdles to accessing one of our country's biggest deposits of much-needed critical minerals?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE is actively working to secure supply chains for critical materials through its research, development, demonstration, and commercial deployment efforts as part of its Critical Materials Program. These efforts are described on the DOE CMM website: <https://www.energy.gov/cmm/critical-minerals-materials-program>. Many of these efforts . Many of these efforts promote environmentally friendly, efficient, and cost-effective solutions to facilitate compliance with the high environmental and social governance standards for domestic critical materials production, processing, and manufacturing in the U.S.

49. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, if China has a monopoly on critical mineral processing while simultaneously being the world's greatest polluter, and this Administration denies domestic mining projects from moving forward, are electric vehicles truly cleaner?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Life cycle analyses, which take into account the emissions from production of the vehicle and battery, including mineral extraction, of plug-in electric vehicles and internal combustion engine vehicles consistently show that electric vehicles result in lower life cycle emissions compared with a similar internal combustion engine vehicle. The DOE is actively working on securing domestic and clean supply chains for battery critical materials such as graphite, lithium, cobalt, nickel, and copper. In addition, the DOE is sponsoring research on new batteries that employ abundant materials available domestically, as well as research on more

efficient, lightweight batteries and vehicles that can use less material overall on a per kWh basis.

50. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how does the Department of Energy plan to ensure a sustainable and reliable supply chain for critical minerals in the long term?

Secretary GRANHOLM. It typically takes many years to start operation of a new metal mine in the United States, due to the time required for prospecting and resource delineation, the large capital cost (raising of capital), and the often long permitting processes. Similarly, it can also take many years to start operation of a new domestic metal refinery or smelter, because of the high capital costs and long times needed for obtaining permits. The construction and startup of new mines and metal refineries/smelters are two rate-limiting steps in securing increased domestic production of energy critical materials. DOE research, development, deployment, and education/workforce development efforts, including efforts on abundant domestic wastes and byproducts as novel sources of critical materials, as well as intensive interagency collaborations, will work toward increased domestic critical material production. DOE's investments in mid-and downstream projects also bolster the demand for minerals upstream, which can spur and sustain upstream projects.

51. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how does the Department of Energy justify the slow progress in incentivizing domestic critical mineral production while other countries race ahead?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Large-scale production of metals typically involves mining and refining (smelting) operations. These are expensive long-term projects. There are many factors that contribute to the long times often needed to start production at a domestic mine, including thorough characterization of the mineral deposit, which involves collecting and characterizing numerous samples; obtaining the financing; construction of the mine and processing facilities; obtaining the trained workforce as well as acceptance from the local community; and obtaining the necessary permits for both the mining and processing. The United States has high standards for protecting both worker and community health and welfare and this contributes to stringent permitting requirements for mining and refining operations.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what concrete steps is the Department of Energy taking to challenge the dominance of foreign adversaries in the critical mineral market?

Secretary GRANHOLM. DOE recently released a request for information on critical materials market dynamics to better understand market dynamics and price volatility in critical materials processing, refining, and recycling and how the Federal Government can play a role in supporting market stability and price transparency.⁸

DOE conducts a suite of enabling activities, cross-cutting functions to enable and enhance the DOE Critical Materials Strategy. These enabling activities include analysis and advanced tools, market assessment and development, international engagement and standards, and education and workforce development. In addition to establishing and bolstering domestic supply chains, these activities are vital to U.S. global competitiveness. For example, the global adoption of high environmental and social governance standards is one avenue to level the playing field for global competitors. DOE coordinates with EPA and NIST to support standards development through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committees on rare earth elements (298) and lithium (333).

53. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what accountability measures does the Department of Energy have in place to ensure it is actively working toward reducing our dependence on foreign adversaries for critical minerals?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE has a goal to reduce the overall U.S. critical material import reliance by at least 10 percent by 2035. The DOE supports numerous projects, from lab through commercial scales, aimed at producing critical materials in the United States, in a cost competitive and environmentally friendly manner.

The DOE Critical Materials Strategy includes four pillars to:

- Diversify and Expand Supply to identify and secure a wide variety of feedstocks.
- Develop Alternatives to reduce component and system reliance on critical materials.

⁸ <https://www.energy.gov/mesc/articles/request-information-critical-materials-market-dynamics-office-manufacturing-and>

- Improve Materials and Manufacturing Efficiency to reduce the waste of critical materials throughout the supply chain and promote environmentally friendly practices.
- Build the Circular Economy to extend the lifetime of critical materials in use and recover them at end-of-life to partially offset the need for virgin materials.

54. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, can you elaborate on your agency's approach to consultation with Alaska Native people?

Secretary GRANHOLM. DOE takes seriously our trust responsibility and our government-to-government relationships with Alaska Native entities (villages and corporations). Specifically with respect to critical minerals, DOE is co-chairing an inter-agency working group focused on Tribal Nations and the domestic critical minerals supply chain. The working group held two consultations in Anchorage, Alaska, August 20 and 21, to hear Alaska Native entities' perspectives and get feedback on recommendations published in the September 2023 "Improving Mining on Public Lands" report. DOE worked in collaboration with Department of the Interior, Land & Minerals Management (Co-Chair) and Bureau of Indian Affairs to reach out to Alaska Native entities about the consultations and will publish a summary report. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Commerce, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are also participating in the sessions.

More broadly, DOE is in the final stages of updating the agency's Tribal consultation policy (Policy and Order 144.1) which was last updated in 2009. The updated policy recognizes the uniqueness of Alaska Natives among Indian Tribes and affirms that it is agency policy to consult with Alaska Native Corporations on the same basis as federally recognized Indian Tribes to the extent permitted by law. Simultaneously, DOE has finalized new financial assistance rules that will help proactively identify DOE funded projects that could impact Alaska Native Villages, Alaska Native Corporations, and other Indian Tribes to assist DOE in conducting Tribal consultation earlier in the financial assistance process.

In addition to formal consultation, DOE has robust engagement with Alaska Natives, through the Arctic Energy Office (AE), the Office of Indian Energy, and other offices, including regular participation in community conferences, and inclusion of Alaska Native Villages in the Indian Country Energy and Infrastructure Working Group which advises DOE. AE has established a framework for engaging Alaska Native communities designed to incorporate a wide array of perspectives that includes DOE staff from various regions nation-wide visiting indigenous Alaskan communities. AE has also launched the Arctic Energy Ambassadors program, which is supporting 12 Ambassadors, located throughout Alaska, to assist rural communities, including Tribes, in locating Federal energy funding opportunities, and convening and uplifting voices at the regional level.

Additionally, the DOE Office of Indian Energy has significant outreach and programming in Alaska. The Office recently closed job openings for four additional staff to be based in Alaska. The work of this new staff will build on the Office of Indian Energy's 2015 MOU with the Denali Commission for the delivery of energy programs to Alaska Native villages and corporations in support of rural Alaska communities. As a follow on to the MOU, in 2019, both parties entered into an Interagency Agreement, to be used for Alaska-based technical assistance through a local network jointly managed by the Denali Commission and DOE. The technical assistance is primarily carried out through a subaward to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and more recently the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc., (Rural CAP). The second component of the agreement is for multi-year K-12 STEM energy education. Several DOE offices meet with the Denali Commission on a bi-weekly basis, including Indian Energy, Arctic Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, and others, to discuss these efforts and maintain collaboration on rural energy engagement.

55. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how is the Department of Energy working with American investment companies to encourage public-private partnerships into domestic critical mineral supply chain resiliency?

Secretary GRANHOLM. DOE makes substantial contributions in the critical materials space by funding cutting edge research, coordinating consortia, fostering public-private partnerships, and engaging participants as it carries out the CMM Strategy.

In its first two 5-year phases, CMI research produced over 500 publications, 195 invention disclosures, 47 awarded patents, 20 technologies licensed to industry, and 12 R&D 100 Awards, as well as more than \$80 million in follow-on funding secured by research partnerships to mature CMI-developed technologies.

In 2023, through a merit review process, EERE's AMMTO renewed CMI for a third 5-year phase under a new name: the Critical Materials Innovation Hub (CMI Hub). In Phase III, the CMI Hub will play a central role in the CMC, both as an innovation engine that grounds the development of early stage S&T solutions and as a convener for shared ideas and best practices.

56. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how does increasing domestic production of critical minerals align with the Department of Energy's broader energy and economic security objectives?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Metals and materials play a vital role in the U.S. economy. According to the USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries (U.S. Geological Survey, January 31, 2024, Mineral commodity summaries 2024: U.S. Geological Survey, 212 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/mcs2024>), the value added to Gross Domestic Product by major industries that consume processed mineral materials was over 3.8 trillion dollars in 2023, out of a total GDP of 27 trillion dollars. Diversification and expansion of critical materials is one of four pillars that provide the foundation for DOE's Critical Materials Strategy.

57. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what role does international cooperation play in securing access to critical minerals?

Secretary GRANHOLM. International cooperation is vital in securing access to critical materials. Allied countries will play a role in providing access to critical materials. Domestic sources are not always sufficient, at least in the near term, to satisfy U.S. critical material needs. Even in the long term, it is important to have a diversified network of supply. The United States is working with close and like-minded countries to help expand the locations and quantities of responsible supplies of critical materials. As part of this process, it is important to build capabilities that allow the tracing and verification of mineral provenance for batteries, magnets, and other manufactured products.

58. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how is the Department of Energy engaging with allies and partners to address critical mineral supply chain vulnerabilities?

Secretary GRANHOLM. For the United States and its allies to be successful in creating manufacturing capabilities and building domestic capacity throughout the supply chain, it must ensure that all countries have the same quality, environmental, and labor standards. The United States can no longer allow the rest of the world to bear the brunt of pollution from these industries while it reaps the benefit of the finished products. DOE will work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the Department of Commerce, and other U.S. and international organizations to help develop effective international standards across the supply chain for CMM production and use. These efforts promote market transparency to support U.S. industry's competitiveness and material traceability to support the development of responsible supply chains—both within the United States and globally.

In early 2022, DOE's Office of International Affairs led coordination of the first-ever ministerial mandate on critical minerals and materials under the International Energy Agency (IEA). Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, the 2022 Ministerial Chair, and the other 30 ministers of member countries approved this language as part of the 2022 IEA Ministerial Communiqué. Recognizing the importance of secure, reliable CMM supply chains to clean energy, the communiqué directed IEA's Governing Board and Secretariat to assess and compare methods of "ensuring the availability, security and responsible sourcing of energy-specific critical minerals and materials," informing future investments in sources of supply and the eventual realization of a CMM circular economy. Recycling, stockpiling, and enhanced RD&D into developing alternatives were among the approaches mentioned in the document.

The communiqué also noted that, at the meeting where the final document was announced, some member countries had launched an IEA Voluntary Critical Minerals Security Program (CMSP) to facilitate further cooperation on the topic. Participating members pledged to share data and experiences from their national critical mineral stockpiling, recycling, resilience, and transparency efforts. In Phase 1 of implementation, countries that choose to participate will make specific operational decisions for carrying out the voluntary program.

59. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, can you expand on the Department of Energy's strategy about diversifying supplies of critical minerals and materials and the role Alaska can play?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The Department of Energy is committed to diversifying the supply of critical minerals in the

United States and believed Alaska could have a vital role to ensure our supply of these minerals.

The Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management, in coordination with the Arctic Energy Office, has held two workshops in Alaska since 2023 exploring the technological, regulatory, and financial resources necessary to extract and process critical minerals in Alaska. In addition, the Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management has funded the CORE-CM program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and ARPA-E has funded critical mineral research efforts in SE Alaska.

60. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, what steps is the Department of Energy taking to address the challenges that currently exist to expand domestic production of critical mineral production and processing?

Secretary GRANHOLM. Several DOE offices are supporting large-scale projects on processing and production of critical materials such as graphite, lithium, and rare earths. In addition, numerous smaller projects are being supported that will develop next generation technologies for domestic production of critical materials.

In July 2022, LPO issued a \$102 million ATVM loan to Syrah Technologies LLC to expand its facility in Vidalia, Louisiana, which processes natural graphite-based active anode material (AAM) used in lithium-ion batteries. This is the only vertically integrated, large-scale AAM manufacturing facility outside China, making it a supply chain trailblazer for U.S. clean energy technologies. At the time of closing, the direct loan to the Syrah Vidalia Facility was estimated to support 150 construction jobs and nearly 100 permanent jobs. The facility's expanded capacity is expected to produce natural graphite-based AAM for enough EVs to save 52 million gallons of gasoline per year.

The ATVM program has issued conditional commitments to loan another \$2.9 billion to three other CMM projects. This includes up to \$700 million for Nevada-based Ioneer Rhyolite Ridge LLC to develop onsite processing of lithium carbonate for EV batteries.

In addition to ATVM, LPO has approximately \$72 billion in authority under the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program—Innovative Energy Projects and Innovative Supply Chain Projects, to guarantee loans for commercial-scale energy projects, including critical minerals facilities. All told, LPO is actively evaluating \$7 billion of critical minerals project loan applications across the ATVM and Title 17 loan programs, foreshadowing a massive investment in building out domestic CMM capacity.

61. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how is the agency working with the Department of Defense to have sufficient independence of critical minerals to successfully implement the National Defense Strategy?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The Department of Energy collaborates closely with the Department of Defense in developing strategy on critical materials, with regular meetings between the DOE and DOD through the DOE Critical Materials Collaborative, as well as having regular DOD-DOE seminar series. DOD, DOE, and State executed a memorandum of agreement in early 2022 to lay the foundation for a U.S. critical minerals stockpile by creating a new interagency process for stockpiling minerals for the clean energy transition.

62. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, how is the Department of Energy supporting the “National Strategy for the Arctic Region” and the opportunity it highlights by ‘significant deposits of in-demand minerals’?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The Department of Energy is one of the key contributory agencies to the development of the National Strategy for the Arctic Region. The Arctic Energy Office has played a substantial role in the development and implementation of the strategy. Since the publication of the NSAR in 2022 DOE has raised awareness of Alaska and the wider North American Arctic as a source of critical minerals, has funded research and education on accessing these minerals (see Q60), and has supported innovative efforts to develop these resources through both traditional and advanced methods.

63. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, as a member of the interagency working group on Federal hardrock mining laws, how does its recommendation to authorize Federal land managers to withdraw lands from availability for mineral development conducive to increasing our domestic critical mineral supply?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE conducts and supports research and serves as an unbiased source of technical information. The DOE does not comment on policy decisions of the working group.

64. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, as recycling critical minerals alone will not be sufficient fill the demand required under the Biden administration's proposed 2030 climate goals, what is the Department of Energy doing to ensure we have a long-term strategy to address the growing demand for critical minerals?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE is pursuing several areas to increase the supply of critical materials, including development of next generation mining techniques with a lower environmental impact; identification of abundant wastes and byproducts as sources of critical materials; and recycling. DOE also pursues avenues to reduce reliance on critical materials by developing alternative materials, components and systems that use minimal to no critical materials.

65. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Granholm, a National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) report titled, "Materials Used in U.S. Wind Energy Technologies: Quantities and Availability for Two Future Scenarios" highlights vulnerable materials, including 16 critical minerals, necessary for renewable energy projects. How is the Department of Energy working with NREL to address these vulnerabilities, particularly as it relates to renewable projects being developed?

Secretary GRANHOLM. WETO works with NREL on multiple topics related to critical and vulnerable materials. NREL researchers are often the lead analysts for our material assessment and modeling activities, including for the development of the Renewable Energy Material Properties Data base, which assessed current and future material supply vulnerabilities across the wind space. They are also leading a substantial analysis effort, in cooperation with ORNL and SNL, to assess the State of practice for wind materials recycling and to identify emerging technologies and needs in order to recycle wind materials (including and emphasizing critical materials) more efficiently and at a higher rate. Additionally, NREL administers the Wind Turbine Materials Recycling Prize, which recently closed Phase 2 submissions and will award cash prizes to accelerate the development of wind material recycling technologies, including for critical materials.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

CRITICAL MINERALS

66. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Granholm, we understand that there are many challenges to the U.S. and our allies accessing and developing critical minerals and rare earths. Aside from the permitting issues we are all aware of, there is a complete inability to process these minerals outside of reliance on Communist China. What are you doing to develop processing abilities and partnerships outside of CCP-controlled China?

Secretary GRANHOLM. In early 2022, DOE's Office of International Affairs led coordination of the first-ever ministerial mandate on critical minerals and materials under the International Energy Agency (IEA). Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, the 2022 Ministerial Chair, and the other 30 ministers of member countries approved this language as part of the 2022 IEA Ministerial Communiqué. Recognizing the importance of secure, reliable CMM supply chains to clean energy, the communiqué directed IEA's Governing Board and Secretariat to assess and compare methods of "ensuring the availability, security and responsible sourcing of energy-specific critical minerals and materials," informing future investments in sources of supply and the eventual realization of a CMM circular economy. Recycling, stockpiling, and enhanced RD&D into developing alternatives were among the approaches mentioned in the document.

The communiqué also noted that, at the meeting where the final document was announced, some member countries had launched an IEA Voluntary Critical Minerals Security Program (CMSP) to facilitate further cooperation on the topic. Participating members pledged to share data and experiences from their national critical mineral stockpiling, recycling, resilience, and transparency efforts. In Phase 1 of implementation, countries that choose to participate will make specific operational decisions for carrying out the voluntary program.

DOE's Loan Programs Office (LPO) greatly facilitates private investment in domestic critical material projects. BIL and IRA have supercharged DOE investments in critical materials, expanding the Department's critical materials work to include commercial deployment, including at LPO. A key part of LPO's focus on critical materials and the EV supply chain is the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing (ATVM) Loan Program. Under the ATVM program, LPO has approximately \$50 billion in authority to provide direct loans for commercial-scale facilities involved in vehicle supply chains.

In July 2022, LPO issued a \$102 million ATVM loan to Syrah Technologies LLC to expand its facility in Vidalia, Louisiana, which processes natural graphite-based active anode material (AAM) used in lithium-ion batteries. This is the only vertically integrated, large-scale AAM manufacturing facility outside China, making it a supply chain trailblazer for U.S. clean energy technologies. At the time of closing, the direct loan to the Syrah Vidalia Facility was estimated to support 150 construction jobs and nearly 100 permanent jobs. The facility's expanded capacity is expected to produce natural graphite-based AAM for enough EVs to save 52 million gallons of gasoline per year.

The ATVM program has issued conditional commitments to loan another \$2.9 billion to three other CMM projects. This includes up to \$700 million for Nevada-based Ioneer Rhyolite Ridge LLC to develop onsite processing of lithium carbonate for EV batteries.

In addition to ATVM, LPO has approximately \$72 billion in authority under the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program-Innovative Energy Projects and Innovative Supply Chain Projects to guarantee loans for commercial-scale energy projects, including critical minerals facilities. All told, LPO is actively evaluating \$7 billion of critical minerals project loan applications across the ATVM and Title 17 loan programs, foreshadowing a massive investment in building out domestic CMM capacity.

Complementing DOD's DPA Title III investments, DOE has been investments in research, development, and demonstration efforts to advance rare earth separation and processing capabilities. DOE has a demonstration project to produce neodymium and praseodymium oxide using ore sampled from the Bear Lodge deposit in Wyoming, a Rare Earth Element Demonstration Facility to produce rare earth oxides and other intermediate critical material commodities from deleterious materials, and several pilot projects advancing the production of rare earth elements from coal-based sources including fly ash and acid mine drainage. The Critical Materials Innovation Hub has developed several efficient and environmentally friendly technologies produce rare earth oxides and metals needed for magnet production—several of which are being advanced by industry partners. DOE also established the Critical Materials Accelerator Program to bridge innovative solutions from the benchtop to industrially relevant scale.

67. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Granholm, what authorities are you lacking for the Department of Energy to pursue these abilities with great urgency?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The DOE is aggressively supporting research and development activities through the Critical Materials Collaborative and Critical Materials Institute that will enable secure domestic supplies of critical materials.

SOLAR CELLS

68. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Granholm, will the Administration rescind its June 6, 2022 Declaration of Emergency and Authorization for Temporary Extensions of Time and Duty-Free Importation of Solar Cells and Modules from Southeast Asia and if not, why not? Is this proclamation under review?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The 2-year temporary moratorium on the Declaration of Emergency and Authorization for Temporary Extensions of Time and Duty-Free Importation of Solar Cells and Modules from Southeast Asia will expire on June 6, 2024.⁹ The purpose of the temporary bridge ensures robust deployment while the domestic solar manufacturing base ramped up.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

US DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIAN NUCLEAR FUEL

69. Senator BUDD. Secretary Granholm, Congress has appropriated significant funding to help transition the U.S. commercial nuclear power industry away from a heavy reliance on Russian fuel. I understand that the Department plans to issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for novel and innovative nuclear enrichment technologies. Can you provide a timeline on when that FOA might be released?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The FOA is being developed. We anticipate releasing the FOA as soon as January 2025.

⁹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/05/16/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-takes-action-to-strengthen-american-solar-manufacturing-and-protect-manufacturers-and-workers-from-chinas-unfair-trade-practices/>

70. Senator BUDD. Secretary Granholm, how can that FOA be best tailored to encourage the commercialization of new technologies like laser enrichment?

Secretary GRANHOLM. The objective of the FOA is to improve the domestic high-assay low-enriched uranium fuel supply chain with innovative technologies that could reduce technological risks, increase production, or reduce costs. Technologies could span the front end of the uranium supply chain including uranium production (mining and milling), conversion, enrichment, and deconversion. We believe that laser enrichment technologies would fit within the scope of the FOA.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

ARMY POSTURE

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. I will call the hearing to order. I thank everyone for this early start, and the floor has developed so that we can proceed as we typically do with opening statements, and I want to thank all of my colleagues over the last few days for making special arrangements, being brief and concise, so that we could ensure we could get to the floor.

Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive testimony in the President's Budget Request for the Department of the Army for fiscal year 2025. Witnesses today are Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth and Chief of Staff for the Army, General Randy George.

I would note that this is General George's first posture hearing before the Committee. Welcome, General. Thank you both for your service, and please convey this Committee's appreciation to the men and women serving under your command. This is a challenging but important period for the Army.

Even as the Army navigates the most difficult recruiting environment in half a century and the most dangerous global security environment since the Second World War, it is also undertaking a thorough, service wide modernization effort. It is critical that this effort is successful as the threats before the Army are significant.

We know that China seeks to challenge United States' interests and leadership in the world, that Vladimir Putin views Ukraine as a steppingstone in his imperialist vision, and that Iran seeks to ex-

exploit the war between Israel and Hamas to expel the United States and other countries from the region.

The United States Army, the most combat credible ground force in the world, is fundamental to successfully deterring, and if needed, confronting these threats. It is worth noting that each of these challenges I just mentioned can be addressed in part through the National Security Supplemental that the Senate passed more than 2 months ago.

The bill would support Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan, provide humanitarian relief in Gaza, and replenish the United States Army with the stocks and resources it so urgently needs, and I urge the House to pass this supplemental funding immediately.

Indeed, if we have to once again counter—that we do so immediately. In its fiscal year 2025 budget, the Department of Defense (DOD) has requested \$186 billion for the Army, continuing multiple years of planned budget for the service.

I am concerned that inadequate investment in the United States primary land component may create vulnerabilities and complicate decisions about how to use the funding. We risk the Army's combat strength if we do not provide it with the resources it needs to continue full modernization.

Secretary Wormuth, General George, I am interested in hearing about the Army's view, its mission globally, especially in the Indo-Pacific, as well as how the service is adjusting its operating concepts and force posture within its budget constraints. To remain competitive with China and Russia, we must prioritize investments in the cutting edge technologies that will define future battlefields across all domains.

The Army specifically has been pursuing modernization in key areas like long range fires, air defense, vertical lift, and deep sensing, among others. These are ambitious and far sighted objectives. I am also encouraged by the Army's efforts on its new cross-functional team focused on contested logistics.

This team, under the direction of Army Futures Command, is addressing the need for more resilient and agile logistics in dangerous environments like the Indo-Pacific. I recently visited a number of Army posts, including Grafenwoehr training area in Germany, and Fort Sill in McAllister Army Ammunition Plant, Oklahoma.

I have been impressed by the work that these soldiers and Army civilians are doing to not only train and equip our warfighters, particularly for counter UAS missions, but also the lessons and knowledge gained from our foreign partners, including the tens of thousands of Ukrainians who have conducted training at Grafenwoehr.

I would like to know what lessons and tactics the Army is learning from the conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, and what resources are needed to implement them. As I mentioned, the Army's most valuable asset has always been its people.

I am pleased to see this budget request places a priority on taking care of our soldiers by providing a 4.5 percent pay raise and committing more than \$2 billion per year for the next several years to improve barracks and family housing.

The Army is also making significant investments and improvements to its recruiting enterprise. For the past several years, the service has fallen far short of its recruitment goals, but recent pro-

gram initiatives, including a major new marketing campaign and expansion of the Future Soldier Prep Course appear to be gaining some ground. I would ask for an update on your efforts to recruit a broader pool of potential recruits and grow back end strength in the coming years.

Finally, the Army must continue to improve its readiness in the context of long term strategic competition. The Army's focus on increased training exercises, including Defender Europe, Pacific Pathways, and its leadership in the projects' Convergence series demonstrate commitment to broad experimentation and regional preparedness.

I would ask for an update on how the Army is designing exercises to support its forces on our pacing threats, China and Russia. Again, I thank the witnesses for their participation today. Look forward to the testimonies.

As a reminder to my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing in room SVC-217. Let me now recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses for being here today and for briefing so many of us before this hearing.

The chair mentioned that this is General George's first testimony before the Committee in this capacity. It is noteworthy that Secretary Wormuth actually administered the oath of office to the General via cell phone while he was visiting the 11th Airborne in Alaska.

Since then, these two leaders have worked together to reform their service branch, and I commend both of our witnesses for their shared leadership. In October, the Army announced a series of overhauls to its recruiting structure and strategy in an effort to combat the recruitment crisis. I hope to learn more about this today.

When implemented, the entire Army recruiting enterprise will reside under a single three star commander. This person will serve for 4 years and report directly to the Secretary of the Army. The service is now targeting prospective candidates in the college age range, embracing modern data collection methods and professionalizing the Army recruiter role.

So, I look forward to hearing an update from the Secretary about these reforms, as well as current recruiting progress. These recruiting overhauls directly impact the new total Army analysis released in February. The Army rightfully reduced force structure to align better with the number of soldiers in its formation.

The service plans to stand up a new counter UAS—some new counter UAS batteries, fire protection battalions, and multi-domain task forces to adjust to current trends in warfare. While I support these decisions, I remain cautious about the reductions in Special Operations forces, and we would like to hear from General George about the service's proposed force structure changes.

All of the units and soldiers in the total Army analysis will rely on current Army modernization efforts. I am encouraged that the Army's fiscal year 2025 budget request contains more than double

its purchase year over year of precision strike missiles, a critical capability in the Indo-Pacific.

Further, the Army tripled its request for coyote counter drone interceptors to help protect our soldiers in overseas bases from Iranian attack drones. I also thank the witnesses for using congressionally provided multiyear procurement authority to procure both GMLRS and Patriot missiles.

However, I must say it is disappointing to see additional Patriot and Stinger missiles on the unfunded requirement list rather than fully funded in the base budget. Unfortunately, the Biden administration has again done a disservice to the Army in the fiscal year 2025 budget submission. When accounting for inflation, this year's budget is more than a 2 percent cut compared to last year.

Madam Secretary and General George and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the Chairman of the Committee just a moment ago, expressing concern that we are not providing adequate resources to the Army to get the task done.

General George submitted a list of over \$2.2 billion worth of unfunded priorities the Army needs, including more counter UAS capabilities like roadrunner and reconnaissance systems. I think that is a low figure. I am convinced the Army actual unmet needs far exceed this \$2.2 billion.

So, General, I am going to ask you to comment on that. U.S. Army Pacific has \$430 million of unmet needs, of which only \$100 million are covered in the unfunded list. Plus, we know of significant shortfalls elsewhere, such as nearly \$1 billion missing to update the Army pre-positioned stocks this year.

The Army plays a leading logistical role in the Western Pacific, and I would like to hear from both of our witnesses about what else we can do to improve our ability to operate there. Tell us what you need, please, and we will try to get it for you.

Congress must correct this budget request to ensure the Army has the resources to meet the needs and meet our Nation's challenges. Thank you to my teammate, Mr. chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker. Madam Secretary, please.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHRISTINE E. WORMUTH, SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Secretary WORMUTH. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you, first of all, for your continued support of our soldiers, their families, and our Department of Army civilians. General George and I appear before you this morning at a period of profound transformation for the United States Army.

We are transforming our capabilities, our force structure, and our recruiting enterprise to ensure that the Army is ready and able to defeat evolving threats, keep pace with technology, and attract the very best talent.

As we pursue this transformation, we are also taking care of our people, ensuring that our soldiers and their families have the quality of life they deserve to sustain our readiness now and in the future.

This is my fourth year before the Committee, and like last year, the fiscal year 2025 budget continues to support the most ambitious modernization effort the Army has undertaken in over 40 years. We are making significant progress transforming our capabilities by staying consistent in our goals and meeting key milestones for development and fielding.

The next generation squad weapon, integrated battle command system, the mid-range capability, and the precision strike missile are examples of just some of the critical new systems we have recently delivered.

As we bring new systems into our inventory, we are also transforming our force structure to meet the priorities of the National Defense Strategy. We are building out new formations, like our multi-domain task forces, to make sure that they are equipped with the capabilities we need to conduct large scale combat operations against advanced military powers.

We are shrinking excess force structure so that the units we do have are manned and ready. While these force structured decisions will bring down authorized troop levels by about 24,000 spaces, our goal is to increase the Army's authorized end strength from 445,000 to 470,000 by fiscal year 2029.

To meet that goal, we are working around the clock to overcome our recruiting challenges. Building on successful initiatives like the Future Soldier Prep Course, we are fundamentally transforming our recruiting enterprise to better compete in the 21st century job market. Most significantly, we are redesigning our recruiting workforce by creating new permanent talent acquisition specialties for both enlisted soldiers and warrant officers.

Actually, the assessment and selection of the first cohort of warrant officers is complete, and the first group will be going out into the field later this summer. But while we transform, we can't afford to lose sight of our soldiers and their families and what we need to do to take care of them.

A key part of that responsibility is providing safe, high quality housing and barracks, and over the next 5 years, as the chairman I think noted, the Army is going to invest an average of \$2.1 billion annually in the construction, sustainment, restoration, and modernization of barracks for our soldiers.

This investment will include barracks sustainment at 100 percent for the first time in years. We are also going to leverage the expertise of the Army Corps of Engineers to stabilize our project cost as much as possible, and we will be hiring civilian barracks managers so that our soldiers can focus on warfighting.

Physically and emotionally healthy soldiers are more resilient, higher performing, and less likely to engage in harmful behaviors. To build resilient soldiers, we are expanding our health and holistic fitness programs to 71 Active component brigades. We are investing in financial counseling to make sure that our soldiers and families know how to manage their money.

We are encouraging programs in our divisions to focus on soldier well-being. Our goal has been and remains building cohesive teams that are ready to fight and win. Throughout this transformation, which we absolutely have to do because as you all know it is a very

dangerous world out there, we are continuing to provide Combatant Commands with what they need, trained and ready formations.

This year's budget seeks \$1.5 billion for activities tied to the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, and we have asked for \$460 million for Operation Pathways, the series of exercises we conduct in the Indo-Pacific to strengthen deterrence and also build regional interoperability with our partners and allies.

In Europe, our troops are demonstrating our commitment to deterring Russian aggression. The Army is leading support to Ukraine. We have trained over 17,000 Ukrainian troops, and we provided, as you all know well, hundreds of vehicles, weapons systems, and millions of munitions.

In the Middle East, our soldiers are mission focused and standing ready to provide further support for Israel's defense and to enhance broader regional stability. The chief and I strongly urge the passing of supplemental appropriations that will maintain this critical support to Ukraine, support partners in Asia and the Middle East, and invest in our own readiness, all while creating jobs for Americans all around the country.

With your support, we will continue to take care of our people and sustain the transformation that will keep our Army the best in the world. I am proud of all that our soldiers and Army civilians do and look forward to your questions this morning.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. General George, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL RANDY A. GEORGE, USA, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY

General GEORGE. Thank you, Chairman. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to talk about our Army.

The world is more volatile today than I have seen it in my 36 year career, and there is clear cooperation between adversaries than we have seen in a while. A spark in any region could have global impacts.

Meanwhile, the character of war is changing rapidly, which we see from what is happening on battlefields in the Ukraine and in the Middle East. Our Army is as important to the Joint Force as has ever been. We must deter war everywhere and be ready to respond anywhere.

So, we are focused on providing the best Army with the budget we are given. Our soldiers deserve it, the joint team deserves it, and our Nation deserves it, and that means making some tough decisions and finding ways to get better every day.

As the Secretary already highlighted, our planned investments reflected in our fiscal year 2025 budget will help our Army win the future fight and ensure that our soldiers and their families remain ready and resilient.

Across the Army, we are learning from global events and continuously transforming how we operate, how we train, and how we equip, and I would like to highlight a handful of things. We are learning that designs for things like unmanned systems must be modular, adaptable, and software defined.

We are working to get relevant technology in the hands of our soldiers immediately. We are learning that counter unmanned systems must evolve, as the threat does, to protect our formations and critical infrastructure. We are also moving out on that while being mindful of the cost curve.

We need cheaper solutions. We are learning that in some cases, the right tech already exists to support transformation. For instance, the tech exists to make our command and control nodes more mobile, low signature, and more effective, and we are fixing our network.

We are building our magazine depth and modernizing our organic industrial base, because we know that wars never end as quickly as we hope. They take a lot of ammo.

We are also transforming how we recruit, ensuring that we have the right talent and right tech, and that we are getting the word out about how our Army is a great place to serve because of our mission and our people.

Finally, we are also looking at where we need to reimagine our processes and where we can afford to stop doing things that don't support our warfighting mission or building cohesive teams. I am proud of what our soldiers are doing around the world. We appreciate your support, and we look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Secretary Christine Wormuth and General Randy George follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY SECRETARY CHRISTINE WORMUTH AND GENERAL RANDY GEORGE

THE NEED FOR CONTINUOUS TRANSFORMATION

Today's security environment is both complex and volatile. The contemporary battlefield is increasingly transparent. The inescapable prevalence of internet-enabled sensors, from cell phones to satellites, makes it possible for our adversaries to see and target U.S. interests anywhere in the world. Advances in commercial technology have outpaced military technology in many areas, and the innovative use of simple and inexpensive commercially available systems provides a tactical advantage to forces that can procure and adapt faster than their opponents. Conflict is migrating into cities and dense population centers and is extending into new domains, with space and cyberspace enabling global effects. Developments in Ukraine, the Middle East, and elsewhere around the world have highlighted the volatility of this landscape, and regional conflicts carry the potential to ignite a firestorm with global impacts.

To meet these challenges successfully, the Army must transform quickly. We will ensure continued progress on long-term efforts that improve our warfighting on current and future battlefields in support of the National Defense Strategy, but our readiness cannot wait for arbitrary time horizons. The Army must continuously transform to adapt to the rapid pace of change occurring now. This need drives our \$185.9 billion budget request for fiscal year 2025.

Army transformation is well underway, but we must accelerate and intensify our efforts. We must transform our capabilities, force structure, and recruiting enterprise. We must deliver ready combat formations and take care of our people, ensuring the quality of life for our soldiers, Army civilians, and families.

TRANSFORMING OUR CAPABILITIES

As we adapt to the changing environment, we are steadfast in developing advanced, long-term modernization programs to ensure that the Army maintains the overmatch required for future battlefields. The Army has made significant progress in our most ambitious modernization effort in more than 40 years by maintaining continuity across budgets and meeting major milestones for development and fielding. The success of this effort has been marked by the recent delivery and fielding of the Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle (AMPV), Integrated Air and Missile Defense

Battle Command System (IBCS), Mid-Range Capability (MRC), Next Generation Squad Weapon, and Precision Strike Missile (PrSM).

The Army continues to develop counter-unmanned aircraft system (UAS) capabilities as the Department of Defense's lead agency for countering small-UAS (C-sUAS). From the testing and fielding of systems such as Mobile Low, Slow, Small-Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System (M-LIDS), Fixed Site Low, Slow, Small-Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System (FS-LIDS), or Coyote, to the operational deployment of Directed Energy Maneuver Short Range Air Defense System (DE-MSHORAD), the Army and the Joint Counter-UAS Office (JCO) are exploring novel concepts and accelerating system development to meet the challenges of the advancing threat.

Building on the requirements for long-range precision fires, the Army fielded the first prototypes of the MRC to its 1st Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) in 2023 and is in the process of completing flight testing of the Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon, which is intended for delivery by the end of 2024. The Army awarded the contract for the development of the Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node (TITAN) in 2Q fiscal year 2024 to produce the targeting data needed for these advanced capabilities and provide battlefield commanders with advanced decisionmaking tools in a rapidly evolving battlespace.

The Army is transforming the network to enable these capabilities and ensure our forces are lean, mobile, and low signature. We will begin a pilot for satellite-as-a-service in early fiscal year 2025 while making continued progress on a zero-trust architecture. These efforts will form the security backbone of the Unified Network and enable the Army's integration into Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control (CJADC2).

The Army is re-balancing aviation investments, shifting away from capabilities that are not survivable on the modern battlefield while investing in effective new technology. We are ending the development of the Future Attack and Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) and the production of the UH-60V version of the Blackhawk helicopter while also phasing out the operations and sustainment of the Shadow and Raven unmanned systems. We are delaying entering into production of the Improved Turbine Engine but remain committed to developing that program for integration into the UH-60 Black Hawk and AH-64 Apache helicopters. We will deliver needed capabilities by relying on a mix of enduring, unmanned, and space-based assets that are survivable and effective for current and future fights.

We are investing in our aviation capabilities by beginning production of the CH-47F Block II Chinook helicopter and continuing development of the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA). We are also continuing to develop advanced unmanned systems, such as the Launched Effects family of systems and the Future Tactical Uncrewed Aircraft System, while leveraging opportunities to use commercial technology in innovative ways.

As we transform our capabilities, we will explore new ways to validate our systems as we introduce them into our formations. One way we will do this is by transforming in contact, using ongoing deployments and troop rotations as opportunities to explore new techniques and equipment. Transforming in contact ensures we validate systems and processes in their intended environments with the soldiers who will employ them. Infusing commercial technology that is ready for employment will improve our lethality and readiness to face the challenges ahead.

These developments require the continued support of industry, underpinned by the ingenuity and drive of the American people. Investments in the modernization and workload of our organic industrial base are essential to meeting the requirements and scale of the modern battlefield. Current commercial production is insufficient to meet global demand. Multi-year procurement authority will significantly improve the production rates of critical munitions such as 155mm artillery rounds and Patriot missiles. However, further investment is necessary to ensure that the Nation can scale the production of these and other munitions and systems to meet current and future requirements.

TRANSFORMING OUR FORCE STRUCTURE

The Army is transforming our force structure to incorporate new capabilities and refocus on large-scale combat operations. The legacy structure from the past two decades focused on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations and maintained authorizations to accommodate 494,000 Active Duty soldiers. Our transformation will reduce the unfilled and excess positions and create space for new capabilities supporting large-scale combat operations in a multi-domain environment. The success of this restructuring will rely on the Army's ability to gradually in-

crease end strength from the current 445,000 soldiers to 470,000 by fiscal year 2029 to meet the requirements of the future force.

This transformation includes a reduction of some 32,000 authorizations across the Active-Duty force structure and an addition of 7,500 new authorizations, leading to a net decrease of about 24,000 authorizations. The overall reduction in authorizations will more closely align the structure to the authorized end strength to improve the readiness of formations while increasing their capabilities for the future fight. Our restructuring efforts focused on creating lethal, flexible formations that can adapt to large-scale combat operations and decreasing the number of authorizations that were designed for a counterinsurgency mission, not frequently deployed or unfilled. New additions to the Active Component force structure include the completion of five MDTFs, four additional Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) battalions, nine C-sUAS batteries, and four additional M-SHORAD battalions. All these formations bring advanced capabilities to meet current requirements and ensure that we maintain overmatch against adversaries in the future.

TRANSFORMING OUR RECRUITING ENTERPRISE

Transformation will only take place through the hard work of talented and dedicated soldiers, Army civilians, and the support of their families. The Army is a great place to serve: we are retaining talented soldiers, finishing fiscal year 2023 at 102 percent of our retention mission. Even so, the challenges to Army recruiting pose an existential threat to the all-volunteer force, and addressing these challenges has been one of our most comprehensive efforts over the last year.

The Army is making fundamental changes to its recruiting approach. This starts with redesigning our recruiting workforce, moving away from a model that places soldiers outside of their primary military occupational specialty (MOS) into temporary recruiter positions for only a few years at a time. To do this, we are creating new talent acquisition specialties for both enlisted soldiers and warrant officers, allowing our recruiters to develop skills to succeed in a competitive hiring environment. These new recruiters will expand their focus on the prospect market beyond those with a high school degree and will aim to recruit a third of new trainees from the “college or some college” population by 2028. This shift requires our recruiters to become more active on the campuses of junior colleges and technical institutes and increase Army recruiting presence in online forums.

We are also creating a significant innovation capability within U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) to quickly identify and scale promising new approaches and discard recruiting practices that are no longer successful in a competitive and rapidly changing labor market.

Finally, we are seeking to elevate USAREC to become a three-star command that oversees enlisted recruiting, Army Cadet Command, and the Army’s Enterprise Marketing Office and reports to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army in light of its critically important mission. The leadership of USAREC will serve for an extended tenure, building stability and expertise and decreasing the impact of frequent leadership changeover.

Although fiscal year 2023 was a challenging year, it showed a marked increase of 5,200 recruits over fiscal year 2022, in large part due to the outstanding work of our 8,000 recruiters and the successful implementation of initiatives across the Army. As this transformation begins, our goal for fiscal year 2024 is 55,000 Regular Army recruits and 5,000 commitments to the Delayed Entry Program. We will also continue successful initiatives like the Future Soldier Prep Course, which has brought more than 18,000 new soldiers into the Army since its inception in the summer of 2022.

DELIVERING READY COMBAT FORMATIONS

Despite recruiting challenges, the Army is meeting our global requirements. Over 140,000 soldiers from all components are deployed or stationed in 143 countries worldwide to defend the Nation’s interests and maintain security with our allies and partners.

The Army provides the operational endurance, reach, and survivability necessary for joint force success in the Indo-Pacific. For fiscal year 2025, we are requesting \$1.5 billion for Pacific Deterrence Initiative activities to exercise and campaign with our allies and partners, building and demonstrating shared readiness to deter Chinese aggression and ensure regional stability. This readiness begins in Hawaii and Alaska, where U.S. Army

Pacific has established the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC). JPMRC allows the Army and our partners to train in a variety of environments, from tropical jungles to the high arctic.

Funding for Operation Pathways will support partnered, all-component, multinational exercises such as TALISMAN SABRE. Last year's exercise included over 30,000 participants from 15 nations and provided the Army with the opportunity to construct and operate Joint Logistics Over the Shore (JLOTS), the largest such operation in over two decades. We continue to train, exercise, and collaborate with our long-standing allies, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. Last summer, the Army deployed a combined arms battalion on short notice from CONUS to the Korean Peninsula to demonstrate rapid crisis response and our resolve to deter DPRK aggression. In Japan, the Army supported Japan's Ground Self Defense Forces through the annual YAMA SAKURA exercise series.

The Army will continue to prioritize the Indo-Pacific as we transform our force structure and introduce new capabilities for strategic competition, including the 1st, 3d, and 4th MDTFs, the 5th Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB), and the 11th Airborne Division, the Army's newest division focused on cold weather and high-altitude operations in the Arctic.

In Europe, the Army is requesting \$2.1 billion to support European Deterrence Initiative activities to maintain rotational deployments, train with our NATO allies, build readiness, and demonstrate our ability to rapidly project combat forces into the theater. This was recently on display during Exercise ARCTIC SHOCK when U.S. Army paratroopers and their Norwegian counterparts flew over the North Pole from Alaska and conducted a combined airborne operation into Norway. In the coming months, over 16,000 of our soldiers will train with more than a dozen other countries in Exercise DEFENDER 24.

We continue our full support of Ukraine and its fight to repel Russia's invasion of its sovereign territory. Our troops have trained over 17,000 Ukrainian soldiers in Germany. We have sent major combat systems and munitions to Ukraine, including 21 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), 1 Patriot air defense battery, 131 Strykers, 31 Abrams tanks, 162 Bradley fighting vehicles, and over 1.5 million artillery

munitions. This support is an investment in our own national security: it deters potential aggression elsewhere in the world and strengthens our defense industrial base. Supporting Ukraine is also critical to our military readiness. The lessons we have learned from Ukraine have allowed us to develop new methods, techniques, and capabilities for future conflicts. We have also seen how U.S. equipment is both effective and survivable, even in degraded or contested environments.

Now more than ever, the Army is leading efforts to support Ukraine in its fight to regain its sovereign borders, but that support is at risk the longer we operate without a supplemental appropriations bill. Every day that passes without funding for support to Ukraine is one that Russia will use to its advantage against Ukraine, against Europe, and against our NATO allies. We urge Congress to pass on-time appropriations bills and supplemental appropriation bills when required to support unforeseen crises.

In the Middle East, Iranian-aligned militia groups have increasingly threatened and attacked United States Forces and interests, invigorated by Hamas's attacks against Israel in October 2023. U.S. Army Central (USARCENT) has assessed the force protection requirements of facilities and units, and we have deployed advanced counter-UAS capabilities, including DE M-SHORAD, to the region to defeat the ongoing use of sUAS and expand the network of defense for U.S. troops and bases. We are also supporting U.S. Central Command with JLOTS, which will provide the Joint Force with the capability to increase the viability of large-scale maritime shipments of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Soldiers from all components of the Army are serving the Nation around the globe, including 2,500 soldiers supporting the Department of Homeland Security at our southwest border. Regionally aligned Special Operations Forces and SFABs provide access and presence in each geographic combatant command, including 2d SFAB's support over the last year to partner forces in Kenya, Tunisia, Gambia, and other partners in Africa. Army National Guard units support 30 nations in Central and South America as part of the State Partnership Program, training and building enduring relationships that improve mutual readiness.

READINESS OF SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES: QUALITY OF LIFE INVESTMENTS

Our readiness depends not just on recruiting, equipping, and training the force but also on the individual health and fitness of every soldier. This readiness begins in the barracks, and the Army is dedicated to providing safe, high-quality housing and barracks for our soldiers. The Army will invest an average of \$2.1 billion annually in the construction, sustainment, restoration, and modernization of barracks for unaccompanied soldiers across Future Years Defense Program 25–29.

For fiscal year 2025, the Army is budgeting \$935 million for nine unaccompanied housing construction projects across Active Duty and Army Reserve at multiple installations, a 325 percent increase in construction from fiscal year 2024. Barracks sustainment has been funded at 100 percent of the requirement, an investment of \$680 million in fiscal year 2025. We are also leveraging the expertise found within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to stabilize project cost growth through early involvement in the planning and design processes. Additionally, the Army is allocating \$35 million to hire civilian barracks managers at multiple installations, which will decrease the requirements for soldiers to serve as barracks managers and allow them to focus on their primary warfighting duties.

For accompanied soldiers, the Army is investing \$403.7 million into Government-owned Army family housing in fiscal year 2025. This investment will address facility sustainment, construction of 173 new homes, and renovation of 252 homes. Across all installations, the Army is committed to increasing oversight of privatized housing and combating environmental hazards within both Government-owned Army family housing and privatized housing through consistently applied maintenance and inspection programs.

The Army remains committed to reducing instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment, ensuring impartial justice, and encouraging healthy behaviors that strengthen the trust between the Army and the American people. During early fiscal year 2024, the Army established the Office of the Special Trial Counsel (OSTC), which is staffed by specially trained, independent military attorneys (“special trial counsel”) who make prosecution decisions for sexual assault, domestic violence, and other covered offenses. Beginning in December 2023, the OSTC gained the authority to make case dispositions. This increases transparency and ensures that impartiality is inherent within the military justice process.

The Army is implementing a comprehensive, integrated prevention plan (CIPP) at all commands across the Army, which details actions to improve command climate. In particular, at the United States Military Academy, CIPP incorporates character development with proactive approaches to prevent sexual assault and other harmful behaviors. Additionally, we have instituted dedicated instruction during initial entry training that reinforces the shared trust required to form cohesive teams and provides education on prevention and response resources. These proactive approaches and many others will inform the creation of the Army’s Sexual Harassment and Response Program (SHARP) regulation, which will be published this fiscal year.

The Army continues to combat the risk of soldier suicide through multiple approaches, acknowledging that every suicide impacts families, teammates, and the readiness of the force. The Army published its Suicide Prevention Regulation in September 2023, and we are ensuring that soldiers are aware of and have clear access to mental and emotional health resources. The Army is investing in programs that help soldiers maintain financial stability, mental health, strong relationships, and physical well-being, including expanding the Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) program to 71 brigades in fiscal year 2025 and budgeting \$24.4 million for financial counseling services.

This holistic approach to soldier wellness is taking form at every installation in the Army, with many garrisons consolidating the resources needed to combat suicide and increase soldier fitness at a single accessible location. Tailored programs like 1st Infantry Division’s “Operation Victory Wellness,” 10th Mountain Division’s “Mountain Care,” and 11th Airborne Division’s “Mission 100” are prioritizing engaged leadership and providing a wide range of location and community-specific resources to soldiers and their families.

Ensuring that Army families have the resources they need to thrive is vital to our force’s readiness and a driving factor behind soldier retention. The Army’s fiscal year 2025 budget requests funding to construct three new child development centers (CDCs) at Fort Liberty, North Carolina, Fort Meade, Maryland, and Wiesbaden, Germany. We are testing and implementing incentives to maintain high staffing levels at existing CDCs by providing recruitment and retention bonuses, tuition assistance, and access to on-post resources such as commissaries at 16 installations.

Building on the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022, the Army continues to work with the Defense State Liaison Office to ensure military spouses can achieve portability of their occupational license as they undergo a permanent change of station. Army spouses may also take advantage of new opportunities provided by updates to the Military Spouse Employment Act, which grants Federal agencies the authority to hire military spouses for remote work and allows military spouses to retain their positions should they relocate to another location. We are also continuing to coordinate with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to implement new policies that further expand employment opportunities for our Army

spouses as directed by the Executive Order on Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors.

The Army spends over \$1.3 billion annually to provide soldier and family support programs at installations around the world, but we recognize that each installation, unit, and community is unique and has discrete needs. We are empowering senior installation commanders with the authority to scale successful programs and close programs that do not meet the needs of each individual community. We are piloting this tailored, localized approach to soldier programs at Fort Cavazos, TX, and will expand to other installations pending the results of the pilot.

MAINTAINING THE STRATEGIC PATH

Today's security environment is volatile and evolving quickly. The battlefield is increasingly transparent, commercial technology is advancing rapidly, and new capabilities allow adversaries to reach around the world. The Army is transforming to meet the needs of this rapidly changing environment. With congressional support, we will keep the Army on a sustainable strategic path as we transform for the future. We will deliver ready combat formations with advanced capabilities to defend our Nation and its interests. We will transform our recruiting enterprise to guarantee the longevity of the All-Volunteer Force. We will invest in the quality of life of our soldiers, civilians, and their families. We will build cohesive teams and foster climates of trust grounded in our shared Army values. We will serve with the discipline and professionalism that the Nation demands of its Army, just as we have done for the past 249 years. This We'll Defend.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General. Both for the Secretary and Chief of Staff, the obvious point is you are operating under a flat budget, essentially, and that makes your decisions of how you spend the money more and more critical.

Secretary Wormuth, the Army has made some shifts in its priorities this year. Can you describe the overall guidance for building this ready and modernized Army, and the shifts you have made?

Secretary WORMUTH. Certainly, Chairman. You know, the chief and I are very focused on spending every single dollar that we have in the most effective way, and I think the broad direction of our modernization program has remained the same.

You know, we continue, as you said in your statement, to focus on investing in air and missile defense, in long range precision fires, in advanced aviation and a number of other categories. You know, I think we did make, obviously, a significant decision in choosing to not pursue further the FARA reconnaissance aircraft.

But in doing that, we basically came to the realization looking at, you know, what is happening on the battlefield in Ukraine, for example, what is happening with technology. We felt we could meet that requirement in a different way, and we also wanted to make sure we kept our aviation industrial base healthy.

So, that led us to the multiyear procurement of additional but more modernized Blackhawks. But beyond that, I would say, you know, again, the broader goals of our modernization program are looking at the large scale combat operations study that we did several years ago now.

I think the things that that led us to invest in, frankly, have been validated to a large degree by what we see happening on the battlefield in Ukraine in particular. So, we are going to continue, I think, with all of those important portfolios, and they are they are going to give us capabilities that we need to be able to deal with the challenges in the Indo-Pacific, but also in Europe and elsewhere.

Because, as the chief says, you know, we are a globally deployable Army. We are not focused on one theater.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Madam Secretary. General George, again, on the context of this budget and the context of the strategy that the Secretary has laid out, how are you maintaining ready combat formations, which is essential to the mission?

General GEORGE. Yes, Chairman, and that is, every month I chair the readiness update and there is nothing more important than having a ready Army, and so, we are completely focused on that.

To carry on a little bit with what the Secretary was talking about, what we are—I mean, we owe it to get every—make sure that every dollar that we are spending. So, we are looking at processes. I will give you a couple examples of—and I mentioned up front in my opening remarks about how we got to get after cheaper solutions, and I think unmanned systems is a good example of that.

Countering unmanned systems as well. We can't keep—you know, we can't afford to just keep lobbying very expensive missiles out of that, so we are working on and those kinds of things through R&D and then getting stuff forward to do it. Then the battlefield is changing really quickly.

So, one of the things that I have been—that we have been talking about is I think that what will help us in that is having more flexible funding that would allow us to make some of those adjustments as rapidly as the battlefield is changing.

Chairman REED. Thank you. The issue of recruiting always comes up. Can you give us an update, Madam Secretary? I think we are making a little more progress.

Secretary WORMUTH. We are. We still have 6 months left to go in the fiscal year, so the chief and I don't want to be overconfident. But right now, we are on a very good pace, I think, to meet this year's recruiting goal, which is 55,000 new contracts, plus 5,000 in the delayed entry program.

So that is, you know, that is very good news. February and March were very good months. The chief and I actually just chaired yesterday a meeting with all of the senior leaders from our recruiting enterprise. You know, I think we continue to see very good success with the Future Soldier Prep Course, our advertising campaign.

I don't know if you all saw some of the ads during the March Madness basketball tournament. We, as I said, you know, we have selected our first cohort of new warrant officers. We are doing some things to leverage better data to give our recruiters stronger leads, and we are looking at how to break into the college market.

So, I think we are doing well. We have also, I would say, we are selecting our existing recruiters in a different way that is more attribute focused, looking at sort of personalities, and we are also, we have overhauled the curriculum at our recruiting college. About 40 percent of the curriculum has changed.

So, the recruiters that we surged kind of last—late last year have gone through that, and they are in the field now, and I think they are part of the reason why we are seeing our contracts per month go up.

Chairman REED. One layer you just mentioned is focusing on college students. I have always felt that junior colleges are an excellent place to recruit, you know, people who are mature more so

than in high school. Then—I hope, and then you have also people who have made a conscious decision not to go to a 4-year school. Are you finding success there?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, I would say, chairman, we are absolutely looking at junior colleges, community colleges. You know, we are looking at kids maybe who did a couple years of college but then dropped out for whatever reason. I would say, candidly chairman, we are still in the early days.

We—actually chief and I just talked about this yesterday. We really need to do some more market research on that some college, college market. We just haven't been focused on that market for so long, so we really need to dig into that more, and we are actually going to engage a private sector company to help us with that.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Wicker, please.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General George, you said I believe this is the most volatile international security situation in, did you say 37 years?

General GEORGE. In my 36 years.

Senator WICKER. 36 years, okay, and also, your prepared statement with the Secretary says the Army must transform quickly.

Chairman Reed said that the budget that has now been proposed is essentially a flat budget. I think he might not take issue with my statement that it is a 2 percent cut when you consider inflation and purchasing power.

I understand what the Secretary said about using every dollar carefully and making sure that it is—that we squeeze every bit of value, but we are not going to meet this threat simply by being more efficient with the dollars that have been asked for, either in your budget submission or the unfunded requirement.

There are \$430 million in unmet needs in U.S. Army Pacific, and only \$100 million of that \$430 million is covered in the Army unfunded list. We need almost \$1 billion to update Army pre-positioned stocks this year. This budget is not adequate for this most volatile situation in 36 years, is it, General George?

General GEORGE. I am Senator, what I was focused on in the unfunded priority list, first and foremost, was everything that we could potentially execute. So, there was two things in the unfunded priority list that we put in there, and it was very extensive process that we went through.

One was a lot of things that were in our base budget but we—next on the list, to maximize production. So, there is some of those that took us out to production, and then the other example is facts of life changes. What happened on October 7th and what we needed to do.

Senator WICKER. Okay, well, you know, we only have just a brief, brief moment, but the \$330 million that aren't covered of U.S. Army Pacific, you are going to need that, aren't you? Are you say you can't execute that in the next fiscal year?

General GEORGE. I know what was included on there was specific to U.S. Army Pacific was some additional campaigning that we are doing.

Senator WICKER. But there is a \$430 million in unmet needs and only \$100 million recovered in the Army unfunded list. You could use that entire \$430 million in this next fiscal year, could you not?

General GEORGE. Senator, I would have to go back and look. I don't know what the other, you know, additional funding that you are specifically referring to.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Let me just say, I do appreciate the fact that we have to be efficient. We have got to get the absolute value out of every single taxpayer dollars that we entrust with you.

But we are going to need—if we are going to keep the peace and have peace through strength, which has always worked, we are going to have to—we got to make sure that you tell us what you need. Let me ask you this, General George, the Secretary mentioned the things that we are doing to help the effort of our friends in Ukraine.

What lessons are we learning that we can use later on, should we be asked in another theater to go into combat?

General GEORGE. Senator, I could go on for a long time. I would love to come over and talk to you about lessons. We have a big work with formation that is over there.

Senator WICKER. We will—

General GEORGE. I will give you a couple of quick—I will give you some really quick examples. We are learning the effectiveness of ground based long range fires. We are learning that UAS unmanned systems and countering unmanned systems is rapidly evolving.

We are learning that the EW landscape is changing everywhere between 3 weeks and 3 months, and so that we need to be more flexible in our approach, and this is why are—

Senator WICKER. EW being?

General GEORGE. Electronic warfare. So, the battlefield is changing really rapidly. We are learning about how well additive manufacturing is going to work and reduce our—can help us reduce our footprint.

We are learning that you can be seen anywhere on the battlefield, and you are going to have to become more mobile, lower signature. That is why we are focused on our network, because if you can be seen, you can be killed.

We are doing all of those things and training all of those things, and we are taking those lessons. They are not lessons learned until we have actually changed how we trained, change how we operate, change how we equip, and then change how we buy things.

Senator WICKER. General, there is no way to learn that other than actually watching actual combat. Is that correct?

General GEORGE. I think we are watching a lot of that unfold, and we have got a lot of combat experience inside our formation.

Senator WICKER. We are doing that without any of our guys and gals having to actually be in combat. We are doing—we are watching someone else who is our—

General GEORGE. Yes. Watching. Exactly.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Wormuth and General George both for being here and for your service to the country. Secretary Wormuth, I am sure you won't—

probably won't be surprised to know that I am still focused on night vision devices.

This is the second year in a row in which the budget has included very little for procurement of night vision devices, and it makes it hard for me to understand what the Army's plans are for the future. The budget for 2025 suggests that the Army plans to both—to buy both L3 Harris's ENVG-B and Microsoft's IVAS systems, but it doesn't really justify how it is going to sustain both. Can you give us some more detail on what you are planning?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, Senator Shaheen. As you know, we are planning to buy both capabilities, and I think, you know, we don't see it as an either, or. They each bring some different things to the table.

If I am not mistaken, I think there is more in the budget this year for the enhanced night vision goggles than last year's budget. I think we have money in there for about 2,300 additional sets of goggles.

We also have money in the budget for 3,000 of the 1.2 version IVAS, you know, hologram headsets, as you know very well because you and I have talked about this over a number of hearings. You know, we are continuing to work with Microsoft on that program. We have some additional testing coming up this year. We are going to be doing a lot of testing on the 1.2 version.

We did—the last test that we ran looking at IVAS was much more successful. The soldier feedback we got was much better. You know, the form factor for the headset was more comfortable. They weren't having as much neck strain.

I think the resolution on the—for the vision piece was better. So, we are planning to continue with both programs, but of course we are going to look and see what the results are for the 1.2 version later this year, before we decide further on the IVAS.

Senator SHAHEEN. According to the budget justification materials, the IVAS system heads up display is designed to work within their network to provide situational awareness and synthetic training environment capabilities. I am quoting, so hopefully I am going to get that correct. Are all Army situational awareness devices interoperable with the IVAS network? Do we know that?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, what that means, really, and it has been a little while since I have actually worn IVAS, but the—you know, one of the things that is unique about IVAS is that it allows our soldiers to have sort of a virtual training environment so that they can plan, you know, tactical missions, for example, wearing the headsets, and also to use that for training.

That is not a capability that we have right now on any of our other systems. So, it is—that is why it is a bit of a pathfinder in wearable technology for us, and one of the reasons why we are interested in it.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly look forward to seeing more of what the experiment and the record shows that IVAS can do. General George, in your opening comments, you talked about wanting more flexibility for budget.

What specifically—I know we have we have done a lab, the multi-year procurement, but are there other things that you are

suggesting that you need in order to better manage the funding that you have?

General GEORGE. Senator, yes, first, the multi-years for 155 GMLRS, PAC-3 have been extremely helpful to us. On the—there is three areas and I kind of mentioned those briefly with Senator Wicker, but how we are changing in unmanned aerial systems or unmanned systems overall and encountering those and EW is, the battlefield is changing in weeks and months.

So, the point is for our systems—and I will give you an example. When October 7th happened, Hamas attacked Israel, situation changed in the Middle East, and we needed to do additional things with counter UAS. We did not have the flexibility because of a continuing resolution to move money, make adjustments, go from R&D to procurement for certain systems.

So, I do think in those three areas just is how fast—and I am we are not talking big systems. That we need more flexibility in those areas because of how things are changing, and I am confident that we could do that in a way where we would notify and wait, and to tell inside those systems. So those are the three areas that I think we would need the flexibility.

Senator SHAHEEN. But just to clarify, the fundamental problem there is budget certainty and making sure that you are not operating on a continuing resolution on an ongoing basis.

General GEORGE. That is—right. That was—we could not make adjustments and we couldn't up our production level for Coyote, for example, and had to go to things. But I do think in those three areas that we do need some flexibility. For counter—like counter UAS systems, we are in R&D and have the ability to procure some of those. I think it is also going to help for a lot of the small technology firms that are doing great things here in the States.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here today. General George, your unfunded priority list included several counter UAS systems that you just touched on with Senator Shaheen. Can you tell us why it is important to acquire these systems in fiscal year 2025, if not sooner?

General GEORGE. Senator, I think that you have seen with just what happened last weekend with a number of, you know, systems and unmanned systems in one way attack and loitering munitions.

I think every formation out there is going to have to operate these unmanned systems inside of our own formation, and we are going to have to be able to counter them.

So, we need to—I think that is one area where I think we are going to have to speed up, and we are attempting to do that, wanting to do that inside the Army.

Senator FISCHER. Well, I appreciate it that you put it on your unfunded priority list because it is extremely important, extremely helpful. As you said, we just witnessed some of that last week.

General and Madam Secretary, we have seen the unmanned aerial systems, we have seen the counter UAS systems to be used to great effect. We have seen them particularly in Ukraine.

So, how is the Army taking what it has learned specifically in that conflict about drone warfare and incorporating those lessons learned into the development of new tactics, techniques, and procedures for soldiers?

Secretary WORMUTH. Sure, Senator Fischer. First of all, we are aggressively collecting lessons learned from what we are seeing in Ukraine across the board.

I was actually in Grafenwoehr in February and saw some of the training we were doing with the Ukrainians, and frankly, I felt like our soldiers might have been learning more from them than they were learning from us.

What we are doing is, you know, taking all of those lessons and infusing them into our combat training center, so at Fort Irwin and at Fort Johnson, and you are actually seeing what we call the OPFOR, you know, the opposition force that our brigades train against.

They are attacking our brigades that are in the box with drones and with drone swarms. So, we are already, you know, testing our brigades against the kinds of things that we are seeing in Ukraine. They are—that is causing them to adjust their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

As the chief said, they are having to move their command posts, you know, more frequently. They are having to camouflage them. We are having to find ways to reduce the footprint, both physical and sort of signature.

But we are very much trying to learn those lessons. As someone said, you know, a lesson observed is not the same thing as a lesson learned.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Also, all of the data that we are seeing indicates that military recruiting remains a challenge. You also touched on that in your openings. I do appreciate the efforts that you have made, those ongoing efforts, and to help create solutions so that we can maintain our all-volunteer force.

Madam Secretary, your joint written testimony outlines the Army's plan for transforming the recruiting enterprise, in part through a focus on innovation. How will the Army work to quickly take the successful approaches and incorporate them into a wider recruiting enterprise?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we are creating an innovation essentially cell or directorate that will be part of U.S. Army Recruiting Command. They are doing everything from helping us, you know, figure out how to develop the pipeline to train the new, what we call Forty-Two Tango. That will be the kind of specialized enlisted recruiters that will come in.

So, they are involved with curriculum development. They are involved with helping us figure out how to apply artificial intelligence and machine learning to, again, looking at large data sets of potential prospects and really trying to help our recruiters focus on the most—the best leads, if you will.

They are helping us look at basically what we would call the recruiting station of the future. We really think we need to sort of fundamentally relook everything from sort of the storefronts to kind of how our recruiting stations operate. So those are just a few examples of how the innovation cell will help us.

Senator FISCHER. You know, I am really concerned about what I perceive as a growing distrust of institutions in our society, and especially with our younger generation. Are you looking specifically at ways to address that as well and to be able to communicate better about the strength of a commitment and dedication and how important that is—and just the value of the institution?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are, Senator. You know, I share your concern about the decline of trust that our young people have, and frankly, a lot of Americans have in our institutions.

You know, I think what we can do in the Army is, you know, continue to do more to talk about the value of service and what it means to be part of an institution that is about something larger than yourself and about protecting this great country.

But I think, frankly, is something that we need your help on, all of you, because I think we need more voices in leadership talking about the value of service. It can't just be—you know, the fact that 83 percent of our recruits come from military families, that is wonderful in many ways, but it is also a little concerning.

You know, we need to—we can't rely on just military families to give their kids to the Army. So, the more all of you, I think, can talk about the value of service, that will help us.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for your testimony. Secretary Wormuth, the Army is negotiating renewals for several training, very important training area land leases in Hawaii, particularly for Koloa on the Big Island.

That training area, that would be the Army and the Marines, not to mention our civil—our civilian people. So anyway, we are in the midst of negotiating, although those leases do not expire for a number of years, but we do need to be already in the process.

The lands that this training area, and particularly Koloa, hold cultural significance to the Native Hawaiian community and it is imperative that you and your team conduct frequent and respectful engagements with the local community leaders, especially the Native Hawaiian community, because truly we need to avoid a situation where there is major conflict in terms of our ability to extend these leases.

So, I included a provision in last year's NDAA that requires the Secretary of Defense to designate an official responsible for coordinating these negotiations. Has that individual been identified, and could you provide an update on the lease renegotiation efforts and community outreach?

Secretary WORMUTH. Certainly, Senator Hirono. I am tracking that requirement in the last NDAA. I do not believe that OSD has yet hired that individual. I know that, you know, we have had discussions with them about the attributes that would be helpful in that kind of person. You know, obviously someone who has deep ties to the community and relationships with all of the different stakeholders.

But I think OSD is still working to identify the right person for that. You know, we certainly think it would be helpful to have someone be a single belly button, if you will. What we are doing

in the Army is really to try to have exactly the kinds of conversations that you are referring to, with all of the different stakeholders. So General Flynn has been very engaged.

My Assistant Secretary, our Assistant Secretary for Installations and the Environment, Rachel Jacobson. We have had our General Counsel, Carrie Ricci, has been out to Hawaii to have conversations.

You know, as you said, the leases don't expire until 2029, but we need to be having discussions about what the options are. I think there are discussions informally with the Department of Land and Natural Resources, for example. So, we are trying to continue to stay focused on that.

Senator HIRONO. I cannot overstate the importance of finding the right person to be that liaison with the community. Let me give you an example. The Maui wildfires has resulted, and the family of—what I describe as the family of Federal agencies there, over 1,000 Federal people have been there on Maui, and FEMA, of course, is very much there.

As FEMA is conducting its cleanup operations and all of that, they have hired dozens, dozens of cultural advisors to be there when they are actually cleaning out individual lots. That is how critically important the sensitivities are.

I would say that if we do not renegotiate these leases successfully, that is going to have a major impact on the continuing presence of the military in Hawaii, and therefore our National Security.

So, we have talked a lot about recruiting, and all of the services are having recruiting challenges, except possibly the Air Force. So, some of the new things that you are doing, is this something that is being shared with the other services, because they are all facing recruiting challenges?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes. I am proud to say the Army is leading the way in this space and our sister services are taking, you know, a page from our playbook.

So, I believe the Navy, for example, has started their own version of the Future Soldier Prep Course. Secretary Austin has regular conversations with the service chiefs and secretaries, and we are sharing our lessons learned and what is working for us, and what is not working in some cases.

Senator HIRONO. Well, when you noted that we can't continue to rely on the recruits coming from military families, over 80 percent, and that the value of service, it needs to be something that all of us talk about and express our support for.

Civic education is, I would say, very much a part of all of this, and as you are recruiting, I assume that you are recruiting from a diverse population. So, frankly, diversity, equity, inclusion, those are important aspects of what I consider to be the military's approach to how they are going to—how you are going to successfully recruit even as we are facing challenges to exposing our military people to DEI.

So, I am among those who are very much support of the DOD's efforts to expand populations who are underrepresented I would say. One more thing, I am focused very much on the need for repairing our frankly crumbling infrastructure in the military. The

Indo-Pacific region, U.S. Army Pacific estimates the total cost of repair of all of their facilities runs in the billions.

While I am encouraged to see the Army's overall budget for military construction has increased by \$1 billion this year, there is still obviously a lot of more work we have to do. So, what is the Army's long term plan to replace our—and repair our crumbling infrastructure in Hawaii and the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary WORMUTH. Very briefly, Senator, we have \$200 billion a year in this year's budget request for infrastructure, specifically in Hawaii. As you noted, that is a down payment, I would say, and the—you know, the Army has an enormous inventory of infrastructure worldwide.

So, we don't have the resources to tackle everything everywhere, all at once, and we use our facilities investment planning process every year to try to help us prioritize, and that is a 15 year plan. But we are—we do have a focus on infrastructure in Hawaii.

Senator HIRONO. Well, one of the things that I notice is that although—

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Oh, I am sorry. I will send some questions for the record.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, General George and Secretary Wormuth, for being here today. I do appreciate your leadership and your dedication in maintaining the readiness of our great United States Army.

We know we are in a very tough security environment, so thank you both for being here. General George, I will start with you, and it is going right back to Iowa. As you know, the Iowa Army ammunition plant means a lot to our Iowans, and we are proud of the men and women who served there daily.

They continue to indirectly support our efforts alongside those of our allies and partners all around the globe, including Ukraine and Israel. As we recently discussed, the Army introduced a significant modernization plan to the facility in Middletown, Iowa.

How confident are you that these initiatives will adequately meet the Army's and our future needs, and serve as a foundational step in and harnessing our domestic industrial base from Iowa?

General GEORGE. Senator, I think if there is a silver lining in all the—what has been happening in the world, is that we have realized that we need to improve our organic industrial base, and we are moving out on that. I have been to the Iowa ammunition plant. We are going to—it is planned to invest \$280 million to modernize.

It is a good example of what we need to do, and I was recently down in Radford. The same thing. You can modernize, have the same workforce, but you can greatly expand your production, which is what we need to be able to do. We are really proud of our OIB workforce everywhere we go. They are just so patriotic, and those communities are so patriotic, and we need them.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely, and it is, for those that might be watching or catching this later on, the Iowa Army ammunition plant produces the 155 munitions that are so talked about through

the news today. General George, I would like to focus on commercial technology as well.

So, we just recently saw the cancellation of the FARA program, our future attack reconnaissance aircraft, and that came as a big surprise to a lot of folks. But the lessons that we are learning in Ukraine are really demonstrating the significance of embracing a much lighter, more agile, and cost effective aerial reconnaissance solution.

Again, for perspective, what we are seeing in Ukraine with smaller unmanned drones, it makes sense. This is one of those times that I know we have spent a couple billion dollars on this program, but I would rather see it stop right there if it is not going to meet the needs of tomorrow.

So, General George, can you describe innovative ways that Army partners with the commercial sector to field and leverage commercial technology, technology that will work for us tomorrow?

General GEORGE. Senator, there is a lot of examples, and I think what we are seeing in the world today is that there is a lot of areas where commercial tech is outpacing what we are doing in the military. You look at unmanned systems and Amazon, Home Depot, people that are building these things. The network is another example and—of how we can do with transport and satellites.

So, we are trying to embrace all of that, and I think the biggest changes that we are doing are with our network, what we are doing to reduce the systems that we have, make sure that we are more mobile, more low signature, and we are doing that with a lot of commercial off the shelf capabilities, because you can now have a tablet with apps and software. It is also cheaper than to update that. Unmanned systems is another one that we are doing.

I think we are getting to the point because other people are out there, you can also 3D print. So, we want modular open systems, architecture systems that we can adjust sensors with. A lot of that is happening, you know, the actual—or the UAS commercial technology is moving very rapidly on that. So, I think we can learn a lot from that and pull that into our formation.

Senator ERNST. Right. I appreciate that, and I think it is important that we take a look at the constrained budgetary environment that we operate in today and try and do more with what already exists out there.

We are seeing this in many instances with the constrained budgetary environments that we see in Ukraine, in Israel, and other places around the world. So, I am running out of time, but Secretary Wormuth too, I really appreciate you asking all of these great folks to be a voice as well.

There are a lot of really incredible young men and women that are out there. We need to be able to reach them and encourage them into service. But thank you both very much for your service, and I appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to start with three data points, \$10,000, \$4.3 million, and \$12. \$10,000 is the high end estimate of the cost of the drones that Iran and the Houthis are using. \$4.3 million is the cost of one SM-6 missile—

\$4 million for the Patriot. \$12 is the cost of a directed energy shot that can take down one of these drones.

Yet, the entire Defense Department has cut its directed energy budget in this budget. The Army has cut its directed energy budget in this budget. Every agency and department in the Department of Defense has cut its directed energy budget in this budget. What in the hell are you people thinking?

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator King, as we talked about, we are pursuing directed energy—

Senator KING. Why the budget cut?

Secretary WORMUTH. I will have to look at the specifics of whether we have made cuts. I know you know, we have shifted money from RDT&E into procurement because in many cases a lot of our systems are coming online now.

So, we are not—this year's budget doesn't show as much in RDT&E, but we are—our four prototypes for our directed energy M-SHORAD system are out in CENTCOM right now. General Kurilla is testing them in that environment for exactly the reasons that you allude to. You know, they have a lot of promise in terms of being much more cost effective—

Senator KING. We are shooting down \$10,000 drones with \$4 million missiles. They can drain our bank account on that ratio in not too long. The same thing with—in Israel. I mean, three of the conflicts we are observing right now are—indirectly engaged in, Ukraine, Iran, and the Houthis are all about air defense.

Yet I just can't understand the Defense Department not having its hair on fire about directed energy, and since 2023, the directed energy budget has declined Department wide. I appreciate that you are testing some of these units, but this ought to be one of the highest, most urgent priorities, both in terms of cost but also in terms of effectiveness.

General, would you be able to effectively use directed energy if it were available to take down some of these aerial attack vehicles?

General GEORGE. I think what we are looking at, Senator, is a lot of different options to include high powered microwave lasers. I mean, we are looking at—it is going to be a layered defense of what we are doing.

As the Secretary mentioned, we have put the prototypes that we have—we are sending everything that we have available over to the Middle East and testing it in those kind of environments. We are still working through, I will tell you, you know, some of this stuff on the directed energy—

Senator KING. Unfortunately, there is a naval facility called Helios and that is being tested off of San Diego instead of in the Red Sea. I just don't understand why this isn't a higher priority.

Budgets are policy, and if the budget for directed energy in the Department has gone down substantially over the last four or 5 years, that is an indication of a policy that I just don't understand.

Let me move on to a couple of other topics, more specific. I hope that you will continue research on the effects of blasts on your people. We had a tragedy in Lewiston, Maine last year, and it turns out that the fellow was a munitions test instructor. He experienced blast after blast after blast.

Analysis of his brain indicates that it was severely damaged. So, please attend to that risk because it is now clearly contributing to the tragedy that we had, but also suicide, and long term damage to our soldiers.

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator, I would say, a couple of things on that. One, starting this June, we will be doing a cognitive assessment on every new soldier coming into basic training so that we set—

Senator KING. You have baseline.

Secretary WORMUTH. To set a baseline, exactly, to what—you know, to where they are before they start getting exposed as they go do training—

Senator KING. High school football teams have been doing that for years, by the way. It is nice that we are—

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we are going to start doing it this June, again, every single new soldier. We are also looking at what additional personal protective equipment we can provide to our folks, especially instructors and others who are routinely exposed to blast pressure.

We are also looking into wearable gauges that would allow us to continuously track what soldiers are being exposed to. The challenge we have had to date is we haven't been able to find sufficiently ruggedized gauges, so we need to do some more work on that. But I—

Senator KING. If the gauges can't stand the blast, what does that say about the soldier's brain?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, it is more that the gauges, as I understand it, you know, didn't do very well in sort of field environments. But I know, Special Operations Command has some wearable gauges on their UPL list, and I think we will be looking at sort of what they are hoping to invest in. But we are very attentive to the brain induced injury issues.

Senator KING. I am very delighted to hear that. Thank you very much and keep up that emphasis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thanks both of you for your service. I am worried more about our people.

You know, I came from a team oriented background, and we are going to have the weapons. We are borrowing \$80,000 a second right now to pay for all those weapons, so I don't know what our kids are going to have to do in the future, but we need to protect us, our country, and our allies.

But I am very concerned about the people that are within our military. I have had a chance to go to bases all over—in country and out of country, all over the world and I try to ask for kind of a group session with officers and noncommissioned officers and talk to them. A lot of good things.

A lot of things that are not so good. A lot of them concerned in the last few years about some of their fellow servicemembers that didn't make the cut because they didn't take the vaccine.

Secretary Wormuth, we lost 1,861 servicemembers and 200 people that basically were mechanics in the military. Did we have a

backup plan for that, especially for the mechanics that we lost, going—you know, that we very desperately need in times like this?

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator, I think, you know, again, one way we try to deal with shortfalls in any particular MOS is to increase our recruiting in that area. You know, obviously, none of us anticipated the pandemic.

None of us anticipated many of the different effects. But the percentage of soldiers who were released from the Army because they didn't take the COVID vaccine was very, very small out of our formation.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Well, 2,000 people is a lot of people, as we look at it today in recruiting, and I think it is important. We need to look at our shortfalls when it comes to that. Also talk to a lot of our servicemembers that are out of the military as we speak, a lot of special ops, a lot of rangers.

A lot of them are very disgruntled about the things that they were being taught at the end of their service, DEI. If I had to use DEI when I was coaching, I would have been fired a long time ago. I don't think you can run a military off of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I think you do it with the best, the meanest, the people that are—that we need to train to fight to defend this country. What is your thoughts on that, General George?

General GEORGE. Senator, I would—

Senator TUBERVILLE. Be honest about this now.

General GEORGE. Yes—

Senator TUBERVILLE. We are in trouble.

Secretary WORMUTH. I will tell you, and you can ask any of the formation we go out and I am talking to them, we are focused on building warfighting, you know, increasing lethality in our units and building cohesive teams.

So, as you know from being a coach, when you are bringing everybody together too, you also bring—you got we got people coming from all over the country. So, I have been, you know, talking and talking about building cohesive teams since I was a brand new private, when I was instructed on that coming right out, all the way of being a leader.

So, I think that those are the two things that we are focused on. It is obviously different in every form—you know, in different formations that I have been in different levels, but that is what we need to be focused on.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, and you are finding out that it is hard to bring people from different backgrounds, put them together to make them mesh as a unit, as a team, and their lives are at stake. It is not a football player, you know, playing to win or lose a game. It is, you know, their loss in the military is losing their life.

I just want to make sure we—you know, we live in a dangerous world, as we all know. I think that I would love to be giving you all this \$100 billion that we are getting ready to send overseas to our military, to the people—to try to get more people in the military.

I think we need to look more at us than we do at other people. I can understand why we are doing this, but I think we are going

to have shortfalls in the long run when it comes to that. General, are we taking illegals into our military—in the Army?

General GEORGE. You know, I think what we are taking in—you have to be a legally—legal permanent resident or a resident of our country to enlist in the Army, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do you know, Ms. Secretary? Are we taking illegals—in the Army?

Secretary WORMUTH. As the chief said, you have to be a lawful permanent resident or a resident of the United States to join the military.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Resident or a citizen?

Secretary WORMUTH. Lawful permanent—you know, I am not the State Department, but lawful permanent resident, I think is an immigration status that is not full citizenship, but it is certainly not an undocumented person.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Well, I would just hope that we would take people that love this country. I know there is probably a lot of people come across the border that is going to end up loving our country. I can understand that.

But, you know, having people that really understand, you know, what that flag means is pretty important in our military. So, I would hope that we would really consider the options, you know, if it came down to that. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you, both.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses. General George, I appreciate our visit to Radford a couple weeks back, looking at that World War II era old facility, but cutting edge work is being done there.

You spoke with Senator Ernst a bit about this but talk about the need to increase our capacity to produce munitions. General Cavoli was here the other day and was talking about the European nations upping their production capacity.

But talk about what we are doing in the Army to increase munition production.

General GEORGE. Senator, same as in Iowa. What we are, you know, down the patriots that are down there in Radford.

For example, what it does down there just with energetics and explosives is critical not only just to the Army, but really the Joint Force. So that all of our base, organic industrial depots and arsenals are critically important.

It is important—a lot of what is in the supplemental is actually going to go back to improving those facilities, which we need to do. So, we are investing in our own base. I think we have \$640 million that is in there to get after projects.

I know there is one down at Radford, but we have to modernize those, and we are starting to do a little bit of that at Radford, but we got more work to do.

Senator KAINE. You raise a good point. The supplemental isn't just about overseas support. About \$130 million in the supplemental is going to Radford for munitions production, and there are similar investments being made at munitions facilities around the country.

I do want to start by recognizing the men and women of the 7th Transportation Brigade at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia. They are on their way to answering the call and deploying into the Mediterranean in support of the humanitarian aid efforts on the pier construction in the Eastern Mediterranean, and I just wanted to mention them.

Future Soldier, I want to ask you, Secretary Wormuth and we have talked about this before. Share a little bit more about this program. As I understand it, and you really are, the Army is leading in this way, taking folks who want to be in the military but who may not meet some of the physical criteria.

But you are doing good work in designing this pre-course that enables somebody to meet the physical criteria to enter the Army. What are you finding out about their ability to not just meet, but then sustain the physical capacity as they have enlisted?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thanks, Senator Kaine. Yes, there is—first, there is two tracks in the Future Soldier Prep Course. There is an academic track for young people who haven't quite scored high enough on the test that we use, and then there is a physical track if you are not quite within the body fat standards.

So, young people can take one or the other. We now have expanded it, and they can take them in parallel. We have graduated, I think, almost 18,000 young people out of this program. It is like a 95 percent success rate. They often are going into basic training and taking on sort of leadership roles in basic training.

So, it has been very, very successful so far. We are doing a longitudinal study to follow graduates from the prep course, you know, as they go to their first duty station and have their first set of assignments to see how they perform.

But right now, it has been a very good program at both Fort Jackson and Fort Moore.

Senator KAINE. Excellent. We had a hearing about a year ago sticking on the recruiting, and the Army had done a really good survey of reasons people will join or not. One of the things that surprised me was the sort of top listed reason why someone might not join the military is the fear of falling behind their peers.

There is sort of an attitude of, look, I am an 18 year old, I have got some friends maybe going off to college or others that may be starting careers. I would like to serve my country. I see that it has a patriotic advantage, but I worry that 5 or 10 years down the road when I exit the military, or 20 years down the road, my peers will have moved farther ahead, and I won't.

So, making the case to young people that a military career isn't a cul de sac or detour from life success, but it enhances possible future careers, seems to be really, really important. As you are approaching retooling, recruiting, how are you kind of factoring that in?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, one of the things we are trying to do is really get the word out in part through our marketing about, you know, how that is basically a myth that you are going to be left behind.

I mean, we have the GI Bill. We have certification programs so that soldiers can earn, you know, certificates that are marketable when they leave. What we have really tried to do is to have some

of our marketing efforts really focus on that and kind of getting that information out there, and that is obviously something that we make sure that our recruiters are well versed in so they can talk to young people, and frankly, their parents and other important influencers about all of the benefits to joining the Army.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Kaine. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Wormuth, General George, thank you for being with us today. We appreciate your service to our country.

Secretary Wormuth, the Army will play a pivotal role in the Western Pacific as the Department lead for the contested logistics problem set. Congress has been providing bipartisan support and funding for Project PELE Micro Nuclear Reactor.

Does the Army have any plans to transition the PELE technology and regulatory approach for either operational or installation energy resiliency solutions?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we certainly are very focused on energy and resilience at our installations and being able to operate in a more resilient manner.

We are interested, I think, in the potential of micro nuclear reactors, and I am familiar with the Project PELE project. I think, you know, we are looking at and I think we will soon be entering into some discussions, some informational discussions with industry to learn more about what might be possible.

Because certainly, to the extent that we are able to have a reliable source of energy, if we have—you know, if the electric grid in many of our communities goes down for some reason, it certainly would be appealing to have something that is dependable and reliable.

So, we are interested in exploring that, but I would say we are still in the early stages.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. General George, can you describe for the Committee how the fiscal year 2025 budget request takes into consideration the Army's lead role in addressing the contested logistics problem for the Department and the Joint Force's sustainment needs?

I am thinking particularly with regard to the year 2027. I would like your professional military opinion. Do you see—do you believe that the Army will be able to fulfill its role and meet those requirements?

General GEORGE. Senator, I do. Obviously, this is something that we are working on very diligently. We are increasing—we just stood up a watercraft company, for example, over in Japan throughout this next TAA, Total Army Analysis.

We are looking at two additional. We are investing in the LSV, you know, some of the same capability that is getting ready to go over—that is out in the Mediterranean right now. I will say that this is a joint mission that we are—you know that we are getting after with that, just like we are doing that mission. We have rehearsed those.

So that is I think the other thing that we have to do. We have—in this next budget, 200 percent increase in our exercising, obvi-

ously testing, doing all these things. Through exercises is where we learn. We are going to be also doing it with partners and allies. Then we are also taking a look at overall what we need to do with, for example, on watercraft, what can unmanned systems provide? What can we do with leasing?

Pre-positioned stocks is a part of this. So, I think we are looking at this holistically. We have stood up here this—just this last fall, a contested logistics cross-functional team that is really focused on that for the whole Army.

Senator ROUNDS. How about with regard to the different nations involved in the status of forces agreements and so forth, are those coming together?

General GEORGE. Are you talking, Senator, like where we would maybe station something or what our forward posture would be?

Senator ROUNDS. Yes, and I am curious whether the—with regard to the agreements themselves and so forth. The Army takes a role, but does the State Department participate in those discussions as well?

General GEORGE. Obviously that would—a lot of that is going to be led by the Ambassador, by the State Department. It is going to happen across the interagency, and I think, you know, a good example of, you know, a great partnership that we have right now is what—you know, how we have expanded with the Philippines or what we have continue to do with those partners, but—

Senator ROUNDS. Those particular agreements and so forth are in line for being able to meet the needs by the year 2027.

General GEORGE. Obviously that is our focus, is moving out quickly in all of those. I think that is—I know it is a Department led and INDOPACOM, and—but really it is the whole interagency, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Very good. Thank you. Secretary Wormuth, the Army established the Joint Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office back in 2019 to coordinate counter UAS development across the force.

The top two items on your unfunded priorities list are the counter UAS items. Now, Senator King makes a really good point when he talks about the costs involved. Can you share any information about the JCO's role in General Brown's Counter UAS Task Force?

Secretary WORMUTH. Sure. First of all, I want to say, you know, since 2020, the Army's invested about \$3 billion in counter UAS. So, we are very focused on that. We have spent more than any other service. The Joint Capabilities Office is really—their job is to go out for the whole Department and work with industry to kind of bring forward what is possible so that we can start investing in sort of the best available technology, and then each service decides what they want to buy. But it is playing a key role. We are also standing up a joint counter UAS University at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, again to help us learn, and I would let the chief speak to sort of the UASs that are on his unfunded priority list.

General GEORGE. Yes, Senator. So, what we did—again, I mentioned up front on the unfunded priorities list, it is stuff that is executable, and specific to the counter UAS, it is what we have

seen change since October 7th, last fall, and, you know, we have had some advancements in some of that.

We know that that environment and those systems are changing very rapidly. So, there was one system on there specifically that we wanted—was Roadrunner. We want to—there is additional missiles that we need, like Coyote missiles that we know are very, very effective, but we need to increase our magazine depth. So those are the kinds of things that were on there.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. So, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our military families sacrifice a lot to serve their country and to keep Americans safe. One thing they shouldn't have to worry about is whether they are going to have a safe and affordable place to live. We provide basic housing allowance and other assistance to make sure that military families have what they need, but often that is just not enough.

For example, the Commander at Fort Carson in Colorado has 26,000 people working on post, but he is able to offer only 3,100 family housing units. What is available off base is often very expensive or requires a very long commute to get there, all because we simply don't have enough housing for our people.

So, Secretary Wormuth, you oversee everything for the Army, from personnel to equipment. Do you think that meeting military families' housing needs is important both for recruiting and retaining a strong military?

Secretary WORMUTH. Absolutely. It is very important.

Senator WARREN. Okay, I agree with you, and that is why Congress created the Defense Community Infrastructure Program to help communities address, and I am going to read, deficiencies in community infrastructure supportive of a military installation.

Now, DCIP provides grants to local governments for transportation, building, and other infrastructure projects. Secretary Wormuth, would you support using this program to build more housing in communities near bases in order to help us continue, excuse me, to attract the best and brightest to serve in our military?

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator Warren, this is a program that is run by OSD, and like you said, it is Generally grants to community. So, I know we do use it for things like assessments of utilities and things like that in partnership with communities where we have our installations.

You know, I think additional authority for housing is always helpful. The real challenge, though, with housing is money. You know, at the end of the day—

Senator WARREN. I understand that. But you don't get what you don't ask for here. So, let's start with the idea of recognizing we are in a housing crisis, and making this a priority in terms of getting funding in for housing for our military, does that work for you?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, and we are certainly trying to find—you know, for example, with our privatized housing partners, we are trying to find more ways to help get money into that portfolio.

Senator WARREN. Okay. I am coming to them. Let me mention one other problem here. I have concerns about the safety of the housing we provide to servicemembers and their families.

Now, Congress recently adopted reforms to address housing deficiencies, including requiring the DOD to create a public complaint data base to put a stop to Government contractors acting like slumlords and then hiding settlements when they get caught. I got that bill passed 5 years ago, 5 years, and today DOD still does not have that data base up and operational.

Even worse, these Government contractors continue to muzzle military families by requiring them to sign nondisclosure agreements. So, there is no record of the mold, or the broken windows, or the water damage, or the rats, or any other unsafe housing conditions that military families are forced to put up with.

Secretary Wormuth, do you think it is appropriate for Government contractors to ask military families to stay silent in return for those companies meeting their basic obligations to provide safe housing?

Secretary WORMUTH. We encourage our soldiers and their families to use the dispute resolution process to the max——

Senator WARREN. Yes, but the part I am worried about are the nondisclosure agreements that come out of that, the NDAs.

Secretary WORMUTH. What I would say about that, Senator, is I think, you know, we appreciate the provision that you put in that basically requires that their soldiers have 10 days before they are even asked to sign an NDA.

What we do is offer a lawyer that the Army will pay for to advise our soldiers and family members of their rights before they contemplate signing an NDA.

Senator WARREN. I appreciate that that is better than it used to be, but it is not as good as it ought to be.

Last year's NDAA put in restrictions on the use of non-disclosure agreements. I just think we are going to have to set a much brighter line. No landlord should be able to make military families sign NDAs in exchange for providing basic housing, period. No NDAs on that. Before I close, I want to say one other thing and I will just say it quickly, and that is to you, General George.

There is a significant disconnect between Army rhetoric and action. When you were confirmed, you told this Committee, "I will make every effort to honor our commitment by providing quality barracks to our soldiers."

Sounded great. But on your unfunded priorities list, the list of things that you were not willing to fight for funding in your basic budget, right near the bottom of your unfunded priorities list is money to repair the barracks in Fort Devens, Massachusetts. You can't stand up and say you care about housing your people and then not make housing repairs a part of your base budget.

There is no surprise here. It was deteriorating and deteriorating over a long period of time. So, I want to work with the Army on this. I know I am over time, but we got to stop playing games on this and follow through. We have to deliver better housing for our people. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Budd, please.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you both for being here. Secretary Wormuth, I sent you a letter regarding the Joint Deployment Warfighting Complex at Fort Liberty.

You sent me a prompt response, so thank you for that. It was really about consolidating the 18th Airborne Corps headquarters into a single modern building.

The 18th Airborne Corps, it is spread out over 26 facilities, some 40 acres, and it really wasn't designed to support the headquarters' current mission to rapidly respond to contingencies around the world, particularly not with the IT systems and cyber resiliency requirements that we have today.

So, I understand this project, it is slated to reach 35 percent planning and design over the next 6 months. So, my question to you is, will you commit to keeping this Committee updated on this project's timeline?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, certainly, Senator Budd.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, and I understand it is going to compete with other Army requirements, but this is a top priority not just to North Carolina and to Fort Liberty, but from an operational and readiness perspective for the whole of Army.

So, if you would, please. Thank you. General George, again, thank you for being here. I appreciated our discussion earlier in the week. The Army has selected Fort Liberty as home of its 5th Multi-Domain Task Force. Is that correct, sir?

General GEORGE. That is correct, Senator. Yes.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. Can you elaborate on the capabilities of these multi-domain task forces and where we are in building these out?

General GEORGE. Yes. So, we are at various stages. Right now, I was actually the Commander up at the JBLM and we had the first MDTF.

So, what—and the big piece that will go in and that we will build, and I think will be important for 18th Airborne Corps, the 82d, really everybody that is there, is the effects battalion that will go in that will have the cyber, space, EW. So, all lethal targeting and non-lethal that is part of that, which I think is critically important.

Also, part of MDTFs, and we are stationing these in different areas, but there is also long range fires, indirect fire protection capabilities, and support battalion. Liberty is really important to us. Obviously, what you were just talking about with what it does to support the Joint Force and rapid response.

Looking—so having that capability there, in the space that you have, and we also get some economies of scale with all of the—given it is a large base with all the other MLs that we are going to put there.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. You know, on a different topic, we have talked a lot about counter UAS. So, to add on to that, clarify for me, is it purely additional resources that you need, General, or are there new authorities there that would be helpful? I know we talked a little bit about this on Monday.

General GEORGE. I think—well, there is two aspects of this. For some of the authorities, for us specifically, is being able to, you

know, go from research and development to actually procuring things, what I was talking about.

I think if you are coming back stateside and you are looking at actually defending airfields and critical infrastructure, there are some additional things. I think NORTHCOM right now is doing a study kind of on what that is, because there is obviously—it is an interagency challenge when you are looking at, you know, small UASs that are operating here stateside.

But for us and forward, I think we are in a good place.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. You know, North Carolina is also proud home of the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, and I am aware of planned upgrades to their Abrams tanks, but also I am interested in whether we will see a replacement for Bradley infantry fighting vehicles. What is the status of the XM-30 program?

General GEORGE. I have had—we just went through the, you know, the requirement and go into this. It is—we do need to upgrade our infantry fighting vehicle. We are going through the process of that. I do think that that will be a significant leap forward for us, and I will have somebody come over and kind of brief you the detailed timeline on what we are looking at that.

Senator BUDD. If you would, please. Thank you. Madam Secretary, I would like to talk about munitions that are going to be critical in the conflict in the Indo-Pacific. I am thinking the precision strike missiles and guided MLRS rockets. My first question is, have you identified any production lines that have additional capacity? If so, which ones?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we do—you know, we are using multiyear procurement authority that you all gave us for GMLRS. So, I think there is more capacity there. Precision strike missile, we have funding in this year's budget for sort of the first wave of precision strike missile. I think at this point we don't have additional capacity. We are still sort of—that program is still in the beginning of its effort.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Wormuth, I want to followup on Senator Budd's question about munitions.

But, you know, really, you know, concerns we have with our defense industrial base and, you know, industry struggling to produce enough to support even the limited conflict in Ukraine. In a conflict with a near our adversary, we will use munitions much faster than we are having to replace the ones we are sending to Ukraine today. That is clear.

It is also clear that more needs to be done to prepare our industrial base for possible future conflict. One of the keys to bridging this gap is what Senator Budd mentioned, which is the multiyear procurement, which allows DOD to send a steady demand signal to companies and leads to long term reductions in acquisition costs.

The Army has been taking advantage of multi-year procurement to help replenish stockpiles and ensure that we are well postured for future conflicts. So, Secretary Wormuth, can you talk about—a little bit more broadly about multi-year contracts and how the Army is currently taking advantage of them to save money and in-

vest in the future? General, please feel free to add anything to her comments.

Secretary WORMUTH. Certainly. Thanks, Senator Kelly. We have found the multi-year procurement authority to be very helpful for exactly the reason that you said, which is essentially that it sends a very strong demand signal to industry that there is a consistent need for that investment, and they are more willing, frankly, to invest in their own facilitation when they have essentially a guaranteed buy, you know, over multiple years. So, I think that has been very helpful with both GMLRS and the Pac-3s.

Senator KELLY. What else are we buying in multiyear procurements?

Secretary WORMUTH. Right now, if I am not mistaken, I think those are the two sets of munitions for which we are using the multiyear. You know, we are spending over \$3 billion a year on munitions more broadly, but I think those are the two that we have multiyear authority—

Senator KELLY. Do you plan on expanding that to other munitions?

Secretary WORMUTH. I think we have been in conversations at the staff level about a couple more places where that might be applicable.

If I am not mistaken, I think we have to demonstrate, you know, a certain amount of cost savings. There is a threshold that one has to meet to be able to get multiyear procurement authority. So, I think that is kind of where the conversation has been with some of the professional staff.

Senator KELLY. Then General, do you see our stocks going up at a higher rate than you would have expected without a multiyear on those two items?

General GEORGE. I think, Senator, the multi-years are definitely very helpful to us, and we appreciate it. I think one of the challenges, and I will just go back to the—you know, during the continuing resolution, if we wanted to increase any, you know, new productions, new starts, we couldn't do—you know, we couldn't do any of that.

So, we lost time with that. It is why also for the Army, the supplemental is very important to them because we have got, you know, more than \$3 billion worth of, of munitions we need to put in there. So, I think it is a combination of all of those things that are going to help us move forward.

Senator KELLY. Then, General, another subject. The Army is working to modernize its airborne ISR capability, divesting in older turboprop planes and investing in more, you know, some more modern aircraft.

The new HADES system is going to be a significant increase in range and capability. It is vital that this new capability is based at a location where the aircrew can train for any threat environment that is similar to what they would face in combat. The new signals intelligence capabilities will require that your pilots have regular access to ranges that can simulate the threat they will face in combat.

So, General, do you agree that access to electronic testing ranges will be vital to ensure that the continued—ensure the continued development and success of HADES?

General GEORGE. Yes, I agree with you 100 percent, Senator. I was down—I mean, the John R. Fox Range is one of those that has incredible capability for us, for the whole Army.

Senator KELLY. The, you know, Fort Huachuca in Southern Arizona. I mean, it is uniquely positioned to support this mission. It already does RC-12 training. It has got the electronic range, the electronic proving ground.

You don't need to go very far to train because it is right there. You know, it is not like, you know, other bases that I have been at. You have to, you know, make up a pretty long trek to the range. I just want to get your assurances from both you and the Secretary that the Army will consider these factors when deciding basing operations for HADES.

General GEORGE. We will definitely consider all of those, and just on the HADES, it is from all of the COCOMS are very positive about having that asset supporting them.

Senator KELLY. Okay. Secretary.

Secretary WORMUTH. Same.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Sergeant Kelly. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. Secretary Wormuth, I want to return to the line of questioning earlier about recruiting. You have said that you don't want to be overconfident, but you think we have a good shot at making that goal this year, the goal being 55,000.

But isn't it the case that you dropped your goal this year because not many people are joining the Army since you joined, or since you became the Secretary?

Secretary WORMUTH. It is true that our goal last year, Senator Cotton, was 65,000. General McConville and I set that as a stretch goal. That is how we characterized it. So, this year, between 55,000 new contracts and 5,000 in the DEP, it is 60,000.

Senator COTTON. Last year, you forecasted that you would need 62,600 for this year. Why did you cut that?

Secretary WORMUTH. Again, we look at what is possible, and we set a goal that we think is both——

Senator COTTON. Do you look at what is possible or what is needed?

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we—General George and I——

Senator COTTON. Possible is pretty low since you became the Secretary——

Secretary WORMUTH. Actually——

Senator COTTON. The question was needed for our Army to defend our Nation.

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator Cotton, the chief and I are both committed to growing back our end strength. We are aiming to get up to 470,000 by 2029, and our recruiting is improving, consistently.

Senator COTTON. Well, if it is improving because you are throwing a dart at the wall and then drawing the bullseye around it. In

your first full year on the job, the target was 60,000. You didn't even get 45,000.

Last year it was 65,000. You got 55,000. You had projected last year for it to be 62,600 this year, and conveniently, you decided to change the goal to 55,000, which is exactly what you got last year.

You don't think that is a little suspicious that you are simply trying to avoid negative headlines once again for your failure to meet basic recruiting goals, goals that we have met almost every single year since 2005?

Secretary WORMUTH. I am not focused on headlines, Senator Cotton. What I am doing is doing everything possible to help the Army improve its recruiting, and that is what we are doing.

Senator COTTON. Does the Army need 7,600 fewer soldiers than you expected this year, and than you expected it would need last year?

Secretary WORMUTH. The Army has been able to meet all of the requirements that the Combatant Commands have levied on us at our current end strength, and our end strength is going to start going up.

Senator COTTON. What are the requirements that have changed in the last year from those Combatant Commands that allowed you to drop your goal, not just from the 65,000 it was last year to 55,000 this year, but from the 62,600 that you predicted last year that you would need this year. What requirements have decreased on the Army's—?

Secretary WORMUTH. The requirements haven't changed, and we were able to—

Senator COTTON. You would think so since the world is going up in smoke because of Joe Biden's failed policies.

Secretary WORMUTH. Were able to meet all of the Combatant Command requirements last year. We have been able to meet them this year. But we are still focused on growing our end strength.

Senator COTTON. I mean, we met our recruiting goals at the height of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. You can't meet your recruiting goals now without dropping them by 10,000 from what they were last year?

Secretary WORMUTH. All of the services are facing challenges, but I am proud to say we have—

Senator COTTON. Your service is acute—the challenges of your service are acute.

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, we because we have the biggest force, and we have to recruit the largest number. But we are doing considerably better this year.

Senator COTTON. I am looking at every single year here, 62,500, 68,500, 76,500, 68,000, 61,200. This is not a systemic problem until you became the Secretary.

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator Cotton, I don't think that there is a correlation between me becoming Secretary and the recruiting headwinds that the entire Department has been facing.

Senator COTTON. Okay, I want to touch on another recruiting matter, or I guess a force strength matter. I noticed a story in Stars and Stripes from January that there is a shortage of about 250 officers in adjutant General, finance, and signal corps, and the

Army was going to ask infantry and armor officers to transfer. Has that happened?

Secretary WORMUTH. I will have to take that for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Secretary WORMUTH. For year group 2021, the Army identified it would be over-strength in IN and AR officers at the rank of Captain. Rather than losing talented officers, U.S. Army Human Resources Command hosted a volunteer Officer Requirements Rebranching Program (ORRP) that allowed all YG21 IN & AR officers the opportunity to volunteer to branch transfer from their basic branch to either AG, FC, or SC by submitting their preferences for these branches within a special officer market. No officers were forced to transfer from combat arms as part of this process.

Senator COTTON. General George, do you know any more details?

General GEORGE. Yes, I can—yes, typically, as you know, Senator, we typically have more combat arms, lieutenants—

Senator COTTON. So that is—

General GEORGE. Typically, we do VTIP. This was a done a little bit earlier that we knew because of our structure. We are actually growing some additional MDTF, which came up earlier. Signal is, for example, is one of them or MI, where you typically have more captains and majors than you do lieutenants.

So that was what that was, and what we did is took volunteers. We just put the message out, because we want to keep talent, and it is actually really good for us to infuse those branches with people that have experience in the combat arms.

Senator COTTON. Yes, normally things like signal and AG are our donor branches at the lieutenant ranks to infantry. But it is infantry officer ranks, whatever the Army as whole. Infantry, armor officer ranks are healthy right now at the company level?

General GEORGE. We are very healthy for lieutenants, Senator. We are doing well on that.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Thank you. One final issue, Secretary Wormuth, the Caisson Platoon. The Army just acknowledged that they are not on track to get Caisson operations back up at Arlington National Cemetery.

This has been an ongoing issue now for more than a year. We directed you in the NDAA to make sure the Caisson Platoon remains in existence. You fought that tooth and nail last year. What is the issue here? It is horses pulling wagons.

It has been happening since before recorded time. Why can't these families who have a right to a horse drawn case on their funeral expect that is going to happen?

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator Cotton, first of all, we didn't have any plans to get rid of the Caisson Platoon. We have actually spent a lot—

Senator COTTON. You fought my amendment tooth and nail about it, so I don't know what—I mean, I don't know if you have an animal rights activist from PETA on your staff handling this issue. But why can't you get horses pulling wagons in the cemetery?

Secretary WORMUTH. There is a range of challenges, and we can come and talk to you in detail.

Senator COTTON. Old guard did this for decades.

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, and the horses that did that for decades are now old and lame.

Senator COTTON. They have always been old. They have always been retired from other activities.

Secretary WORMUTH. Well, we are now trying to grow the herd. We have been focused on this incredibly hard. We are looking at additional pasture land. We are going to have to rebuild the stables that you probably remember. But we are very focused on trying to get to a point where we are able to offer, again, the Caisson service with the funerals.

Senator COTTON. If the Army under your leadership can't figure out horses pulling wagons, it is not a surprise they can't figure out increasing munitions manufacturing or drone warfare.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Wormuth, General George, welcome to the Committee and thank you both for your service to our country. In response to a question asked by Senator Budd, it seems clear that the Army knows that the future conflicts that we are going to face, we are going to require some new units, with example is the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces at the very center of those modernization efforts that you are undertaking now.

When forward positions, these MDTFs will ensure freedom of operations for U.S. forces in what are going to be heavily denied environments. As you stand up—so my question for both of you is, as you stand up additional MDTFs, I hope that the Army will pursue a similar force structure to the Security Force Assistant Brigades, SFABs.

Currently Active Duty SFABs are aligned with Combatant Commands, while a National Guard SFAB is globally aligned. So, my question specifically to both of you is, are you in conversations with the National Guard about a guard based MDTF, and if so, what additional analysis is going to be needed prior to making an informed decision on future MDTF force structure?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thank you, Senator Peters. Right now, our plan is to develop five multi-domain task forces, as I think you noted. We aren't currently thinking about yet having an MDTF in the Guard.

The MDTFs are very, very new. I think the first MDTF had come online right as I became Secretary, you know, more than three and a half years ago. We have—it has been a journey. We have been learning.

You know, right now we think the five is what we are going to need, but we are very much a total Army, and we are always in conversation with our colleagues in the Guard about, you know, changes to their force structure as well.

So, I think it is something that we will remain open minded to, but right now our plan is for the five in the Active.

Senator PETERS. So, there are no active discussions beyond that?

General GEORGE. Can I jump in?

Secretary WORMUTH. Sure.

General GEORGE. Yes, I would not—I think the Secretary exactly—you know larger MDTF just because of what we require. What we are—I have had some discussions, and I would say these

are initial discussions with a lot of the Guard leaders is there is a lot of space capabilities, cyber.

I mean, we get, you know, a lot of capability from that, not just for MDTFs, but in the Guard and Reserve, and COMPO 2 and COMPO 3. How do we maximize that capability? You know, how could we have plugs?

For example, when I went over to Afghanistan as a division commander, I took—there was a large number of National Guard folks that were—that built out our intel and targeting just because of their expertise. So that is what we are talking about.

I would just say that those have been preliminary conversations because we know we have capability in the Guard and the Reserve, how could they maybe augment some of this stuff that we are doing already.

Senator PETERS. Yes. Great, and that is important. A lot of these members of the Guard have extensive civilian experience and some very high level of skill sets that they can bring to their duties.

So, it is good to hear that that is happening. Secretary Wormuth, last week, the EPA issued Federal drinking water standards for six PFAS chemicals. These standards include PFAS chemicals previously used by the Army and National Guard in firefighting foams at many installations across the country, but one in particular that I am focused on is Camp Grayling in Michigan, where PFAS contaminated drinking water is a serious and real concern for the local community—something that folks around the country are dealing with right now.

So, my question for you, ma'am, is what is the Army's plan and timeline for conforming with these new EPA standards? When can impacted residents, in Grayling, Michigan in particular, expect to see some action to conform to these new EPA standards?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thanks, Senator Peters. Yes, I am broadly aware of the new standards that the EPA has set for PFAS. I think, you know, we have already been working closely with folks at Camp Grayling, which is a great training area, by the way, to work on eradicating PFAS at the previous levels.

I think what I would say is I would love to send our installations and our environment team over to talk to your office in detail about sort of how we will be approaching the new raised level and what the timelines associated with that will be.

But we want to continue to be proactive with you all about getting into compliance with the EPA standards.

Senator PETERS. Well, it is good. Could we arrange that meeting sooner rather than later?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes. Happy to do that.

Senator PETERS. Right. We appreciate that commitment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters. Senator Duckworth, please.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning to both of our witnesses. I am glad we are having a conversation about the role of the Guard and the Reserve, because I think they are an important part of our overall force.

Right now, as you have already acknowledged, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers have specific qualifications and spe-

cific skills that are highly needed. Yet those who have specific qualifications are only paid a fraction of what their Active Duty counterparts are paid in incentive pay, although they maintain the same skill sets.

I have consistently advocated for fixing this problem and passed legislation to address this incentive pay disparities several years ago, and we even updated it in last year's NDAA. Bottom line, you get the same two paratroopers who make their three jumps in a single day. The Active Duty one is going to get a full month's worth of incentive pay.

The guard or reservist will get 1/30th of that incentive pay for the same three jobs that they took. This is fundamentally unfair. Last year's update, Section 612 of Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, was meant to clarify Congress's intent that special and incentive pays should be paid equally to members of the Active and Reserve components.

If these pays are intended to encourage Reserve component servicemembers to maintain a skill or proficiency identical to that required of the member in the Active component, or to compensate the reservist for exposure to hazards or risk identified to hazards or risk faced by an Active Duty servicemember.

My update from last year requires the Service Secretaries to go back and review each type of special and incentive pay individually and certify that those pays that meet this criteria to be paid out to members of the Reserve component equally, if doing so will not hurt retention. It is starting to feel like I am being slow rolled.

We need to get these paid. I mean, these folks have earned it. They should get the same amount of pay as the Active Duty folks. The pilots who go out there and maintain their minimum flying hour requirements that are the same as Active Duty pilots should get a full month's worth of pay.

Those paratroopers, they should get a full month's worth of jump pay, just like the Active Duty troops do. Secretary Wormuth, do you commit to completing this review to ensure that servicemembers within the Army Reserve components are paid the same special and incentive pays as their Active Duty counterparts when they maintain the same critical skills or face the same risk. What is your timeline for doing so?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thanks, Senator Duckworth. Yes, we are working with RAND right now to basically help us develop a framework to be able to assess—you know, as you know very well, there are many different types of special pays and incentives, but there is also many different types of duty statuses for Guard and Reservists.

So, we have been working with RAND to come up essentially with a framework that is going to be a tool for us to be able determine which special pays and incentives may qualify for the full pay. I will have to take for the record the exact timeline when the RAND work will be completed, but I can assure you, we are not trying to slow roll.

[The information referred to follows:]

Secretary WORMUTH. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) anticipates the report in August 2025. Meanwhile, Office of the Secretary of Defense has formed a working group, with stakeholders from across the Depart-

ment, to develop a process for assessing special or incentive pays for Reserve component members without adversely affecting the regular component. OSD aims to conduct this work in parallel with the RAND study. As you know, 37 U.S.C 1001 states, "a Secretary of a military department may not prescribe a regulation under this title or any other law, relating to the pay and allowances of members of an Armed Force under that department, unless it has been approved under procedures prescribed by the Secretary of Defense."

Senator DUCKWORTH. All right. I will get back in touch with you in 90 days to get that timeline. Secretary Wormuth, in your opening statement, you communicated you would continue to prioritize the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific region is also a priority for me. As the Army continues its modernization efforts, I am ready and available to lend my support to ensure the Army's resource and postured for any future conflicts in the region.

In fact, along with Senator Sullivan we will be leading a CODEL to the Shangri-La dialogs that are coming up in just over a month. The Army would need to operate in a distributed but a connected manner for survivability, placing greater demands on enablers such as logistics, force protection, and command and control.

The Army's current backbone of its intra-theater lift in the Indo-Pacific, consists of Army watercraft systems like the LSV and the MSB. But I am concerned that the Army is not dedicating enough funding to these platforms in its fiscal year 2025 budget, which can only lead to a capacity gap in our intra-theater sealift.

Secretary Wormuth, how does the Army plan to fund and continue to modernize Army watercraft systems over the next few fiscal years?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thanks, Senator. As you noted, first of all, we have a composite watercraft company in Japan. I am actually going to get to see that in July myself. We have money in the budget for the MSB Lite version that I think will begin fielding, if I am not mistaken in fiscal year 2028.

We also have a requirement for a heavy version of that. As the chief alluded to earlier, we are exploring with Army Materiel Command, what we can do in terms of offshore supply, vessels, things that the commercial sector is using that may be more cost effective for us, because we do see the requirement for contested logistics as substantial.

But as is the case with many things, our challenge is having enough resources to be able to do that, but then also invest in air and missile defenses and other things that we need. But that is broadly the outlines of our plan.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I am all for buying off the shelf if it is cheaper and it could work, and it is to keep our troops safe and accomplish the mission. General George, I am going to pass it over to you.

Can you describe the Army's current capabilities for intra-theater sealift in Indo-Pacific? How is the Army working with other services, and Combatant Commands like TRANSCOM, to develop a unified intra-theater sealift strategy for the Indo-Pacific?

General GEORGE. Thank you, Senator. You kind of summed it up at the end there. These, you know, any time we are going to do anything out there, it is going to be a joint mission. We are going to have to work with everybody. Just, and I know the Secretary got

to see the JLOTS when it went in for Talisman Saber down in Australia.

So, we are looking at all the different aircraft or the watercraft, and we are looking at how the oil industry, for example, send stuff. They do a lot of unmanned systems and leasing. I also think this gets after also what are we doing with 3D print. It is the whole contested logistics.

How are we doing tele-maintenance, what do we have for pre-positioned stock, where we are doing it. Then the other thing I just wanted to highlight that you kind of set up front as far as being distributed. A big part of that too is making sure on our network that we are also low signature.

You know, this is important for all of us, and that will tie all of that together. Our contested logistics, CFT, we would love to have them come up and brief you, on what they are doing in advancing all of these areas, was stood up last fall, and they are getting after all of this.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, just one quick thing. I would like to submit for the record a question for—on aeromedical evacuation in the Indo-Pacific. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you. Senator Duckworth. Senator Schmitt, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General George, I do want to give you a shout out here. I think that looking for those new and innovative ways to recruit is sometimes a challenge but always welcomed.

I saw recently that the Army has entered into a partnership with the UFL, which is the new spring football league. I am a little biased here. The Saint Louis Battle Hawks have the highest by far and away, highest attendance numbers. They averaged 35,000 people at these games.

I think that is a smart way to reach a new audience. I think there is going to be a lot of opportunities there. Can you walk me through how this kind of came to be and what you expect from it?

General GEORGE. Sure, Senator. The—and I agree with you. We do think it will be a good audience. People love watching football. I am top of that list.

The part of this with the UFL that I like about the comparisons are these are a bunch of last year, I think there was 100 that came out of the UFL that went into the pros. I mean, what we need to get out to everybody, it is the same thing in the Army, you can come into the Army, and you can accelerate your life.

You are going to advance your life. So, they were interested in this partnership with us, and we studied it with our marketing agency, and we are in a 1-year, you know, agreement to see how this works.

But so far, it has been really good, and we have had troopers telling their stories at every one of these games across all campus. I am sure we have had soldiers out there on the sideline doing that, which I think is great.

Senator SCHMITT. That is good. Yes, maybe we will have to followup and get you the—a t shirt, the call is the law, which is the call is for the Battle Hawks. Anyway, all right. So, Secretary

Wormuth, I do want to ask you a question. You know, I enjoyed our visit at Fort Leonard Wood.

I guess it was around a year ago. It was in August, maybe. As you know, in last year's NDAA, it required certain criteria and certifications be made by you before the Army can relocate the Army CID special agent training course or any of its training cadre. Despite that, our office has learned recently that the Army is already in the midst of a comprehensive overhaul of CID training and composition.

Maybe most concerning, the Army Times reported that "in the Army, the lowest retention job specialties for men were criminal investigation division special agent, with a retention rate of 38 percent for fiscal year 2023." We also learned that CID agents are already flowing through pipelines in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the FLETC.

So, this was one of the things that we were trying to address in the NDAA, and it feels like—and I would like for you to maybe give some explanation. It feels like this is an effort to get around the law because there is supposed to be a process before what appears to be happening is actually happening.

So, I wanted to give you an opportunity to walk me through this because it feels like a workaround.

Secretary WORMUTH. Certainly, Senator Schmitt. We do not want to try to do a workaround. You know, I think, as you know very, very well, we are in the process of transforming the criminal investigative division, and it is our intent to have 60 percent of those agents become civilian.

That is a big change, and I think—I am not intimately familiar with the retention statistics for CID, but I think part of what you are seeing a little bit of change is hard. I am certainly aware, you know, and I know that there is some anxiety from our uniformed folks about the transformation.

But we want to comply with the law, and what I would like to do is make sure that we have Director Ford come and brief you on how he is proceeding. You know, certainly we continue to plan to have our MPs and agents trained at Fort Leonard Wood.

There is also, I think, some training they are doing with FLETC, but what I would like to do is have Director Ford come and talk with you in detail about what they are doing.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay, let's do that. Because that is a very important role that Fort Leonard Wood plays. I think one of the reasons why we wanted to make sure before there is any real change, that it is a real process.

It appears as though maybe some things are being moved away, whether it is without those certifications or not. So, we will work with you on that and look forward to that briefing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt. I have been informed that Senator Rosen also would like to return and ask her questions, so let me take this opportunity to continue the theme of congested logistics.

Critical to that is fuel efficiency of every moving platform, together with improved maintenance. General George, can you com-

ment on the progress for making and the plans you have in that regard? Then I will ask Senator Wormuth.

General GEORGE. Chairman, I think hybridization is important to us. One for the—reduce our logistical tail for our formations. So, I think we are looking at hybridization for all of our vehicles that are out there, specifically any of our newer platforms.

We are—the other big advantage that you get with this is that you also get silent watch and silent approach. So, they—also these vehicles are going to be more lethal on the battlefield. So, I mean, that is really what we are looking at in total with some of this effort.

We are looking at, there may be some sensors out there that may be—you know, that would be strictly electric, because then we could do the same thing on the ground, get them out there, silent approach and put them out there.

But I think all of those things combined are going to make us more lethal and more mobile on the battlefield, on lower signature.

Chairman REED. Thank you, and your comments, Madam Secretary.

Secretary WORMUTH. Chairman, the only thing I would add is two things, maybe one. I think an additional benefit of some of the hybrid vehicles that we are looking at is that in addition to fuel efficiency, silent watch, they offer, in some cases, the ability to power other devices that we have so we can actually hook, you know, other systems that we have up to those batteries.

Then the second thing I would note is just, you know, this is an area where the commercial sector has done a lot of work. So, we are trying to partner with companies in the commercial sector to leverage all of the investment they have already made to see how it can benefit us in the Army.

Chairman REED. One topic that has come up in your conversations, discussions is the notion of maintenance in the field, employing 3D printing, and also having the intellectual property to do that effectively. Is that a specific goal and program you have in place, Madam Secretary?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are certainly looking at everything we can do with 3D printing in terms of helping us with contested logistics—helping us get, you know, parts much closer to the tactical edge, if you will.

We are looking at, you know, what we can do with that. You know, obviously, one of the issues there with 3D printing is making sure that the components that are being fabricated meet our safety standards.

So, there is some work that we have to do there. I think another thing that we are doing is tell a maintenance. You know, that is something we have seen be very, very effective in Ukraine. So, thinking about how we can apply tele-maintenance for ourselves.

The other thing I would add, again, that we have also seen with the Ukrainians is the importance of predictive analytics when it comes to logistics. So, we are now doing much more to be able to see where everything we need is and to be able to anticipate what future requirements may be.

Chairman REED. General George, you have any comments?

General GEORGE. Sure. I will add on the 3D printing. The other thing that we can look at, I think for the future, is UAS is something else that we are looking at.

So, whether or not you are producing kind of the bus or the body part of an unmanned system, whether it was ground or air or that you could also replace it. So much like the Secretary said, we are—I think we are trying to look at this at scale to—out in Rock Island, there is one of the largest, you know, additive manufacturing capabilities that we have in the Army.

So, you know, when we struggle with long lead time parts, I think that that is definitely something that could fill that in.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. I just want to add a comment. I was out at Fort Sill on Friday and was at the university designed to develop tactics against drones.

I was impressed, but I think we have a long, long way to go, in terms of the devices to engage them and also just to tactics too. But I will command both of you for establishing that facility.

We are thinking ahead rather than reacting to something that is facing us. So, my commendation to both. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Oh, thank you, Chairman Reed. I really appreciate you are holding it open for me. I would also like to thank Secretary Wormuth and General George for testifying today and for following through on your commitments to me to build Nevada's first certified small arms training range so the Nevada National Guard will no longer have to travel out of State to fulfill their annual weapons qualification.

It is at an average cost of half a million dollars per unit—\$500,000. So, saving money too, and the inclusion of the range in the President's Budget request is greatly appreciated, because this range is going to improve the readiness of the National Guard, their ability to answer the Nation's call at a greater convenience, and like I said, lower cost to the taxpayer. So, we have cyber workforce development issues.

So, in the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, it included my bipartisan legislation authorizing the Army to create a civilian cybersecurity Reserve to provide CYBERCOM with qualified civilian personnel to serve in Reserve capacities to support operations in cyberspace.

So, Secretary Wormuth, what is the status of the implementation plan for the civilian cyber Reserve?

Senator ROSEN. Thanks, Senator Rosen, and we are very pleased that we were able to get that range in the budget.

On the Civilian Cyber Corps, you know, we absolutely want to make sure we are taking as much advantage as we can of all of the available cyber expertise. I think what we have been in discussions with USCYBERCOM is to think of—is to work with them.

First of all, NSA does the badging and the credentialing that would be required for those civilians. So, we don't control that. But I think what we can do is talk to CYBERCOM about what are their requirements.

We can look at our requirements and see if there's a way to structure a pilot to think about exactly where would we need to have civilians fill in and sort of how to do that. But I think we are a service that would like to have a pilot to look at what can be done.

Senator ROSEN. As a former computer programmer, I would have—now I am doing this, but in my younger days and in my—even as I got into my 40's or 50's, I would have liked to have been able to serve at this point to do what I did as a programmer.

So, I think it is important to have that. But I want to move on, Secretary, with the impact of the EPA ruling on Hawthorne Army Depot. So, Hawthorne Army Depot, it is in Northern Nevada, and we demilitarized one-third of the Department of Defense obsolete munitions via open burn and detonation.

As you are aware, the Environmental Protection Agency recently proposed a new rule to revise regulations that allow for open burning and detonation of certain explosives like munition and propellants. The rule does not consider the National Security implications for DOD facilities, or the lack of available technology for large scale disposal, and this could have serious impacts on Hawthorne.

The rule is now open for public comment after going through interagency review process, and from conversations that my office has had with your staff and with Hawthorne, I know the Army has serious concerns with the impact of this rule on your ability to fulfill DOD's munitions demilitarization requirements, should it take effect.

Maybe you could speak to us about what would happen if the implementation is written, as the way they want to do it now. What challenges would this rule create for facilities like Hawthorne to be able to accomplish the critical mission we have of ensuring the readiness of the munitions stockpile and also the impact on the workforce at Hawthorne?

Secretary WORMUTH. Thank you, Senator, and I am broadly aware of the EPA rule that is out there right now for comment right now.

I would agree with you, I think it could have significant implications for Hawthorne. Actually, the chief and I were over on the House side earlier this week, and one of your colleagues in the delegation raised it. You know, we need to be able to dispose of the munitions that are there that are being stored at Hawthorne.

There is a lot of important work that is done there. In some cases, in the past, we have been able to find alternative technologies that we can use—

Senator ROSEN. There isn't alternative technologies for most of it yet.

Secretary WORMUTH. So, yes—so that is one of the concerns that we have. So, what I would like to do is, you know, do some consultations with the Army Materiel Command and look in more detail at what this might mean for Hawthorne, and then proceed from there. But it certainly we need to have that munitions disposal capability.

Secretary WORMUTH. I think we need to be working with the EPA because once they finalize this rule, it is going to be much more difficult. So, I am going to have my office contact you to see how we engage in this process while they are doing this, before they make a determination. We have to find some other way around it. That is going to have an impact on this important mission.

Secretary WORMUTH. Certainly.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I see that my time is up, and I see Senator Sullivan is here. So, thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Sullivan, if you could stay within the 5-minute mark because we want to go and start a closed session.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chairman, I always stay within the 5-minutes.

[Laughter.]

Chairman REED. Your imagination is profound.

[Laughter.]

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Just, that is a little inside joke here with me and the chair. Well, Madam Secretary, thank you, General. Good to see you guys again. I would like to get an update on the Army's formalizing the 11th Airborne MTOE. I know that you have been both really big supporters. I think it is great we got another airborne division, right.

Probably the best in the Army right now. No offense to the 82d Airborne Division, Mr. Chairman. But the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska is gaining quickly on the 82d. It is always good to have inner service or inner Army competition, but I am hoping that the MTOE will—alleviates the self-funding burden that the division has shouldered since it stood up a few years ago.

As you know, some of the ops, some of the training, some of the elements of operating in the cold weather in Alaska cost more. I think we want to make sure that that unit is getting resource in a very realistic way, so they are not having to kind of undertake this self-funding burden on them.

So, can you give me either of you an update on that?

Secretary WORMUTH. Sure. Why don't I start and then turn it over to the chief, who I know has been very focused on this. One thing we are doing—first of all, I would note to your comments about the Airborne, as you probably know, elements of the 11th Airborne did an airborne drop over Norway, I think just in February or March, that was very successful.

Senator SULLIVAN. There were some very serious cold weather training. It was done all winter.

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes. In February. Exactly.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes, 40 below. I mean, people were getting on. It is not easy to operate in 40 below zero.

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes. I can only imagine, literally as someone who grew up in Texas. But we are doing two war games this year, specifically to help us better understand kind of what are the needs of the soldiers in terms of their cold weather gear, cold weather equipment. So that is one initiative we have underway to help us look at the MTOE but let me let the chief build on that.

General GEORGE. So having been up in Alaska in February, March, I mean, surviving is tough, and so, we are really proud of the 11th Airborne. The big exercise that the Secretary was talking about, I mean, not only surviving but thriving.

So, we have increased their training. You know, we had the joint multi-purpose training up there. You can do almost anything in Alaska, and that is a real advantage to us. India, for example, was also out as our partners and trained up in Alaska. We are doing an MTOE review right now.

As you know, Senator, what works in Texas for systems doesn't necessarily work or won't work when it is 40 or 50 below up in Alaska. So, and the Vice is kind of under and I think you have met with him recently.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

General GEORGE. It is going to go through exactly. What we want to do is make sure that they have the right equipment for operating in the Arctic. Then how do we kind of put—set some aside, because the other great thing about that unit, they are very physically hard. They can operate anywhere in the world. We have that capability to do that.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, General, I appreciate you directly addressing this because as you know, when you are looking at the difference in operational capability, no matter what it is, it is harder and more expensive to operate in that kind of environment.

Sometimes in the past, I was worried that that just got fairly dust, and oh, well, you are going to get the same amount of money as the units down in the lower 48. Don't worry about it, being tough in the Arctic. But it is tougher.

You guys are seeing it. So, I think they need to be resourced in that way that addresses that. Would you agree?

General GEORGE. I would agree, and what we are trying to do as well, like for resourcing, and make sure that they are also not taking care of equipment that isn't going to work. So, we are going to pull some of that out.

So, I think it is a combination of things to make sure we have given them the cold weather equipment. I think what we are trying—what we got to do now is make sure we have—it is sustainable, that we can give it to them. We are buying additional CATVs. As you know, that is what you need to be operational, that is up there. We are reviewing all of that, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me turn to the topic the three of us discussed in my office a couple months ago on the Army force structure changes. Some big articles in Alaska. Some people actually had some concerns about kind of the overall kind of top line numbers.

You know, we went through that whole 425 issue where the Obama administration was going to get rid of the 425, and that was actually us here in the Congress who stopped that. But in our meeting, you two both mentioned to me that the force structure changes that the Army's doing overall are going to mean an increase of 1,469 more soldiers in Alaska by 2030.

Can I just, in this Committee, kind of in the hearing room, can I just get your recommitment to that number?

Secretary WORMUTH. Senator, I will say, I don't have the number off the top of my head, but we do have those numbers, and I am certainly willing to—you know, I am confident that what we explained to you before was accurate. So, we commit to that.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay.

General GEORGE. I just was going to add, Senator, I think part of it was too—was that we have the force structure up in Alaska. We need to recruit now which we are in, and we are doing better, to fill out those formations, which is what we really are trying to get after immediately.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. I had several more questions, but being true to my word to the Chairman, I am going to yield my time.

Chairman REED. Senator, we welcome you to join us in a closed session.

Senator SULLIVAN. Oh, good. Okay.

Chairman REED. You may ask those questions there.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan, and thank you, Madam Secretary and General George. We will close the open session and reconvene in SVC-217 at approximately 11:30 a.m.. Thank you very much. With that, I will deem the open session closed.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

ARMY INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

1. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Wormuth, we have talked several times about the State of the Army's crumbling infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific Region. U.S. Army Pacific estimates the total cost to repair all their facilities is over \$4 billion. While I am encouraged to see the Army's overall budget for military construction has increased by \$1 billion this year, there is still a lot of work to do, especially in the Indo-Pacific. What is the Army's long-term plan to replace or repair crumbling infrastructure in Hawaii and the Indo-Pacific?

Secretary WORMUTH. Enabling the Army's mission in the Indo-Pacific through targeted investment in our critical infrastructure, especially in Hawaii, is a top priority for the Army. We have requested to invest \$537.9 million in Active Component Military Construction to recapitalize Hawaii infrastructure as well as over \$1 billion for other Indo-Pacific investments for fiscal years 2025 through 2029. Investments vary from the recapitalization of water supply infrastructure to the construction of a combat aircraft maintenance facility, as well as live fire range modernization to sustain training readiness.

The Army has also requested \$268 million in facility restoration and modernization funding for fiscal year 2025 to support the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF), repair critical utilities, and restore permanent party barracks. Additionally, facility sustainment funding in Hawaii equals almost \$200 million annually to help minimize facility degradation and address failed building components.

In addition to the Hawaii investments, for fiscal year 2025 the Army requested over \$600 million in facility funding for the rest of the Indo-Pacific region.

RECRUITING CHALLENGES

2. Senator HIRONO. General George, the Pentagon completed a study recently that found 80 percent of new recruits have at least one family member or close friend that served in the Armed Forces—given that tie, is the Army leveraging the extensive veteran and military retiree population to boost recruiting?

General GEORGE. The Retired Soldier mission, "Hire & Inspire," urges retired soldiers to tell their Army stories to inspire the next generation to serve in the military. Other means for communicating with retired soldiers include though annual Retiree Appreciation Days on Army installations and through installation retiree councils.

The Army also engages in outreach and engagement with military/veteran support organizations to build partnerships that help raise awareness about military service. At the installation level, we work directly with local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, and other veteran organizations to encourage veterans to share their Army story and help raise awareness about the benefits of joining the Army.

RENEWAL OF TRAINING LAND LEASES

3. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Wormuth, the Army is negotiating renewals for several training area land leases in Hawaii that are set to expire in 2029, including

the Pohakuloa Training Area. I would like to followup with your testimony regarding the provision in the fiscal year 2024 NDAA requiring the Secretary of Defense to designate an official responsible for coordinating land lease negotiations in Hawaii. In addition to the criteria included in sub-paragraph (b) of section 364, what additional criteria, if any, is the Department of Defense using to identify a qualified individual to fill this extremely important position?

Secretary WORMUTH. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has identified the individual to fill this position and is in the hiring process. The position is expected to be filled by January 2025. The professional has a comprehensive understanding of the legal and technical aspects of the land lease issues and is experienced in working with elected officials, policymakers, regulators, community organizations, including Native Hawaiian communities and organizations. This individual also has a deep understanding of the evolving landscape in Hawaii and the multitude of issues that influence the future footprint and posture of military forces in Hawaii. The professional has an extensive network in Hawaii, is experienced in working with the military services, and has a deep appreciation for the significant cultural and historical issues that will inform these negotiations.

4. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Wormuth, will the person identified have a background level of knowledge on the sensitivity of this subject with the Native Hawaiian community?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, based upon in my discussions with OSD, the professional has comprehensive understanding of the historical actions taken by the Federal Government in Hawaii and subsequent impacts which underlie the sensitivity of the subject within Native Hawaiian networks and communities. Having that key perspective is considered essential.

5. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Wormuth, what will the identified person's title be, and what level/scale will they be within DOD's civilian hierarchy?

Secretary WORMUTH. OSD's identified title for this individual will be Principal Advisor, Hawaii Coordination Cell (HCC) for Energy, Installations, and the Environment (E&E). The grade is "Highly Qualified Expert," which is between Senior Executive Service (SES) and General Schedule (GS) 15.

AVIATION INCIDENTS

6. Senator HIRONO. General George, the Army has experienced 12 aviation related incidents in fiscal year 2024, resulting in the deaths of nine soldiers and one border patrol agent. While five of the investigations are still ongoing, the Army has implemented an Aviation Safety "Stand-Up" in which all units are executing additional safety training for rotary wing pilots and aircraft maintainers. Do you think the additional training is sufficient to curtail these incidents in the future?

General GEORGE. The additional mandatory training will have an impact to curtail aviation incidents by enhancing aviation units' focus on safety in general and on specific aviation maintenance and aviator training to address emerging issues that are contributing factors in recent incidents. After completion of the Aviation Safety Stand-Up, reducing the rate of aviation accidents in the future requires a continuous effort to improve the understanding of operational risk within Army aviation formations, increase the safety margins of Army aircraft where possible through materiel solutions, and address a known decrease in the experience levels of the aviation force due to shortages of mid-career aviation warrant officers. Rebuilding experience in the aviation force will take time, the shortage did not develop overnight, and we cannot expect to fix it overnight. To mitigate the impact the Army continues to offer the Aviation Bonus to retain our most experienced and skilled pilots with 3- to 5-year contracts ranging from \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year. Additionally, the Army will continue to drive down risk in aviation operations and training through ongoing modernization of Army aircraft, reviewing and revising the aviation training strategy, and sharing lessons learned across the Army aviation force and with our sister services.

7. Senator HIRONO. General George, do you think this is an issue that goes beyond just Army helicopter units, and if so, are you sharing lessons learned with your sister military services?

General GEORGE. The Army will continue to manage and reduce risk, however, military aviation remains inherently dangerous. For that reason, the Army shares aviation safety lessons learned with the other military services through the Joint Safety Council (JSC) and benefits from the other services sharing lessons learned as well. Monthly each of the Services' Safety Centers produce a Joint Mishap Infor-

mation Share (JMIS) report of all mishaps of common platforms—ground and aviation—that they share amongst each other. The JSC meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the lessons learned from mishap investigations in extensive detail and decides if specific mishaps/lessons learned need to be shared with larger audiences. For example, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC) recently briefed aviation mishap lessons learned to the Air Force A3, the Marine Corps Airboss, and Navy instructor pilots and students at Whiting Field in Pensacola, Florida. The Army has even taken the step to share lessons learned with our Allies. This past December, USACRC traveled to the United Kingdom to share aviation mishap lessons learned with the U.K. Joint Aviation Command and recently traveled to Canberra, Australia to participate in the Inaugural International Combat Aviation Safety Summit.

THE ARMY'S LONG-RANGE MISSILE PROGRAMS

8. Senator HIRONO. General George, the Army is focused on developing and fielding long-range missiles, including hypersonics, to deter our adversaries. Can you talk about the importance of the Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon, and whether that capability will be available at the end of the year as previously planned?

General GEORGE. The Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) continues to be a top priority for the Army. In calendar year 2023, three iterations of Joint Flight Campaign 2 were conducted but did not conclude as planned. Due to the criticality of this strategic requirement, the Army, along with our Navy partner, has worked diligently to evaluate the system holistically so confidence is ensured, risk is reduced, and the program can return to flight test quickly. Following a successful end-to-end flight test at the end of CY2024, LRHW will begin delivery of missiles to the Army and the program will transition to Program Executive Office (PEO) Missiles and Space.

9. Senator HIRONO. General George, U.S. Army Pacific recently deployed the Typhon Missile System to the Philippines as part of a Multi-Domain Task Force deployment to train with our allies in the Region—can you discuss why this system and its mobility is so important to deterrence?

General GEORGE. The Mid-Range Capability (MRC) Typhon provides a credible maritime strike capability from a mobile land-based delivery system. Deployment enhances maritime defense capabilities while bolstering interoperability and readiness within the United States-Philippine Alliance. As such, the MRC highlights Army contributions to the joint force and enables sister services by targeting critical assets that hold air and maritime platforms at risk, strengthening integrated deterrence in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

10. Senator KING. General George, the fiscal year 2019 NDAA required pre-separation counseling to be completed by transitioning servicemembers at least 365 days prior to leaving the service, yet a GAO report found that only 11 percent met this requirement. Additionally, GAO found that only 25 percent of servicemembers have met statutory TAP requirements. What are you doing to increase these numbers within the Army to take care of transitioning servicemembers?

General GEORGE. In fiscal year 2023, the Army Transition Assistance Program built, implemented, and executed an online Career Readiness Standards (CRS) Commanders Dashboard and a quarterly Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Completion and Timeliness Quarterly Report reportable to the Chief of Staff of the Army. Army Commanders now have access to review the number of soldiers who started and completed TAP through an online dashboard. The quarterly TAP Report requires Army Commanders to provide comments on steps taken to improve soldiers CRS completion and timeliness standards, as required by law. In 1st quarter fiscal year 2024, 60 percent of soldiers completed all CRS before transition and 30 percent are starting the TAP before their 365-day mark. In 2nd quarter fiscal year 2024, 60 percent of soldiers completed all CRS and 33 percent starting TAP before the 365-day mark.

The Adjutant General Directorate continues to message Transitions Centers, Commanders, and General Officers through annual TAP Symposiums, Quarterly GO Update, and quarterly TAP Townhalls. Additionally, the Company Commander and First Sergeant Course includes training on requirements for TAP, which all Army

installations use while teaching new commanders about various responsibilities. These are also available on the Army Training Network.

11. Senator KING. General George, what new initiatives are you implementing this year to address these dismal rates?

General GEORGE. We have committed to a broad messaging and engagement campaign.

- Six military personnel messages and the Army's interactive online forum (called S-1 Net) assists human resources professionals by informing the community on the importance of sending soldiers to TAP:
- Quarterly GO Updates on Transition Assistance Program sent by the Adjutant General.
- Two messages sent to Army Service Component Command (ASCC), Army Commands (ACOM), and Direct Reporting Units (DRU) G-1s on the new TAP reporting requirements and Commanders Dashboard.
- Eight TAP Talks Podcast Series with the Transition Division Chief hosted on Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), Spotify, YouTube, and Apple for Leaders and Soldiers.
- Significant TAP social media to include Facebook, DVIDS Channel, LinkedIn, and the Army TAP Website.

The Army Transition Assistance Program has a system of record that every TAP Center employee has access to create a soldier's record and track their Career Readiness Standards and all other data. The Army TAP also sends an eligibility roster to commanders, which is a list of soldiers who have a separation date in the next 720 days.

ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING INITIATIVES TO AID THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

12. Senator KING. Secretary Wormuth, the State of Maine has many organizations that contribute immensely to the defense industrial base, particularly regarding 3D printer technology and additive manufacturing. How can the Army better utilize these technologies to enhance additive manufacturing for overall readiness, and what will be the impact on the Army's modernization priorities?

Secretary WORMUTH. The Army recognizes the significant benefit of additive manufacturing in modernizing weapon systems, improving operational readiness, and addressing logistical challenges. Initiated several years ago, the Army continues its effort to evaluate candidate parts for additive manufacturing and has developed a centralized database for additive manufacturing part data that is available to authorized users. In order to better leverage these technologies, the Army is working with the broader Department of Defense community and external partners to: develop standards for qualification and certification of printed parts, which is currently a lengthy and cumbersome process; develop appropriate training and education resources across the DOD leadership and workforce to ensure appropriate awareness of these technologies; and share best practices and lessons learned.

13. Senator KING. Secretary Wormuth, what additive manufacturing initiatives does the Army plan to implement in the coming year?

Secretary WORMUTH. A Battle Damage Repair/Fabrication (BDRF) effort to review and quickly address supply chain challenges for the Bradley fighting vehicle and M777 towed howitzer was initiated in mid-fiscal year 2024 and will continue into fiscal year 2025. Future efforts will include the M113 armored personnel carrier, M109 self-propelled howitzer and other critical systems, as needed. As part of the BDRF effort, the Aviation and Missile Center of Excellence at Rock Island Arsenal—Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center is printing temporary replacement parts to be shipped to field. The Army continues to participate in broader Department of Defense efforts focused on accelerating advanced manufacturing capabilities for Joint and Coalition forces.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

TUITION ASSISTANCE

14. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, according to public reporting, the Army is considering cuts to its Tuition Assistance program. Congress created the Tuition Assistance program to allow the Department of Defense to cover tuition expenses for servicemembers at a range of educational programs, including undergraduate,

graduate, vocational, licensure, certificate, and language programs. How many soldiers have used Tuition Assistance benefits in each of the last 5 years?

Secretary WORMUTH. The number of soldiers who have used Tuition Assistance is as follows:

- Fiscal Year 2019: 95,584
- Fiscal Year 2020: 101,592
- Fiscal Year 2021: 96,293
- Fiscal Year 2022: 100,891
- Fiscal Year 2023: 100,566
- Fiscal Year 2024 (as of 13 May): 81,119

15. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, how much has the Army spent on Tuition Assistance benefits in each of the last 5 years?

Secretary WORMUTH. The amount Army spent on Tuition Assistance benefits is as follows:

- Fiscal Year 2019: \$198,511,000
- Fiscal Year 2020: \$216,151,000
- Fiscal Year 2021: \$217,994,000
- Fiscal Year 2022: \$243,718,000
- Fiscal Year 2023: \$220,298,000
- Fiscal Year 2024 (as of 13 May): \$166,200,000

16. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, the Army has stated that Tuition Assistance supports “educational objectives of the Army and soldiers’ personal self-development goals” and “directly contributes to retaining quality soldiers, enhancing their career progression, improving Army readiness, and preparing soldiers for meaningful employment in the transition from military service.”¹ Does the Army continue to believe that Tuition Assistance offers these benefits to the Army and to soldiers?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes, we do.

17. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, please describe the nature of the cuts that the Army is contemplating making to Tuition Assistance.

Secretary WORMUTH. We are currently conducting a thorough program review of our voluntary education programs, both Credentialing and Tuition Assistance, to ensure their long-term sustainability. The Army has not completed its assessment, made any decisions, or implemented any changes to our voluntary education programs. We will continue to assess options and when decisions are made, we will ensure they support soldiers, are fiscally responsible, and fully compliant with the law. When our review is complete, I am happy to have Dr. Schaefer (ASA(M&RA)) and her team brief you on our results and possible next steps.

18. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, what prompted the Army to consider cutting Tuition Assistance?

Secretary WORMUTH. Very high usage rate and demand for our Credentialing Assistance Program prompted us to review it for fiscal sustainability, although as noted above, no decisions have been made.

Our review of the Tuition Assistance Program was not prompted by particular concerns, rather it is a normal program review.

19. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, how much is the Army considering cutting to Tuition Assistance by each year?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are currently conducting a thorough program review of our voluntary education programs, both Credentialing and Tuition Assistance, to ensure their long-term sustainability. The Army has not completed its assessment, made any decisions, or implemented any changes to our voluntary education programs. As a part of the assessment, the Army recognizes that the CA program is particularly crucial for servicemembers interested in high-demand fields such as electricians, plumbers, mechanics, drivers, cyber fields and technicians. Credentials in these areas are valuable both during active duty and in civilian transition. We will continue to assess options and when decisions are made, we will ensure they support soldiers, are fiscally responsible, and fully compliant with the law. When our review is complete, I am happy to have Dr. Schaefer (ASA(M&RA)) and her team brief you on our results and possible next steps.

20. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, how many servicemembers would receive cuts in Tuition Assistance under the Army’s potential plans to cut the program?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are currently conducting a thorough program review of our voluntary education programs, both Credentialing and Tuition Assistance, to ensure their long-term sustainability. The Army has not completed its assessment, made any decisions, or implemented any changes to our voluntary education programs. We will continue to assess options and when decisions are made, we will ensure they support soldiers, are fiscally responsible, and fully compliant with the law. When our review is complete, I am happy to have Dr. Schaefer (ASA(M&RA)) and her team brief you on our results and possible next steps.

21. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, how many servicemembers would entirely lose access to Tuition Assistance under the Army's potential plans to cut the program?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are currently conducting a thorough program review of our voluntary education programs, both Credentialing and Tuition Assistance, to ensure their long-term sustainability. The Army has not completed its assessment, made any decisions, or implemented any changes to our voluntary education programs. We will continue to assess options and when decisions are made, we will ensure they support soldiers, are fiscally responsible, and fully compliant with the law. When our review is complete, I am happy to have Dr. Schaefer (ASA(M&RA)) and her team brief you on our results and possible next steps.

22. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, does the Army plan on cutting Tuition Assistance across the board or targeting the cuts to specific portions of the program?

Secretary WORMUTH. We are currently conducting a thorough program review of our voluntary education programs, both Credentialing and Tuition Assistance, to ensure their long-term sustainability and balance these programs as professional development and force shaping opportunities. The Army has not completed its assessment, made any decisions, or implemented any changes to our voluntary education programs. We will continue to assess options and when decisions are made, we will ensure they support soldiers, are fiscally responsible, and fully compliant with the law. When our review is complete, I am happy to have Dr. Schaefer (ASA(M&RA)) and her team brief you on our results and possible next steps.

MILITARY CHILD CARE CENTERS

23. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, in 2021 you directed the Army to strengthen its regulations on day cares reporting incidents of sexual behavior to parents. It's my understanding that policy has never been publicly released because it was marked as controlled unclassified information. If the current policy is marked as controlled unclassified, will the Army release a non-controlled version of the policy?

Secretary WORMUTH. Yes. On May 7, 2024, The Army decontrolled Headquarters, Department of the Army Executive Order (HQDA EXORD) 111-21, Installation Response to Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children and Youth, along with copies of Fragmentary Orders 1 and 2.

On May 17, 2024, The Army published updated policy, HQDA EXORD 201-24, Implementation Guidance for the Installation of Problematic Sexual Behavior in Children, to include the status of PSB-CY program implementation and clarification on parental notification timelines.

The Army will distribute memos to families to clearly explain changes to policies in the future. The memo and the policy changes may also be found on the Army's quality of life microsite at www.army.mil/qualityoflife.

24. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, when will the Army publicly release this policy?

Secretary WORMUTH. As stated above, the Army released its new policy on May 17th, 2024.

DOD CONTRACTORS' ARMS AND AMMUNITION SALES

25. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, please provide an update on implementation of the President's March 2023 Executive Order that directed DOD to "develop and implement principles to further firearm and public safety practices through Department of Defense acquisition of firearms."

Secretary Wormuth did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in Committee file.

26. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, how many rounds of ammunition produced at Lake City were sold commercially in each of the past 5 fiscal years? Please

list all major types of ammunition sold, and the quantity and caliber of each, including any armor piercing, armor piercing incendiary (API), or tracer ammunition.

Secretary Wormuth did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in Committee file.

27. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, hat operational plan, if any, does DOD or Olin Winchester maintain to prevent diversion of firearms or ammunition produced at Lake City into the illegal market?

Secretary Wormuth did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in Committee file.

28. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, please provide a list of all firearm manufacturers and retailers from which DOD procures firearms that also commercially sell semi-automatic firearms that can carry over 10 rounds of ammunition or accept detachable ammunition feeding devices, and/or ammunition that is .22 caliber or larger, including .223 Remington ammunition and 7.62x39mm ammunition.

Secretary Wormuth did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in Committee file.

29. Senator WARREN. Secretary Wormuth, aside from Olin Winchester, do any of the other private firms with contracts to operate government-owned, contractor-operated plants producing ammunition, firearms, or the materials used to make ammunition or firearms sell items produced using government-owned equipment or facilities to non-Federal customers?

Secretary Wormuth did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in Committee file.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

PROJECT PELE [PAY-LAY]

30. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth, I hope that you're personally tracking that the Department's microreactor program, Project Pele [Pay-Lay], is in the process of being transferred to the Army as a program of record. I cannot overstate the importance of this program for energy supply of our own forces in a contested environment, and for lending to vulnerable foreign partners that are feeling China's predatory pressure on cheap energy projects. How is the Army's Contested Logistics cross functional team looking to integrate Pele into their planning?

Secretary WORMUTH. Project Pele is not in the process of being transferred to the Army as a program of record. At present, the Army has no formal Requirement for a mobile microreactor. However, the Army is considering a fixed facility advanced nuclear power as one potential solution to deliver assured access to energy for our critical missions through a deliberate and thoughtful planning process. We are beginning to formally engage with the advanced nuclear power industry to explore potential solutions that will enhance the Army's energy resilience. These efforts are distinct from Project Pele, which serves as a proof of concept to enable and inform requirements for a future domestic mobile nuclear reactor program of record. Project Pele is being led by DOD's Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO), will be Authorized by the Department of Energy (DOE), constructed, tested, operated at DOE Idaho National Lab by 2027. While this is a potentially valuable technology with many applications across the Army and DOD, the technology needs to mature and the policies and regulations affecting international deployment must be coordinated with the State Department. The Contested Logistics Cross Functional Team (CL CFT) has evaluated the use of nuclear power to offset the required fuel needed to sustain deployed forces in a contested environment but does not feel that mobile nuclear power is currently feasible given its current power output capability, policy constraints, and lack of rapid mobility.

31. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth, can you also followup with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security on how beneficial this program could be for our competition efforts with China? It's about time we start being as aggressive as China has been on economic and energy partnerships with vulnerable nations, and I believe Pele [Pay-lay] is a massive opportunity we can roll out for that purpose.

Secretary WORMUTH. We understand the need and national security implications for a vibrant and globally competitive U.S. advanced nuclear energy industry that will help the United States outcompete Russia and the PRC. An aggressive Federal

investment for advanced nuclear power industry will enable the United States to ensure planning for key issues, such as nuclear fuel, licensing and financing. Doing this will posture the U.S. to achieve the highest standards of safety, security, reliability, and nonproliferation that are critical as our adversaries continue to advance the deployment of this technology. The Army has put in place a cross-cutting team led out of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installation, Energy, and Environment that is actively exploring the potential for advanced nuclear power solutions for our installations, where there is a requirement for reliable and resilient base load power.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SUPPORT IN CYBER

32. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, as we have all recently seen with this latest wave of cyberattacks, every level of government and each section of our critical infrastructure is at risk, and I believe the Army National Guard is already filling a critical domestic defense and response role to cyber incursions. Specifically, I would encourage you both to look at the work being done in a joint capacity by our Critical Infrastructure Protection Battalion at the Army Interagency Training and Education Center (AITEC) in West Virginia. They already support a number of DOD and DHS programs, and are being integrated into DOD's Mission Assurance program that we mandated be stood up in last year's NDAA. Has any consideration been given to a more direct role for the Army National Guard in cyber? Specifically, utilizing them as a liaison force between the Federal Government, their states, and the critical infrastructure in their states so we're able to more effectively respond to cyber-attacks in the future.

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The National Guard is a critical enabler of cyber operations for the Department of Defense. For the Army, the National Guard generates forces for a National Guard Cyber Brigade and 11 Cyber Protection Teams. They bring unique skills and backgrounds to mitigating cyber threats. State-organized fusion centers offer opportunities for the Guard to coordinate between State, local, and Federal partners, as well as with private industry. The Army looks forward to working with U.S. Cyber Command on additional areas where the Guard can bring further competitive advantages to the joint force in cyberspace.

RIDGE RUNNER

33. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth, last year I wrote a letter to you and General George over concerns of potential spending cuts to our Army National Guard Special Operation Forces. But I instead received a reply from General Jensen in the National Guard Bureau. I specifically wrote to you both to ensure the Active component is aware of these issues and understands the need of maintaining our special forces in the National Guard on parity with the Active component. Just to prove the importance of our National Guard Special Forces I also highlighted the work they're doing to bring our foreign partners to West Virginia for the Ridge Runner irregular warfare exercise. This is a cheaper option for us and allows more efficient relationship building with a variety of European and Pacific allies here in the U.S. How familiar are each of you with Ridge Runner, and would you commit to coming to one of the Distinguished Visitor days for the second exercise taking place later this year?

Secretary WORMUTH. I know that Ridge Runner provides a dynamic and realistic training environment for multi-echelon Irregular Warfare exercises involving Special Forces Operational Detachments, Allies, Partner Nation Special Operations Task Units and Groups (SOTUs—SOTGs), and myriad other stakeholders to enhance joint force and combined lethality to defeat adversaries in the Irregular Warfare domain. As you note, these exercises facilitate advanced training with critical partners and allies. I appreciate your invitation and will consider the possibility of attending one of the Distinguished Visitor Days.

MINIATURE HIGH-ALTITUDE BALLOONS

34. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, my staff was recently at Fort Liberty with General Braga [Brah-Gah] of Army Special Operations Command and were made aware of a miniature high-altitude balloon program in development there. This program would offer low-cost capabilities for intelligence gathering and potentially kinetic options as well with obvious value for the fight in Ukraine. Are you both tracking this program and if so do you believe there's value in testing this capability in Ukraine?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. We believe there is tremendous value in testing the Micro High-Altitude Balloons (mHAB) in Ukraine and elsewhere. U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense

Command's Army Capability Manager for Space and High Altitude and Space Prototypes and Experiment Branch have worked tirelessly in improving the mHAB. Results of their combined efforts include doubling the payload weight capacity and improving the stationkeeping. They have continued developing and testing numerous small form factor mHAB payloads and launched effects. Ukraine provides the needed environment to testing this capability in a challenging operational assessment.

The aforementioned collective group has been working on improving mHAB over the last 18-months (2023–2024) through a series of demanding demonstrations and field experiments. The small, zero-pressure, mHAB is capable of mid-range ingress, very limited-stationkeeping, and is capable of carrying different mission specific payloads of up to 30 pounds. The mHAB is a rapid deployable (5–10 minutes), 1 to 2 man launch system. Current testing is focused on obtaining soldier touch points to ascertain if this system could be an economical solution versus the larger and more expensive super-pressure high altitude balloon systems (HABS).

35. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, I recently met with the Deputy Director for Ukraine's Military Intelligence and I can assure you they would be more than willing to take on any capability that offers them a tactical advantage and provides us with some lessons learned on what's effective in a modern battlefield.

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. We recognize the importance of providing capabilities that offer tactical advantages and are committed to supporting Ukraine in ways that are both effective and sustainable. As we move forward, we remain open to further discussions and considerations to ensure we are making informed decisions that align with our overall objectives and resource availability.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

MEDICAL READINESS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

36. Senator DUCKWORTH. Secretary Wormuth, I recently announced a proposal that I am pushing to include in the fiscal year 2025 NDAA to improve DOD's medical readiness in the Indo-Pacific. The Army's 18th Medical Command is the Indo-Pacific Theater's medical enabler and works to improve interoperability with allies and partners. Can you speak to how working with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific to gain access to foreign medical facilities could provide lifesaving care during a conflict for servicemembers needing to be medically evacuated?

Secretary WORMUTH. By establishing agreements and collaborative frameworks with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. is addressing a critical medical gap, ensuring U.S. servicemembers have quick access to high-quality medical treatment in times of both competition and crisis.

Currently, under the Security Cooperation Framework, we have a comprehensive Global Health Engagement strategy with about 350 annual engagements, tailored to individual countries—leveraging unique capabilities. These efforts aim to reduce the need for patient movement, which we know will be challenged, and bolster medical capacity through training, knowledge exchanges, and humanitarian assistance.

Additionally, there are ongoing efforts to secure agreements with partner countries that will enable U.S. providers to be credentialed to work in host nation facilities, thereby enhancing overall readiness and the ability to deliver lifesaving care closer to the point of injury. This strategy not only saves lives but also strengthens diplomatic ties and fosters mutual trust, reinforcing the importance of collective security and shared commitment in the region.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

COUNTER UAS TECHNOLOGY

37. Senator ROSEN. General George, current events in Israel and Ukraine have demonstrated the need for a layered approach to counter UAS and airborne threats. One option the Army has been testing is the DE M-SHORAD. This advanced capability allows a unit to employ an affordable, directed energy laser instead of a costly intercept missile to counter threats. While this technology is not fully mature, defense small businesses in Nevada are part of the leading edge in developing and deploying these technologies. We saw the successful employment of these systems in some of the recent attacks in the Middle East. Describe how useful an additional layer to counter airborne threats would be to any fielded force.

General GEORGE. Layered Air Defense is critical to protect the Joint Force from the full range of threats presented on today's battlefield: ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, helicopters, fixed wing aircraft and unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Based on the spectrum and complexity of these threats, there is no one "silver bullet" or singular solution that can defeat all threats. The Army deploys weapon systems such as Patriot, Avenger, and Fixed and Mobile Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Integrated Defeat System (FS-LIDS and M-LIDS) to provide the warfighter with layered defeat capabilities. The Army is developing Directed Energy capabilities and prototypes are currently deployed worldwide. While these capabilities have demonstrated promise, the Army continues to test and evaluate them through operational testing and contingency deployments to inform future investment decisions.

38. Senator ROSEN. General George, what has been the response and feedback from the field regarding the DE M-SHORAD system?

General GEORGE. Since the arrival of three DE M-SHORAD prototypes at the missionsite in February 2024, the DE M-SHORAD prototypes have fully integrated into the Base Defense Operations Center's (BDOC) layered air defense architecture supporting the U.S. Central Command c-UAS mission. The prototypes have not been employed in a real-world engagement and have been heavily focused on executing scenario-driven tests of the system, which recently culminated with an evaluation by the Army Test and Evaluation Command in June 2024.

As part of the ongoing DE campaign of learning, optimization lines of effort are underway to maximize system lethality, reliability, and availability while improving overall system performance in an extreme and austere environment that requires the prototypes to operate for extended periods. The system's average Operational Availability is 71 percent or 1,544 available hours with 445 unplanned maintenance hours (Data as of 20 May 2024). Additional support equipment and the fourth DE M-SHORAD prototype are pending arrival in June. The Program Management Office is executing a plan that includes the shipment of manufacturing-level jigs, spare parts, and the establishment of a cleanroom at the missionsite to expedite laser optics repairs and maintenance.

Soldier confidence continues to increase in the system's capability to successfully defeat Groups 1-3 UAS targets as the unit's experience with the DE M-SHORAD prototypes expands from their training/prototype testing at Fort Sill, OK, before deployment. Real-time lessons learned and continuous soldier feedback support ongoing DE technology improvement efforts.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

CAISSON PLATOON

39. Senator COTTON. Secretary Wormuth, does the Army have a site approved for the Caisson Platoon that meets the criteria laid out in the Army's 1391 plan for horse farmland acquisition, including stables, pastureland, a training area, and storage needed to assure the health and continued service of the military working horses?

Secretary WORMUTH. The Army has not yet secured an approved site fully meeting the criteria outlined in the Army's proposed construction plan for horse farmland acquisition. The criteria include stables, pastureland, training area, and necessary storage ensuring the health and continued service of military working horses.

40. Senator COTTON. Secretary Wormuth, if not, what is the Army's plan to acquire a new plot of land at least 300 acres in size for the Caisson Platoon?

Secretary WORMUTH. The Army is actively pursuing options, informed by highly qualified experts, to acquire a new plot of land, coordinating with relevant stakeholders and using a comprehensive assessment process to ensure the selected site fulfills the outlined criteria in the construction plan. The Army's fiscal year 2025 Budget Request included \$8.5 million for this effort.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

11TH AIRBORNE RESOURCING

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, the 11th Airborne Division in Alaska participates in exercises in INDOPACOM as well as EUCOM, like ARCTIC SHOCK, where 11th Airborne soldiers flew over the North Pole from Alaska and conducted a combined airborne operation into Norway. As the Army's

only arctic-rated division, 11th Airborne has some unique equipment and supply requirements. The Army is working to establish a formal Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) for the 11th Airborne, which will establish how many Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicles (CATVs), snow machines, and JLTVs the division needs to conduct its diverse mission set. Part of this effort includes the Army recognizing that 11th Airborne soldiers require more than one set of cold weather clothing, given that they wear it daily from October to April. Can you give me a preview of what the MTOE looks like?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The Army recognizes the unique equipment demand associated with serving and operating across the Arctic. The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army is leading an Army Requirement Oversight Council (AROC) to validate the personal (uniforms, skis, snowshoes) and organizational equipment (CATVs, snow machines, tents, heaters) required to ensure our soldiers have what they need to accomplish the mission in an Arctic environment. Upon completion of the Army Requirements Oversight Council process, the Army will develop and produce Military Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) and field new equipment as resources allow.

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, can you explain how the Army will ensure the 11th Airborne division is appropriately resourced and equipped to execute its missions?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. Alaska is essential to the Army's Arctic Strategy. To ensure dominance in the Arctic, the Army is developing doctrine, training, and equipment to meet the unique requirements of cold weather, mountainous, and high-altitude environments. As we develop capabilities for Army 2030 and beyond, this key terrain remains an important part of our focus on the Pacific theater. Therefore, the Army will ensure that 11th Airborne Division is appropriately resourced with the soldiers, equipment, and training needed to execute its missions.

The Army recognizes the unique equipment demand associated with serving and operating across the Arctic. As noted above, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army is leading an Army Requirement Oversight Council (AROC) to validate the personal equipment (uniforms, skis, snowshoes) and organizational equipment (CATVs, snow machines, tents, heaters) required to ensure our soldiers have what they need to accomplish the mission in an Arctic environment. Upon completion of the Army Requirements Oversight Council process, the Army will develop and produce MTOEs and field new equipment as resources allow.

The Army continues to assess our training readiness resource allocation for the 11th Airborne Division and its subordinate brigade combat teams to account for the unique requirements and mission of the organization. This assessment includes individual and collective training at home station and our Combat Training Centers.

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, during Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center Alaska 24-02, soldiers reported to my staff that almost none of their tactical vehicles had dedicated snow tires. Instead, they were running the normal tires that would be installed on a tactical vehicle of that type and using chains for extra traction. The problem is that the regular tires do not grip well on ice, which frequently cover the roads on base and the highways the unit uses to access training areas. This increases the occurrence of accidents on and off base. Chains cannot be used on the public highways, so all vehicles must stop and chain up before entering the training area, a process that takes up to 45 minutes per vehicle. As part of the 11th Airborne Division MTOE, or otherwise, does the Army plan to equip tactical vehicles in Alaska with dedicated winter tires?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The Army is aware of the safety concerns from the 11th Airborne Division regarding Tactical Wheeled Vehicles on ice- and snow-covered roads and has taken steps to try to make the vehicles safer. High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) winter tire development is complete, with a contract having been awarded in May 2023 and delivery to Alaska February 2024. Winter tires for the M915A5/ M915A3 Line Haul Trucks and M872A4 trailer have been tested, are currently in the supply system, and are being used in Alaska. For the new 16.00R20 winter tire for Heavy Tactical Vehicles (Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, Palletized Load System, Heavy Equipment Transporter) and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, testing is scheduled to be completed June 2024, with anticipated delivery this winter season 2024-2025. Tire assessments showed marked improvements in traction and stopping distance across ice and snow versus the currently fielded tire, therefore increasing vehicle safety. The need for additional winter tires is acknowledged for the Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTV) and Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) applications. Plans

are in place for Developmental Test and Evaluation for FMTV and JLTV winter tires in support of DOD & Army Arctic Strategies and the 11th Airborne Division.

44. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, can you explain how the Army will ensure the 11th Airborne division is appropriately resourced and equipped to execute its missions?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. Alaska is essential to the Army's Arctic Strategy. To ensure dominance in the Arctic, the Army is developing doctrine, training, and equipment to meet the unique requirements of cold weather, mountainous, and high-altitude environments. As we develop capabilities for Army 2030 and beyond, this key terrain remains an important part of our focus on the Pacific theater. Therefore, the Army will ensure that 11th Airborne Division is appropriately resourced with the soldiers, equipment, and training needed to execute its missions.

The Army recognizes the unique equipment demand associated with serving and operating across the Arctic. The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army is leading an Army Requirement Oversight Council (AROC) to validate the personal equipment (uniforms, skis, snowshoes) and organizational equipment (CATVs, snow machines, tents, heaters) required to ensure our soldiers have what they need to accomplish the mission in an Arctic environment. Upon completion of the Army Requirements Oversight Council process, the Army will develop and produce MTOEs and field new equipment as resources allow.

The Army continues to assess our training readiness resource allocation for the 11th Airborne Division and its subordinate brigade combat teams to account for the unique requirements and mission of the organization. This assessment includes individual and collective training at home station and our Combat Training Centers.

ARMY EQUIPMENT TRANSFERS TO UKRAINE

45. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, can you explain how previous equipment transfers to Ukraine allowed the Army to procure more modern replacement equipment?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. Use of the replenishment authority, Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act (22 U.S.C. 2318(d)) has allowed the Army to procure more modern equipment as we support equipment transfer efforts in Ukraine. As the Army has provided equipment to Ukraine, the Army has been able to replenish its own stocks with new and/or updated capabilities in many areas such as ground combat vehicles, radars, munitions, and soldier equipment.

46. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Wormuth and General George, can you provide specific examples of older equipment that was transferred to Ukraine and replaced with a more modern variant in Army units?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The accelerated modernization of the U.S. Army is easily seen in the vehicles provided to Ukraine. To date, we requested replenishment funds for:

- 500 Army Multipurpose Vehicles and 100 M2A4 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles to replace 600 provided M113 Armored Personnel Carriers
- 232 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, and 420 M1151/M1152/M1165 HMMWVs to replace 652 provided HMMWVs
- 186 newer model M2A4 Bradleys to replace 186 older M2A2 Operation Desert Storm-Situational Awareness (ODS-SA) Bradleys.

The Army also requested funding to procure upgraded radars, munitions, and soldier equipment.

ARTILLERY IN UKRAINE

47. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, the U.S. and NATO allies have transferred a variety of wheeled, tracked, and towed howitzers to Ukraine. Most of these are 155mm howitzers that shoot the same ammunition. What has the Army learned about the effectiveness of various Western-supplied howitzers in Ukraine, specifically including mobility, rate of fire, range, and fire control?

General GEORGE. First and foremost, our equipment performs well and as designed. The proliferation of drones and persistent observation places Western supplied artillery at significant risk. Ukraine Armed Forces (UAF) artillery crews operating towed systems with longer emplacement and displacement times remain the most vulnerable. An effective towed cannon survivability technique is for crew members to keep their gun in a hardened position and only man the gun during fire missions. The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and M109 (155mm SP) platforms are more survivable than towed systems due to their ability to hide in

the clutter or cities and urban spaces. To maximize counter fire standoff, UAF cannon artillery crews typically fire the highest propellant charges at maximum ranges for each fire mission. Artillery fire at maximum ranges increases tube wear which requires tube replacement. Western supplied Field Artillery platforms (cannon, rocket, and missile) remain the most casualty producing weapons for the UAF. UAF are delivering unprecedented rates of fire for artillery munitions. The need for maximum range and higher rates of fire have highlighted that the industrial base must be able to ramp up production of ammunition and parts quickly to keep artillery crews in the fight.

48. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, Ukraine has integrated various UAS platforms into their artillery fire mission processing. How is the Army incorporating UAS into artillery fire mission processing?

General GEORGE. The Army is leveraging a combination of Ukraine lessons learned, training exercises, and advanced technologies to integrate UAS into the Field Artillery kill chain to conduct artillery fire mission processing. The Army's Fires Center of Excellence at Ft. Sill is developing UAS employment concepts at echelon, Program of Instruction (POI) for institutional training, and certification standards to incorporate UAS capabilities.

ARTILLERY MODERNIZATION

49. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, I understand that the Army is conducting a performance demonstration in fiscal year 2024 for companies to bring existing 155mm self-propelled howitzer to Yuma for testing. With the cancellation of the ERCA program, and mobility mismatch between towed 155mm M777A2s and Strykers in SBCTs, there seems to be a need to a mature, ready to deliver self-propelled 155mm howitzer in the Army. Can you describe the Army's plan to test and procure existing 155mm self-propelled howitzers after ERCA's cancellation?

General GEORGE. The XM1299 Rapid Prototyping effort concluded in October 2023 with the determination that further maturation and redesign is required, but the requirement remains. The Army is planning a performance demonstration of commercial-off-the-shelf like systems that will inform both the requirements and a competitive evaluation intending to down select and award to one vendor. The performance demonstration is targeted for late fiscal year 2024, with the competitive evaluation set to begin in late fiscal year 2025. This approach aligns with the Army's cannon modernization strategy which includes replacement of the legacy towed artillery fleet with a future Mobile Howitzer, continued development of the M109 Family of Vehicles, improving munitions capability, and increasing Division Artillery lethality through fundamental organizational change and material solutions.

50. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, new propellants and projectiles were an important part of the ERCA program. I understand the Army is investing in new chemical compounds that can increase both range and Effective Casualty Radius for 155mm projectiles. How is the Army investing in new chemical compounds to increase range and lethality of 155mm projectiles?

General GEORGE. The Army is investing Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) in unique energetic chemical compounds which, when combined with 3D printing technologies, are predicted to enhance muzzle velocity and extend range for currently fielded weapon systems.

This enables new gun propulsion charge designs and complex geometries that were previously unattainable by conventional processing techniques. These chemical compounds are entirely new formulations synthesized to be compatible with the novel manufacturing technology. These formulations will create future opportunities to reduce the demand on existing critical propellant ingredients such as nitrocellulose (NC) and nitroguanidine (NQ) but will require significant qualification and scale up before transition to the Organic Industrial Base (OIB). In addition, the Army seeks to extend the range of artillery ammunition by innovating at the round, incorporating advanced air breathing post gun-launch propulsion systems such as ramjets. Incorporating such systems will provide greater range than conventional rocket motors while reducing demand on the already extended supply of traditional rocket motor propellant ingredients such as hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene (HTPB) and ammonium perchlorate (AP).

From a lethality perspective, the Army has qualified the IMX-104 explosive formulation for use in extended range artillery ammunition which provides an overall increase in performance over traditional trinitrotoluene (TNT). While reducing worldwide demand for TNT, IMX-104 can also be coupled with advanced warhead designs for even greater lethality. Additional early technology readiness level re-

search investments have focused on designing, developing, and maturing energetic compounds and technologies to increase lethality in smaller payloads. These technologies enable a greater size, weight, and power (SWAP) trade space for post launch propulsion systems, thus increasing the effective casualty radius at extended ranges. Specific technologies include (1) deposition of explosives through additive manufacturing for advanced initiation to optimize detonation effects in a smaller payload, (2) maturation of CL-20 based explosive formulations, (3) development and demonstration of novel castable explosive formulations even more powerful than IMX-104, and (4) an innovative category of nano-amorphous energetics that enables the coating of one explosive with another rather than lowering performance with non-energetic coating binders; achieving both insensitivity and higher performance formulations, (5) advancing industrial biomanufacturing of energetic precursors to strengthen defense supply chains. From an environmental perspective these emerging enhanced lethality energetic technologies have been designed and developed without a dependency on perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), mitigating future risks associated with pending restrictions on this group of synthetic chemicals.

ARMY WATERCRAFT

51. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, I understand that the Army is finalizing development of its Watercraft Modernization Strategy. In fiscal year 2025 and throughout the FYDP, it plans to procure one Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) each year to replace Vietnam-era LCUs. In fiscal year 2025 the Army will invest RDT&E money in the Maneuver Support Vessel (Heavy) program, which will enable divestment of the Logistics Support Vessel. Can you explain the consultation and collaboration that occurred with the Navy and Marine Corps as you developed the capability and survivability requirements for the MSV(L)?

General GEORGE. The Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) (MSV(L)) serves as the replacement for the 50-year-old Vietnam-era LCM-8. The U.S. Army collaborated with the US Navy's NAVSEA Carderock Division to provide engineering assistance during the design and development of the MSV(L). The vessel's unique capabilities, aligned with the Army's demanding operational requirements, position it above other options. Operational and survivability testing of the MSV(L) is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2024.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, does the Army plan on operating the MSV(L) and MSV(H) in the INDOPACOM, EUCOM, or CENTCOM AORs?

General GEORGE. The Army recognizes U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) as the most challenging operational theater for our vessels. The MSV(L) prototype is scheduled to undergo operational testing in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) during the summer of 2024. Successful testing in the INDOPACOM AOR will validate the flexibility of the MSV(L) to operate in multiple AORs. The Approved Abbreviated-Capabilities Development Document (A-CDD) and Key Performance Parameters (KPP) are suitable for the MSV(H) to operate worldwide.

53. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, what consultation and collaboration is occurring between the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps as the Army establishes requirements for the MSV(H)?

General GEORGE. The Army MSV(H) Program Manager (PM) and Requirements Team have engaged with the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps, directly reviewing their design requirements and solution sets. The U.S. Army consistently seeks to incorporate advanced maritime features into all our vessels. The MSV(H) development is approaching the digital design phase upon completion of market research.

54. Senator SULLIVAN. General George, did the Army consider the Navy/Marine Corps LSM to fulfill requirements for the MSV(H)?

General GEORGE. Yes, in line with the Joint Requirements Oversight Council Memorandum (JRCOM) 2021 findings, the Army concludes the USN LSM did not support the USA MSV(H) mission requirements. The Army continues to participate in bi-weekly collaborative working groups focused at identifying "synergies" between the LSM and MSV(H) sub-systems. The U.S. Army requirement is predicated on moving larger heavier formations and providing sustainment for longer durations to widely dispersed units.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

ARMY CHAPLAINS AGE WAIVERS

55. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Wormuth and General George, I've had over 30 Active and Reserve Army chaplains visit my office who were direct-commissioned on age waivers during Operation Iraqi Freedom understanding they would receive prorated pensions if they served to Mandatory Removal Date. I understand the Army misinterpreted the law and granted pensions before members reached 20 years of active service and we had to fix that in the fiscal year 2021 NDAA. Now many of these Chaplains are facing involuntary retirements without the pro-rated pensions and official retirements. Can you clarify the situation and what's going on with these Chaplains?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. Chaplains, like medical and dental officers, often enter service at older ages due to the education and work experience required for qualification. From 1981 until 1 February 2019, 10 USC § 532 authorized an exception to commission chaplains and medical and dental officers without the requirement that they be able to serve 20 years of active Federal service prior to reaching 62. Between 2008–2012, in particular, the Chaplains Corps allowed these officers to commission with the understanding that the Chaplain Corps would pursue extensions to these officers' Mandatory Removal Dates (MRDs) under 10 U.S.C. § 1251. At the time, the Chaplains Corps was in-need of additional officers due to help alleviate personnel shortages exacerbated by the Global War on Terror.

In the intervening years, there were several statutory and regulatory changes affecting our Chaplains' retirement benefits and eligibility, and their understanding of those same benefits and eligibility requirements. Specifically, the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) under 10 U.S.C. § 638b created expectations within our Corps that all officers would be given the opportunity to retire if they reached 15 years of active Federal service; concurrently, misinterpretation and prior mis-application of 10 U.S.C. § 1251 caused officers to believe they were entitled to retirement benefits at reduced rate when they reached MRD for age, regardless of the number of years served. In 2021, Congress updated 10 U.S.C. § 1251 to clarify that retirement benefits were reserved for personnel who had served 20 or more years at MRD, but authorized separation pay for individuals separated due to age MRD who served more than 6 but fewer than 20 years.

The Office of the Chief of Chaplains is beginning to identify and notify the officers who entered service with the expectation of an MRD extension to provide them the opportunity to apply. The CCH will work closely with the ASA (M&RA) to review the suitability of each chaplain, ability to continue service past age 62, and benefit to the Army to make recommendations for the Secretary of the Army to consider extending the MRDs of these officers.

These decisions are approved by the Secretary of the Army, so will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

56. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Wormuth and General George, Does the Army have authority through the Army Board for Correction of Military Records to help adjudicate these cases? It seems to me the Army messed this up and the Army should fix it.

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The Secretary of the Army may correct any military record when considered necessary to correct an error or remove an injustice.

CHILD CARE AT CAMP BULL SIMMONS

57. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Wormuth and General George, as you both know, there is critical need for adequate child care across the force. I hear about it from parents in my State all the time who are serving. In last year's NDAA, I was able to get more than \$598.6 million in funding for construction projects, childcare, and training facilities on Florida's military bases. We continue to hear from many in the community about the lack of access to a Child Development Center due to long distances and lengthy waiting lists. The stories are heart-wrenching, and the impact this is having on both families and readiness is unacceptable. That's why, when I hear stories that this isn't happening and our military families aren't supported with childcare on base even though the funding is there, I get upset. This is a priority for our servicemembers with families and I am sure you hear it from others. I do appreciate the good news you gave me on our phone call about Camp Bull Simmons and hopefully you can give me more details about that. How is the Army prioritizing this issue amongst other infrastructure needs within the force and what actions are being considered to alleviate child care shortages at Camp Bull Simmons?

Secretary WORMUTH and General GEORGE. The Army prioritizes all infrastructure investments through a deliberate process that includes input from commanders and Army Senior Leaders. Although we seek to balance investments in various types of Army facilities around the globe, the Army continues to prioritize facilities that improve our soldier's quality of life. This includes family housing, barracks, and childcare. We believe we have collected almost all of the information needed for the Army and Air Force to agree on the location for the new CDC and look forward finalizing a memorandum of agreement soon.

In the meantime, the Army hired and placed a Parent and Outreach Specialist at Camp Bull Simons in January 2023 to specifically support families with childcare requests. The Army has also worked with OSD to expand the in-home childcare pilot to include Eglin AFB and surrounding communities, including Crestview. Additionally, the Air Force has placed considerable emphasis on initiatives to increase the availability of childcare support to Army families stationed at Camp Bull Simons. We continue to work closely with Department of the Air Force and the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict to finalize the way forward to improve childcare support for Army families at Camp Bull Simons, and look forward to briefing your office in the near future.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2024

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

NAVY POSTURE

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:15 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning, and since we have a quorum, I will begin by asking the Committee to consider our list of 3,549 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the Committee for the required length of time. Is there a motion to favorably report this list of 3,549 pending military nomination to the Senate?

Senator WICKER. So moved.

Chairman REED. Is there a second?

Senator SHAHEEN. Second.

Chairman REED. All in favor aye.

[Voice vote. Chorus of ayes.]

[The list of nominations considered and approved by the Committee follows:]

MILITARY NOMINATIONS PENDING WITH THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE WHICH ARE PROPOSED FOR THE COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION ON MAY 16, 2024.

1. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to be major (Anthony K. Onitsuka) (Reference No. 1171)
2. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Ronald J. Grimley) (Reference No. 1272)
3. In the Marine Corps Reserve there are 38 appointments to the grade of colonel (list begins with Shawn E. AndomM00*erson) (Reference No. 1281)
4. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Stephanie K. Hayes) (Reference No. 1282)

5. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Benjamin C. Waite) (Reference No. 1285)
6. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Benjamin D. Fitzharris) (Reference No. 1286)
7. In the Marine Corps there are 3 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Robert W. Brooks III) (Reference No. 1307)
8. In the Marine Corps there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Glen R. Pond) (Reference No. 1310)
9. In the Marine Corps there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Matthew T. Migliori) (Reference No. 1321)
10. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of commander (Claudia L. Battle) (Reference No. 1328)
11. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (Daniel A. Hancock) (Reference No. 1391)
12. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of captain (James L. Clark III) (Reference No. 1392)
13. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Debra L. Sims) (Reference No. 1416)
14. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Peter S. Joo) (Reference No. 1417)
15. **Capt. Lia M. Reynolds, USN to be rear admiral** (Reference No. 1444)
16. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of commander (William Selde) (Reference No. 1489)
17. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant commander (Edward L. Gungon) (Reference No. 1529)
18. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Dionne L. McMillan) (Reference No. 1598)
19. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Todd A. Hasenstein) (Reference No. 1599)
20. In the Navy there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant commander (Ty R. Christian) (Reference No. 1617)
21. **MG Jason T. Hinds, USAF to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commander, U.S. Air Forces Europe and Deputy Commander, U.S. Air Forces Africa** (Reference No. 1655)
22. **Col. Lisa A. Nemeth, ANG to be brigadier general** (Reference No. 1656)
23. **Col. Peter M. Boone, ANG to be brigadier general** (Reference No. 1657)
24. **Col. Michael S. Shanley, USAR to be brigadier general** (Reference No. 1658)
25. **In the Army Reserve there are 4 appointments to the grade of brigadier general (list begins with Kathleen A. Clary)** (Reference No. 1659)
26. In the Air Force there are 398 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Geoffrey E. Adams) (Reference No. 1661)
27. In the Air Force there are 144 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Nicholas Alberto Aguilera) (Reference No. 1662)
28. In the Air Force there are 311 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Jessica M. Abbott) (Reference No. 1663)
29. In the Air Force there are 1,071 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Mariah C. Aceves) (Reference No. 1664)
30. In the Army there are 405 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Gregory J. Abide) (Reference No. 1665)
31. In the Army there are 502 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Jacob P. Absalon) (Reference No. 1666)
32. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Michael W. Struthers) (Reference No. 1668)
33. In the Army Reserve there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Gary R. Weltman) (Reference No. 1670)
34. In the Army there are 43 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Daniel A. Abaldo) (Reference No. 1671)
35. In the Army there are 323 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Ji Y. Adams) (Reference No. 1672)

36. **MG Jered P. Helwig, USA to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commander, U.S. Transportation Command** (Reference No. 1697)
37. **MG Gregory K. Anderson, USA to be lieutenant general and Commanding General, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Liberty** (Reference No. 1698)
38. **In the Army there are 3 appointments to the grade of brigadier general (list begins with Terri J. Erisman)** (Reference No. 1699)
39. **LTG Stephen D. Sklenka, USMC to be lieutenant general and Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics** (Reference No. 1700)
40. **MG Calvert L. Worth, Jr., USMC to be lieutenant general and Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force** (Reference No. 1701)
41. **RADM Michael J. Vernazza, USN to be vice admiral and Commander, Naval Information Forces** (Reference No. 1702)
42. **VADM John F. Wade, USN to be vice admiral and Commander, THIRD Fleet** (Reference No. 1703)
43. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Paula M. Chavis) (Reference No. 1704)
44. In the Air Force there are 2 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Frank J. Panebianco) (Reference No. 1705)
45. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (James L. Schneider III) (Reference No. 1706)
46. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of lieutenant colonel (Zhibin Jiang) (Reference No. 1707)
47. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Bennet D. Krawchuk) (Reference No. 1708)
48. In the Air Force there is 1 appointment to the grade of major (Dariusz P. Barna) (Reference No. 1709)
49. In the Air Force there are 4 appointments to the grade of major (list begins with Sally L. Cramer) (Reference No. 1710)
50. In the Army there is 1 appointment to the grade of colonel (Caroline M. Kolb) (Reference No. 1712)
51. In the Army there are 19 appointments to the grade of colonel and below (list begins with Michael J. Browning) (Reference No. 1719)
52. In the Army there are 18 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Emily R. Bingham) (Reference No. 1721)
53. In the Army there are 111 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Ahmad B. Alexander) (Reference No. 1722)
54. In the Army there are 27 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Vanessa E. Bonner) (Reference No. 1723)
55. In the Army there are 87 appointments to the grade of lieutenant colonel (list begins with Elizabeth A. Aguirre) (Reference No. 1724)

TOTAL: 3,549

Chairman REED. The motion carries. Thank you very much.

Good morning. The Committee meets today to receive the testimony on the President's budget request for the Department of the Navy for fiscal year 2025. I'd also like to welcome Secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Lisa Franchetti, and Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Eric Smith.

I would note that this is Admiral Franchetti and General Smith's first posture hearing before the Committee, and General Smith, on behalf of the Committee, I'm pleased that you are joining us in good health and good spirits. Not surprising for marine. So, thank you, sir. You and your family have been in our thoughts since your medical emergency last fall, and we're thrilled at your remarkable recovery.

We are grateful to each of our witnesses for your service and for the service of the men and women under your command, and for

the support of all Navy and Marine Corps families. Would you thank them for us, please?

The importance of the Navy and Marine Corps joint mission has never been clearer. Just last month, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel, prompting United States Navy vessels in the region to work with the Air Force, Israel, and partner nations to successfully shoot down the incoming munitions.

In addition, Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched hundreds of drone missile attacks against United States and international vessels in the Red Sea disrupting nearly 15 percent of global commercial trade.

However, the American-led coalition has shut down the vast majority of these attacks and has carried out hundreds of air strikes against Houthi targets and other Iranian proxies significantly degrading their capabilities. I commend the servicemembers who have taken part in these operations as well as the Navy and the Marine Corps leadership in facilitating humanitarian support to Gaza.

Our adversary should take note of the capabilities of the United States and our allies to bring to any conflict. Indeed, in other seas and ports around the world, particularly the Indopacom, the Navy, and the Marine Corps will continue to be the first line of deterrence and defense against China and other competitors' expanding ambitions.

The United States Navy remains the finest in the world, but our maritime forces must adapt quickly to this changing threat environment. To that end, President Biden's defense budget request for fiscal year 2025 includes \$257.6 billion in funding for the Department of the Navy. Within this budget, the Navy has requested a number of new ships. The procurement of several new destroyers, frigates, and logistics vessels is well-reasoned.

However, the Navy has requested to procure only one *Virginia*-class submarine in fiscal year 2025, diverging from the long-standing two per year plan. Instead, the Navy has requested one submarine and roughly \$2 billion to improve the capabilities of the submarine industrial base. I understand this was a difficult decision. I would ask our witnesses to discuss their reasoning in detail.

Additionally, I would like to know how the recently passed National Security Supplemental Appropriations Bill will help improve the situation, particularly with regard to the submarine industrial base and workforce, and let me commend Senator Wicker for his efforts to include \$3 billion in that Supplemental.

Finally, I would like the witnesses to discuss their expectations for the submarine production numbers in the future. Challenges similar to the submarine program are being experienced by other programs in both private and public shipyards. The department has undertaken its shipyard infrastructure optimization program, which represents more than \$25 billion in plant investment over the next 25 years to modernize and improve our Navy shipyards.

The Navy recently completed a 45-day assessment of its shipbuilding program. As the Navy's review makes clear, there are significant hurdles facing the service and the Nation to continue modernizing the fleet. Secretary Del Toro, I would appreciate your out-

look on the Navy's efforts to improve ship building and ship maintenance programs.

General Smith, the Marine Corps is in the midst of a substantial transformation focused primarily on competition in the Indo-Pacific. The service is restructuring around expedition and concepts that will provide a more flexible amphibious force that can support a broader naval fight once ashore. Indeed, the Marine Corps is much more than a ground fighting force. It must help control the sea and air in support of the joint force.

To achieve this, the Corps is prioritizing a number of modernization efforts, including long range fires, enhanced air and missile defense, and improved ground and amphibious combat vehicles. These platforms should help AC equip the marines with improved force, protection, lethality, and mobility. General, I would ask for an update on the force's design, concept, and progress.

There also may be discussions this morning about the appropriate amphibious force structure. I understand that the Marine Corps continues to seek 31 large amphibious ships to meet its requirements in addition to smaller vessels to support the expeditionary advanced base operation concept. Others have asserted that amphibious ships are necessary. I would ask each of the witnesses for an update on these discussions.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses for appearing today, and I look forward to their testimonies. As a reminder for my colleagues, there will be a closed session immediately following this hearing in room SDC-217.

Now, let me recognize Ranking Member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'm grateful to our witnesses for appearing today, and like you, Mr. Chairman, I want to extend an especially warm welcome to General Smith. General Smith, I think that this, without question, your first visit to this Committee since your heart operation, my colleagues and I are very grateful for your recovery.

I was interested to see the special report on one of the news programs just a few days ago. My hat is off to the Good Samaritan, Tim Leland, a CPR-trained bystander who happened along, highly trained, and was willing and capable of keeping you alive, helping you in your time of need.

I'm grateful, and this Nation is grateful to this young man, and I know this experience has given you renewed appreciation for your loved ones and for the marines you're leading. So, glad to see you looking so good.

I want to join all of you in expressing our gratitude to the men and women serving in our Marine Corps and in our Navy. In the Red Sea and elsewhere, they execute missions of which there are no other naval forces capable. For one example, our Navy has been the first to shoot down an anti-ship ballistic missile fired in conflict.

They are accomplishing feats like this so routinely that our Nation could easily forget what an astounding accomplishment that was and what astounding abilities we have. Destroyers like the

USS *Gravely*, which was built in my home State of Mississippi, are protecting maritime commerce, our allies, and our own forces.

For months on end, they operate persistently within range of enemy weapons. Their skill and bravery are evident. But these missions come at a cost, putting our young men and women on extended deployments, places sailor welfare material readiness, and weapons inventory at risk.

This Committee has a lot of work to do and we have a quantum leap that we need to make and we need to do it soon. The truth is that our naval fleet is too small and too old to meet the demands of our combatant commanders and our national defense strategy, particularly in the years going forward. The urgent need to rebuild the Navy is not lost on this Committee.

The pertinent question becomes, how should we rebuild? It's clear we will not be able to do so with the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request, which contains cuts to naval personnel, ship building weapons, and military construction. We will not be able to meet the needs of our Nation with that request. We're going to have to address this by working across the aisle, and I'm glad to be sitting next to a chairman who has shown a willingness to do this over time.

Here are the facts. Compared to fiscal year 2023, President Biden has asked the Navy to take a 3 percent cut. When accounting for inflation, these cuts impact the capacity of our force. The Navy is asking to retire 19 Battle Force ships and procure only six is just a fact. This is completely unacceptable. As I've done in the past, I want to work with my colleagues in Congress, as I say, across the aisle and in the other body to fix the Navy's budget.

The Navy has work to do internally while my colleagues and I work on the budget. The secretary's 45-day ship building review found delays across the entire portfolio. For example, the *Constellation*-class frigate will be 3 years late and will take nearly 10 years to deliver the lead ship. This is largely because the Navy cannot keep its requirements steady. Almost 70 percent of the requirements have changed since the Navy signed a contract. So, the outcome that we see today is no surprise.

This is not an example of the industry underperforming. This is senior officials unable to manage a program. This is acquisition malpractice and a terrible waste of time and resources. I want to understand what urgent steps the Secretary will take to improve the Navy as a customer, regulator, and technical authority. The upcoming landing ship medium program presents an opportunity for the Navy to avoid heading down the same disappointing path as the frigate.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates a cost two to three times greater than the Navy had budgeted. This new program can apply lessons learned to ensure that the marines get a ship at the capacity and schedule they need for campaigning in the Pacific.

I appreciate the efforts of the submarine industrial base community over the past 5 years, and I do appreciate the chair's kind words about our efforts and our success recently in getting over \$3 billion for the industrial base. The industrial base community is dealing in a holistic fashion with structural workforce and supply chain problems.

That's why I insisted last year as a condition for the office agreement that the Administration make a significant down payment on the submarine industrial base. This resulted in the \$3.4 billion that was included in the National Security Supplemental Appropriation. However, I remain concerned that this approach has not been taken for other ship classes.

Finally, I want to touch on the continuing recruiting crisis facing our military. Every service has struggled in recent years, but the Navy has been unique in its response. Other services have invested in reforms and new programs without sacrificing quality. But the Navy has lowered standards. That approach does not appear to be working.

Recent reports indicate the Navy could miss its recruiting mission by nearly 15 percent this year. We need to know if that's true. The Army and Air Force are now optimistic about their ability to achieve their respective recruiting goals. It's time for the Navy to learn from every other service and reemphasize quality.

I hope our witnesses will explain to this Committee how they plan to fix the Navy's recruiting crisis without sacrificing basic standards, and that's just the beginning of what I would like to say. We'll followup more on some questions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Mr. Secretary, please.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO,
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY**

Mr. DEL TORO. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of this Committee. It is indeed an honor to appear before you this morning to discuss the posture of the Department of the Navy.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank General Smith and Admiral Franchetti for, again, answering the call of our Nation time and time again. They, like all who devote their careers, and in many cases, indeed sacrifice their lives in defense of their fellow Americans, represent everything that makes this country a beacon of hope and freedom around the world.

Together, our combined years of service to our country totals over a century. A century marked by multiple deployments, time away from home and sacrifices made by our families. As we gather here this morning, tens of thousands of our sailors, our marines, or civilians and their families are either stationed or deployed all over the world, making the same sacrifices and enduring the same trials that myself, General Smith, and Admiral Franchetti have faced throughout our own careers.

I think that gives us a special appreciation for their service in the Indo-Pacific. Our Navy and Marine Corps are sailing and operating alongside our international allies and partners in support of free and open maritime commons, one where nations are secure in their access to the seas, and where their rights within our exclusive economic zones are respected and upheld by all nations, including the People's Republic of China.

Across Europe, we, in cooperation with our NATO allies, are supporting our Ukrainian partners as they continue to fight to restore

their territorial and national sovereignty as Russia's illegal, full-scale invasion is now into its third year. I commend Congress for passing the National Security Supplemental last month, allowing us to continue providing support to our Ukrainian partners as they fight to restore peace in their Homeland and indeed in defense of democracy for all countries and all free nations.

In the Red Sea, as you have stated, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, our sailors and marines have countered hundreds of missiles and drones launched by the Houthis these past 6 months, over 300, targeting merchant shipping, and the warships of both the United States and our international allies and partners.

We are confronting an adversary supported by Iran that has absolutely no respect for the innocent lives of civilian merchant mariners, and one that is actively targeting our ships, attempting to harm our sailors and marines because we dare to defend the defenseless. Last month, USS *Carney* and USS *Burke* both operating in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, intercepted several Iranian ballistic missiles heading toward Israel.

For those who question why the American taxpayer should provide for and maintain a Navy and a Marine Corps, look at what is happening today in the Middle East, where we are defending the free flow of international commerce, and actively defending our international partners and allies.

Members of the Committee, we appear before you today to ask for your continued support, thankful for the support you've provided us in the past, your partnership and your commitment, ensuring that nearly one million sailors, marines and civilians of the Department of the Navy that we lead are ready on all fronts at all times.

While the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 require us to make extremely hard choices. The \$257.6 billion in the President's budget request for fiscal year 2025 for our department adeptly balances, maintaining, modernizing the fleet and force of today, against planning for the future force, while also taking care of our people within those financial restrictions.

This budget directly supports our department's three enduring priorities of strengthening our maritime dominance, creating a culture of war, fighting excellence, and enhancing our strategic partnerships around the globe. We are acquiring the most lethal, agile, and capable warships, submarines, aircraft, weapons, and systems that our world has ever seen.

We are also funding the research and development of transformational technologies and fielding them more quickly to make our fleet more lethal and persistent within the current fit up. We're investing billions of dollars in the industrial base that supports us, while encouraging them to invest more in resources themselves at the same time.

As responsible stewards of taxpayer money, we will enforce accountability to ensure that our sailors and marines have the platforms and the capabilities that they need, on time and on budget. Above all else, we're taking care of our personnel and their families by focusing and improving housing, expanding childcare capacity, and increasing access to mental health resources amongst other critical areas.

We are clear-eyed about the challenges that our Nation and our Navy faces today in, in the maritime domain, both commercial and naval. As a maritime nation, we must confront the challenges of today and prepare for the potential conflict of tomorrow by investing in a strong Navy and Marine Corps.

Again, it's an honor to appear before you this morning and we look forward to discussing with you how best to deliver the Navy and Marine Corps capability that our Nation requires.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Carlos Del Toro follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE CARLOS DEL TORO

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you alongside General Smith and Admiral Franchetti to discuss the posture of the Department of the Navy (DON). We appreciate your trust and confidence in us to lead the nearly one million sailors, marines, and civilians of our Nation's naval services, and we value opportunities like this to discuss our approach to recruiting, training, equipping, and preparing our sailors and marines to defend our Nation.

For over 248 years, our Navy and Marine Corps have served as our Nation's vanguard, representing our interests around the globe—on, above, and below the sea, ashore, as well as in space and cyberspace. Our Founding Fathers recognized the importance of a well-trained, well-equipped naval force, and codified in our Constitution this legislative body's obligation to the American people to provide for and maintain a Navy and, by extension, a Marine Corps. Since the founding of our Nation, we have relied on our naval services to secure the world's oceans to sustain our economy through international trade, to engage with allies and partners thousands of miles away, and to confront the threats that have challenged our very way of life.

Today, our naval power is on full display around the globe, especially in the Red Sea and in the Indo-Pacific. We are reassuring allies and partners, deterring potential adversaries, and responding to the actions of those who wish to threaten the lives of our sailors, marines, and civilian merchant mariners engaged in lawful, international commercial activities. American sailors and marines are protecting the national security interests and prosperity of the United States—all in line with the National Security and National Defense Strategies.

As we confront global challenges, we remain laser-focused on managing our strategic competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC)—our pacing challenge. The PRC continues to behave provocatively and unsafely across the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. The PRC seeks to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interests, while undermining our alliances and security partnerships. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA(N)) is just one element of the maritime force Beijing employs to challenge the rules-based international order. As illustrated by ongoing PRC actions against our Philippine ally at Scarborough Reef and Second Thomas Shoal, the PRC uses its Navy, Coast Guard, and Maritime Militia as part of an integrated, cumulative campaign designed to force nations to submit to Beijing's excessive maritime claims despite international law, as reflected in the 2016 South China Sea ruling under Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Using these "gray zone" operations, the PRC is attempting to illegally appropriate other countries' offshore resources, threatening the peace, prosperity, and ecological stability of the world's ocean. Our Navy and our Marine Corps play a vital role—and have proven their effectiveness—in supporting our allies and partners' civilian vessels in standing up to the PRC's coercive maritime strategy in the South China Sea. While we do not seek confrontation, we will continue to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific, and we will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

In Europe, Russia's illegal war and full-scale invasion of Ukraine has entered its third year. Our Ukrainian partners continue to display incredible courage and bravery on the battlefield, in the air, and at sea as they strive to restore their national and territorial sovereignty. We are proud to stand by their side, along with our NATO allies, and it is imperative that we continue to provide them with the support required for them to achieve victory.

In the Middle East, the Iranian-aligned Houthis continue to launch unprovoked attacks on civilian merchant ships sailing innocently through waters where international law allows in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, one of the world's busiest waterways that accounts for more than 15 percent of the world's shipping traffic and connects Europe and Asia. More than 20 countries have joined us in Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect civilian ships and crews from harm. Acting in self-defense, our Navy and Marine Corps, along with the navies of our allies and partners, have shot down scores of anti-ship cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones launched by the Houthis. Our ships, aircraft, and crews have performed admirably to both protect international commercial ships from multi-domain threats and defend themselves.

Following exhaustive diplomatic efforts to seek an end to the Houthis' attacks without further damage and bloodshed, we and our allies have conducted multiple rounds of combined self-defense strikes against targets in parts of Houthi-controlled Yemen, including storage sites and locations associated with the group's missile and air surveillance capabilities. These strikes were in direct response to Houthi actions that have demonstrated their callous disregard for the lives of civilian merchant mariners, underscored by the anti-ship ballistic missile attack that claimed the lives of three seafarers aboard the merchant ship M/V True Confidence.

The Houthis' actions in the Red Sea are reverberating across the global economy. Iran, through its proxies and partners, aims to exploit the ongoing conflict in Gaza to exact a price on the rest of the world by increasing shipping costs and maritime insurance rates, as well as lengthening the time it takes goods to reach their intended ports. These costs are borne by our own citizens, as well as citizens in countries around the world, including those most vulnerable to disruptions in maritime transportation. It is imperative that we and our global network of allies and partners bring an end to the Houthis' threat to United States Navy vessels and the disruption of the free flow of maritime commerce. In the Red Sea, as elsewhere, we must not hesitate to counter those who threaten the free and lawful use of the sea by all nations.

The operations in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the past 3 months illustrate perfectly how technological investments and force design decisions made by naval leaders in the past impact operations for decades. The backbone of our air defense fleet, the Aegis Combat System, first became a program of record as the Advanced Surface Missile System 60 years ago this year. Launching from the flight deck of the nearly 47 year-old USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69) in the Red Sea region, the workhorse of our air wings, the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, is derivative of a strike fighter platform that first flew 45 years ago this year, employing the latest version of an air-to-air missile, the AIM-9 Sidewinder, which first entered service 68 years ago. The platforms and weapon systems our sailors and marines have used with great effect in shooting down Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones can be traced back to development efforts and disciplined investments from the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's, as well as timely modernizations and upgrades that have enabled these platforms and systems to be relevant in today's threat environment.

Today, the decisions we make regarding shipbuilding, platform and systems acquisition, cybersecurity and information technology, maintenance, repair, and caring for our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families will shape the future of the Navy and Marine Corps in the

2050's and beyond. I fully support Admiral Franchetti's priorities outlined in America's Warfighting Navy and General Smith's efforts to modernize and increase the lethality of the Marine Corps under the umbrella of Force Design. The guidance issued by our service chiefs is aligned with my three enduring priorities of Strengthening Maritime Dominance, Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence, and Enhancing Strategic Partnerships. With the support of Congress, we have made tremendous progress over the past year to advance our three enduring priorities.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE DON'S THREE ENDURING PRIORITIES

Strengthening Maritime Dominance

Over the past 12 months, we have delivered nearly a dozen new battle force ships to the fleet and have nearly ninety under contract, including our highest acquisition priority, the *Columbia*-class SSBN. We continue to explore new block buys and multi-year contracts to procure ships more efficiently and affordably while providing our industry partners with clear and predictable demand signals for ships, submarines, and munitions. The submarine industrial base faces an increased demand as we ramp up production of *Columbia*-class SSBNs and continue procuring *Virginia*-class SSNs. To augment our Fleet and our Force, we have made significant

strides in developing and deploying a hybrid fleet (manned and unmanned) across the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Fleet Areas of Operations. The Windward Stack and Gatekeeper operations, led by Fourth and Fifth Fleet, respectively, and similar activities in other theaters provide persistent presence and deliver all-domain awareness across a total area covering tens of thousands of square miles. The assistance provided to Ukraine by United States Naval Forces Europe has demonstrated how to deliver combat power with a hybrid fleet in battle with Russia's Black Sea Fleet. We are also on track to conduct an at-sea test of the Transportable Re-Arming Mechanism (TRAM) for Vertical Launch System at-sea reloading, which will significantly increase the combat readiness of our surface fleet by reducing combat reload times.

To keep our Fleet ready, we continue to modernize our four public shipyards through the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP). Over the past year, we have completed renovations and improvements of our dry docks at both Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, and awarded a \$2.84 billion construction contract for the replacement of Dry Dock 3 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. All of this progress was made possible with the support of Congress, and I appreciate your enduring commitment to ensuring the success of SIOP as we contract, fund, execute, and complete these critical projects to support our future requirements and keep our warships and submarines mission-ready.

As we modernize our Fleet and our Force through several initiatives to increase their lethality, mobility, and capabilities, we are also increasing their resiliency in an effort to combat the effects of climate change. In 2022, our Department released Climate Action 2030, focusing our approach on this important issue. Actions we have taken in line with our climate strategy include critical infrastructure upgrades to increase the resiliency of our installations, which are central to our ability to project naval power both at-sea and ashore. Through our Chief Sustainability Officer, the DON has issued guidance on resilient infrastructure, water security, acquisitions, and energy to ensure that we make good use of the resources we have now and invest in the resources we will need in the future. As a maritime nation, we cannot afford to ignore how our world's changing climate impacts the environments across which our sailors, marines, and civilians operate. Our operational environment is directly impacted, increasing the mission demands of our maritime forces and decreasing our ability to respond to those demands.

Our partners and allies are seeing the same thing, and as we work to reduce the threat of climate change and increase our resilience, we are committed to working with them to ensure our collective naval forces remain resilient and resourced to maintain their competitive advantages in the decades to come.

Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence

Our people remain our greatest strength. Personnel readiness and resilience begin and end with them. Every sailor, marine, and civilian deserves leadership at all levels that fosters healthy commands built on trust, respect, and inclusion. We will ensure that both Quality of Life and Quality of Service meet the standards expected by our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families. We are prioritizing our most pressing infrastructure problems, including facilities, barracks, water, and energy.

We are acting on our commitment to provide additional services for our sailors and marines who reside in unaccompanied housing. In February, we launched a pilot program in Hampton Roads to provide complimentary internet access to all sailors living in unaccompanied housing. The feedback we receive from our personnel participating in these programs will directly inform our future efforts to roll out this service Department-wide, providing sailors and marines with access to free internet services in unaccompanied housing.

We also remain committed to maximizing sailor and marine development and are pursuing every available avenue to retain our best and most fully qualified personnel while recruiting the next generation. Our education institutions, including the Naval Academy, Naval Postgraduate School, Naval War College, Marine Corps University, and Naval Community College, remain world-class, and we released the Naval Education Strategy last year to modernize our naval education to meet our Nation's security needs.

Enhancing Strategic Partnerships

Our greatest asymmetric advantage is our global network of allies and partners. We continue to foster strong security ties, pursue new ways to link industrial bases, secure supply chains, and co-produce technologies to boost our collective capabilities. For example, the historic AUKUS trilateral partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, provides a generational opportunity to

strengthen our respective security and defense capabilities, uplift our respective industrial bases, and contribute to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Additionally, we are focused on advocating for national maritime power—both commercial and naval—across the Federal Government. We have collaborated with our inter-agency partners at the Department of Transportation, Department of Commerce, Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Trade Representative, and with maritime stakeholders throughout the Department of Defense, to build consensus and identify actions that we can take in support of our Nation's shipbuilding and ship repair capabilities and capacity in support of our naval services. We are appreciative of the widespread interest and support these topics have garnered in Congress, and we look forward to working with you in the years to come to identify solutions that will improve the readiness and health of our Nation's commercial maritime and naval fleets.

We likewise remain committed to bolstering our relationships with the defense industrial base and academia. With congressional support, Ship and Submarine Industrial Base investments have led to improved hiring across our submarine shipbuilders and suppliers; establishment of dedicated manufacturing trade centers and pipelines; and the training and placement of over 5,000 people within the industrial base since 2020. Over the next decade, our Nation will need 200,000 new qualified workers to choose careers in fields like naval architecture, engineering, and lifecycle management, as well as technical expertise in nuclear welding, robotics, software management, and additive manufacturing. Pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship, and labor management programs are critical tools to help fulfill this labor demand.

Finally, we are strengthening our bonds with the communities we serve across our Nation through outreach, Navy and Marine Corps Weeks, Fleet Weeks, and other events. I am especially proud of the work we've done to foster our connectedness with Tribal Nations. The Department of the Navy is the first military department to have a full-time, dedicated Director of Tribal and Indigenous Affairs. We are committed to the enduring relationships and transparency in our work with Tribal Nations to meet our shared goals, as well as all communities which our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families work in and call home.

THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Building on the successes and progress made along our three enduring priorities during 2023, the President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 request to Congress for the Department of the Navy reflects President Biden's faith in our vision for the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps, and advocates for the funding levels required to maintain the Fleet and the Force that our Nation requires. Our request this year for the Department of the Navy is \$257.6 billion, a 0.7 percent increase over the \$255.8 billion in the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget request, adhering to the defense spending levels set by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (FRA). I will note for the Committee that adhering to the FRA required us to make hard choices, leading us to prioritize the readiness of our Fleet and our Force today, as well as taking care of our people, over significant investments in the future force. These choices are reflected throughout President's Budget 2025.

Every dollar of this requested investment by the American taxpayer will ensure that our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families are provided for—from the continued acquisition of strategic platforms and systems, investments in research and development as well as basic science and technology, addressing critical infrastructure requirements, to improving overall Quality of Life/Quality of Service for our personnel. Most importantly, President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 will ensure the Department of the Navy's ability to continue to invest in support of our three enduring priorities.

STRENGTHENING MARITIME DOMINANCE

Fleet Investments

For fiscal year 2025, we are requesting \$32.4 billion to support ongoing shipbuilding programs and allow for the procurement of six battle force ships, each one bringing advanced warfighting capabilities to the Fleet.

In the undersea domain, this budget provides funding for the first boat in a new multi-year procurement contract for our Block VI *Virginia*-class nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN) and provides significant additional resources to increase industrial capacity for submarine construction. Our request also continues funding for the second of our *Columbia*-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), as well as advance procurement and continuous production supporting the remaining boats. The *Columbia* SSBN will modernize the most-survivable leg of our

country's nuclear triad and remains our Department's highest priority acquisition program.

For our surface fleet, we look to procure two *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers (DDGs) and one *Constellation*-class frigate (FFG), each of which will bring additional capacity and capability to our Fleet's integrated air and missile defense, anti-surface, anti-submarine, and naval strike operations. In support of the Marine Corps' Force Design, President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 also provides funding for the first-in-class Landing Ship Medium (LSM) to enable mobility and sustainment for the Stand-In Force. Investments in our amphibious fleet with the request for one Flight II *San Antonio*-class Landing Dock Transport (LPD) in each of fiscal year 2025, fiscal year 2027, and fiscal year 2029 are necessary to maintain the thirty-one amphibious ships required by law and will give us the flexibility to retire older and less-capable platforms.

Aviation Investments

As we continue to modernize our surface and undersea fleets, we must also ensure that our aviation community has the right mix of air frames and capabilities to support our sailors and marines in the execution of their assigned missions. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 requests \$16.2 billion to support aircraft procurement, aircraft modification efforts, the acquisition of critical spare and repair parts, and funding for aircraft support equipment and facilities.

Our request for fixed-wing aircraft centers around the procurement of twenty-six F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters—thirteen carrier-based F-35s for the Navy and Marine Corps and 13 short-takeoff vertical-landing F-35s for the Marine Corps—and our rotary wing procurement request for the Marine Corps includes 19 CH-53K heavy-lift helicopters as part of a new, 2-year block buy for airframes with engines procured as a 5-year multi-year block buy.

President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 also includes funding to begin low-rate initial production of the MQ-25, an unmanned, carrier-based platform that will provide an organic, in-air refueling capability to our carrier airwings. The MQ-25 is the "pathfinder" to the Air Wing of the Future, and will increase the strike range, capability, and lethality of both the Carrier Air Wing and the Carrier Strike Group.

USMC Ground Investments

Equally as crucial to our Fleet and our Force are the investments we make in the Marine Corps' ability to operate ashore. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 requests \$4.2 billion in support of critical investments that are key to the success of the Marine Corps' Force Design transformation efforts. Highlights in platform and system acquisition efforts include 80 new Amphibious Combat Vehicles, 674 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, and 123 Javelin anti-armor missiles. Also included are requests for funding to continue the procurement of Medium Range Intercept Capability (MRIC) missiles and launchers and support the sustainment of the Ground/Air Task Oriented RADAR (G/ATOR).

The dollars committed to these acquisition programs will exponentially increase the mobility, survivability, and lethality of our marines, giving them advantages over our adversaries in austere and contested environments.

Munitions Procurement

As we consider how our Fleet and our Force fight in contested environments, there is no better example than our operations in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, where the strike and air defense capabilities of our naval forces are in high demand by U.S. Central Command. However, we are expending critical munitions from our stockpiles with every engagement. Our \$6.6 billion request continues our multi-year procurement of the Standard Missile, Naval Strike Missile, Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM), and Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile-Extended Range (AARGM-ER). We also intend to procure Tactical Tomahawks for the Navy and Marine Corps, supporting their ability to strike targets both from the sea and from the shore.

Further, this request increases production for both the LRASM and AARGM-ER, both of which are critical munitions that allow our sailors and marines to engage targets at an extended range, reducing risk to personnel and platforms. We are also investing in systems designed to provide ships with an ability to defeat unmanned aerial vehicles in a way that both lowers the cost-per-kill and reduces the expenditure of high-end missiles against relatively low-end threats. These systems will help put us on the "right side of the cost curve" while also increasing the ability of our ships to remain on station for longer periods of time.

Cyber, Cybersecurity, and Information Technology

As we procure more advanced platforms, we continue the modernization of our IT systems and the cybersecurity safeguards that protect them. We continue to refresh and modernize our computer systems and virtual environments to provide a better user experience, in line with the “Fix Our Computers” initiative. We are also taking advantage of the new capabilities for connectivity provided by proliferated Low Earth Orbit (P-LEO) satellite networks to support our Fleet and our Force, both at sea and ashore. By decreasing the time required for users to log in and set up applications, as well as increasing data flows and network accessibility, we are improving the quality of service provided to hundreds of thousands of users across the entire Department of the Navy.

At the same time, we are implementing our new, comprehensive Cyber Strategy, published in November by our Chief Information Officer and Principal Cyber Advisor. This strategy aims to ensure that the DON’s cyber posture positions our naval services for success during competition, crisis, and conflict. The DON Cyber Strategy is directly aligned to the National Defense Strategy and DOD Cyber Strategy and outlines seven lines of effort for our Department to focus on, including cyber workforce development; cyber readiness; defense of enterprise IT; data and networks; defense of critical infrastructure and weapon systems; partnering to secure the defense industrial base; and fostering cooperation and collaboration. In addition to these efforts, I have directed the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) to utilize other proactive initiatives under their authorities as the Military Department Counterintelligence Organization (MDCO) to better support and harden the industrial base from adversarial cyber and traditional intelligence threats to ensure acquisition integrity.

Additionally, I am committed to supporting our Cyber Mission Forces (CMF)—both Navy and Marine Corps—as they continue to gain advantage in this critical warfare domain. President’s Budget for fiscal year 2025 supports the continued development of our Department’s CMF, both in terms of manning and training, to ensure our personnel are prepared to operate in cyberspace.

Through the investments requested in President’s Budget for fiscal year 2025 for our Department’s information technology, cybersecurity programs, and cyber personnel, we will continue to make progress to secure our global networks from external and internal threats posed by State and non-State cyber actors while maintaining the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data for our users.

Funding for Operations and Maintenance

While acquisition of new platforms and capabilities is critical to the modernization of the Fleet and the Force, we must always make readiness our top priority. President’s Budget for fiscal year 2025 requests \$34.6 billion for Fleet readiness, with \$7.6 billion for ship operations such as training and deployment, \$14.5 billion for fleet upkeep—including fifty-eight ship and submarine maintenance availabilities at our public and private yards, \$10.6 billion for 875,000 flight hours for our Navy and Marine Corps flight crews, and \$1.9 billion for aviation maintenance to increase the number of mission-capable aircraft. Additionally, we are requesting \$4.5 billion to ensure our Fleet Marine Force remains prepared to operate forward. This amount includes \$2 billion for field logistics, \$2.1 billion to maintain the operational readiness of marine units around the world, \$200 million for maritime prepositioning, and \$200 million for depot maintenance for ground platforms and systems.

Divestments

As we acquire new platforms and systems and focus on the maintenance, upkeep, and operation of those that are in service, we must also evaluate which platforms have outlived their service life and are a drain on the force in terms of time, capital, pier space, and personnel.

In the information technology (IT) realm, the DON continues to realize progress through Operation Cattle Drive, our Department’s effort to accelerate the modernization and transformation of our IT capabilities. Led by our Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management and Comptroller and Chief Information Officer, we are working to sunset unneeded, obsolete, unproductive, insecure, and un-auditable IT systems and applications.

Operation Cattle Drive will accomplish two goals: 1) improve the overall financial management and auditability of the DON, and 2) eliminate unnecessarily redundant IT systems, resulting in increased efficiencies, cost avoidance, and funding reallocation to close known resource gaps, enabling better support to our sailors and marines.

President’s Budget for fiscal year 2025 also requests the divestment of several platforms, including the EP-3 Aries, U.S. Navy MH-53E mine countermeasure and

heavy lift helicopters, MQ-8C unmanned rotary aircraft, and ten ships. As this Committee is aware, legacy platforms that are costly to maintain and are ill-equipped to perform their missions in contested environments must be retired in order to invest in new, lethal capabilities.

Some of the ships we seek to divest have yet to reach their expected service lives. Recognizing that the American taxpayer has committed billions of dollars to construction, outfitting, maintenance, and operation of these warships, allow me to provide a hull-by-hull explanation of our request.

For USS *Shiloh* (CG 67) and USS *Lake Erie* (CG 70), both ships are less than 3 years away from their end of service life, and will require a significant amount of time and resources to improve their material condition and upgrade their combat, hull, mechanical, and electrical systems. Simply put, the costs associated with these upgrades and continued operation of these ships post-modernization are too high to yield a positive return on investment. Instead of returning these ships to a ready State just in time for their normal retirement, the Navy will apply the funding associated with these ships elsewhere either to maintain or modernize in-service assets that provide a greater combat capability to the Fleet and the Joint Force.

The same justification applies for USS *Germantown* (LSD 42), which will reach the end of its expected service life in 2026. USS *Germantown* currently has an unsatisfactory life cycle health assessment and is proposed for divestment based on the cost and condition of the ship, including her rotting wooden decks, limitations on the operation of her cranes, and other material deficiencies. The funds required to maintain USS *Germantown* for her final 2 years are better spent elsewhere in support of our amphibious fleet. I will also highlight for the Committee that retiring USS *Germantown* 1 year early does not impact our ability to meet the 31 amphibious ship requirement as we continue to procure new LPDs throughout the FYDP with the support of Congress.

USS *Jackson* (LCS 6) and USS *Montgomery* (LCS 8)—two of our *Independence*-class variant littoral combat ships—have yet to receive the Lethality and Survivability Upgrade, an investment of several million dollars per ship that is beyond our current fiscal guidance. Further, these ships represent an excess LCS capacity beyond our revised requirement for 15 MCM and ten Surface Warfare Mission Packages.

Much like USS *Jackson* and USS *Montgomery*, USNS *Spearhead* (T-EPF-1), USNS *Choctaw County* (T-EPF-2), USNS *Millinocket* (T-EPF-3), and USNS *Fall River* (T-EPF-4), represent excess capacity beyond what our Navy and Marine Corps needs for expeditionary fast transport ships (T-EPF). Currently, the Navy has 14 T-EPFs in service with two additional hulls under construction, exceeding the revised, combined Navy and Marine Corps requirement for 12 EPFs. By divesting these four T-EPFs to bring our fleet size in line with service requirements, the Navy will realize significant cost savings and will be able to use the available financial and manpower resources to support higher priority programs.

Finally, we are requesting to divest the USNS *John Glenn* (ESD-2), one of our Fleet's two expeditionary transfer docks which were originally designed and configured around a specific concept of operations for uncontested ship-to-shore maneuver that has been obviated by the evolution of the threat environment. Operational limitations, including low sea-state restrictions, lack of organic surface connectors, and other challenges that limit the utility of this platform as presently configured. By inactivating USNS *John Glenn*, which is already in a reduced operating status, we project an annual cost savings of \$33 million in OMN funding.

While all ten of these ships, as well as the sailors and Merchant mariners who have crewed them throughout their time in service so far, have served our Nation admirably, their divestment during fiscal year 2025 will allow us to maximize our utilization of resources and personnel in support of programs and platforms that better support the Joint Force in countering our most pressing threats.

Research and Development (R&D) of Enhanced Capabilities

Beyond the acquisition of new platforms, systems, and munitions, as well as the divestment of those that are no longer capable of performing their missions, our Department is also focused on the research and development of our next-generation capabilities. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025's \$25.7 billion for R&D continues to invest in developing and fielding those very capabilities that our sailors and marines of tomorrow will rely on in potential future conflicts. These includes our next-generation fighter aircraft, submarines, and large surface combatants, as well as unmanned systems that will operate in the air, on the ocean's surface, and under the sea. Over \$3 billion of this request will also go toward enterprise networks, cybersecurity, and electronic warfare systems to support our personnel and bolster our current posture across the electromagnetic spectrum.

As a part of our larger R&D funding request, \$2.53 billion is set aside for basic science and technology development that underpins our future capabilities. Yesterday, we released our Department's latest Naval Science and Technology Strategy, the execution of which will be led by our Chief of Naval Research and his team. This strategy will serve as the driving force behind how we invest the American taxpayers' dollars on S&T and will directly contribute to ensuring that our Nation leads the world in developing revolutionary technologies.

Our Department recognizes the importance of protecting the investments we are making in basic S&T research to preserve the competitive advantages they provide to our sailors and marines as technologies mature into cutting-edge capabilities. In early February, the Department of Defense (DoD) released the National Defense Industrial Strategy, centered around four priorities—resilient supply chains, workforce readiness, flexible acquisition, and economic deterrence—to strengthen our industrial base's resilience and counter threats posed by adversary capital investments and intellectual property misappropriation to our Nation's innovation ecosystem. In support of this strategy, the DON recently stood up the Maritime Economic Deterrence Executive Council (MEDEC). This body will serve as a coordinating mechanism to synchronize efforts to protect new and novel technologies with naval applications, both across the Department and in alignment with our inter-agency partners.

Over the past year, we have made structural changes throughout our Department—from standing up and empowering new innovation-focused units to elevating the Chief of Naval Research to be a direct report to me—to better facilitate the rapid identification, experimentation, prototyping, fielding, and adoption of new capabilities and technologies that provide our sailors and our marines with competitive warfighting advantages.

In September, we stood up the Department's Science and Technology Board, chaired by former Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig, to bring together leaders across various disciplines to help identify new technologies and capabilities. I charged them to explore the impact of asymmetric, cutting-edge technologies in both the near and distant futures of warfighting, across all domains in which we operate. They are working on improving surface ship cyber defense, shipboard additive manufacturing, and lifecycle maintenance. Our ongoing project on surface ship maintenance is investigating key issues that impact our performance. I expect their recommendations on potential new technology investments will improve all aspects of our operations, including planning, condition-based assessments, additive/advanced manufacturing, and IT modernization.

Likewise, our initiative on surface ship cyber defense is crucial to executing complex missions in contested environments. We have a world-class team performing this study that will benefit the Fleet. As part of this initiative, we have integrated cybersecurity and defense requirements into the new *Constellation*-class frigate as a critical attribute at the onset of the program. The program has scheduled early integration testing events at available land-based test sites. We intend for these test events to assess network cybersecurity controls and reduce shipboard integration risks for government and contractor-furnished equipment.

This past year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Naval Research Laboratory, highlighting our Department's long history of pioneering research with academia, the private sector and other partners to develop and deliver naval superiority. We benefit from a strong organic, national and global research ecosystem across the entire Naval Research and Development Establishment (NR&DE).

Composed of our 15 Naval Warfare Centers, five Naval University Affiliated Research Centers (UARC)s, the Office of Naval Research, NRL, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity (MCTSSA), Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and our Center for Naval Analysis (CNA), the NR&DE continues to be at the forefront of our basic and applied research through technology development, integration, operations, maintenance and sustainment. The NR&DE unifies Naval R&D organizations to provide greater technological advantage to U.S. warfighting.

This continuum of science, research, development, testing, and evaluation is critical to transitioning ideas and concepts developed in the lab to new capabilities for naval warfighters. Our long-view approach provides our thought leaders the autonomy to produce the scientific knowledge, capability improvements and disruptive technologies able to address naval mission needs. ONR is investing in science and technology projects alongside our international partners and allies, each aiming to address common challenges we face as maritime nations. Similarly, ONR, through NavalX, is working to deepen our international and domestic relationships with industry via our Tech Bridges, many of which are co-located with our Naval Warfare Centers. We connect directly with companies and source commercial technologies

that complement and supplement our Fleet and our Force's existing systems, tools, and research.

The Naval Innovation Center (NIC) at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, which I announced in December 2022, will empower our next generation of warfighters by leveraging the unique warrior talent at NPS to inform future operational concepts and advanced technology development. The NIC will provide a space for academic collaboration, defense-focused experimentation, and demonstration of operational use cases to ensure the effectiveness, technological leadership and warfighting advantage of the Naval services. Meanwhile, the Marine Innovation Unit (MIU) is focused on identifying, experimenting, and rapidly fielding technologies and capabilities to address gaps identified by our marines. MIU leverages the expertise and professional networks of our talented Reserve marines to accelerate the development and fielding of key capabilities throughout the Force. Their efforts are already reducing timelines between identifying needs and delivering warfighting capabilities supporting the Marine Corps' transformational Force Design, ensuring our marines are agile, capable, and lethal.

The Navy's Disruptive Capabilities Office (DCO) is pushing the bounds of rapidly identifying innovative applications of existing and new systems by harnessing today's exponential growth in technology. The DCO is collaborating with stakeholders from across our Department, DOD, and industry, focusing on identifying solutions for our warfighters at a pace and scale to close our Fleet's most critical capability gaps. It works closely with the NR&DE to address the immediate and near-term needs that require the rapid transition and integration of new and innovative solutions.

Program Executive Office (PEO) Integrated Warfare Systems and PEO Land Systems are conducting a pilot program to improve our business practices, realigning their respective portfolios to a capabilities-focused model. This pilot program explores how our Program Executives can operate under a new portfolio-centric construct to increase the capability development and fielding rate over our present timelines and does so in a manner that leverages pre-existing authorities. The lessons we learn throughout this pilot program will enable all our PEOs to better address the emerging threats and requirements under their respective purviews.

An essential element of our Department's approach to innovation is the collaboration with our fellow services and throughout the DOD. We work with our partners at the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and the Office of Strategic Capital to ensure that our requirements for critical technologies are illuminated to industry and investors for their consideration. We are committed to close collaboration within our own Department and with our fellow services, OSD, DIU, and the entire Federal Government to ensure we are aligned. The Department of the Navy's contribution to the "Replicator Initiative," partnering closely alongside joint efforts like DIU, will accelerate production and delivery of the capabilities our Joint Force needs at scale.

Innovation is not solely about delivering material solutions. In many cases, the solutions to real operational problems can be found by changing warfighting doctrine or training approaches. As we re-focus our efforts on addressing the challenges we face in the maritime domain today and will face in the future, we must recognize that there are still organizational changes which must be made to ensure we are developing, adopting, and scaling at a rapid pace to deliver the technologies and capabilities our sailors and marines require.

Working alongside our partners throughout the DOD, we will continue to evaluate our approach to the rapid adoption and fielding of new capabilities and technologies to ensure we are reducing barriers and transition timelines, ensuring our sailors and marines are equipped with modern systems and platforms to support their missions.

Investments in the Organic Industrial Base

As we continue to acquire the ships, submarines, aircraft, and systems we need today and invest in the development of the next generation of platforms and capabilities for the fight of tomorrow, we will not be successful without substantial, consistent investments in the infrastructure that enables these platforms. To that end, President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 requests \$2.8 billion to continue making the necessary investments in our four public shipyards that will ensure their sustainability and climate resiliency through the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP). As I noted earlier, SIOP will improve the operational availability of our Fleet by providing modernized facilities, infrastructure, and equipment that will undoubtedly increase our shipyards' capacity and capabilities to complete maintenance availabilities. By recapitalizing century-old infrastructure, we are also improving the Quality-of-Service for the over 30,000 engineers, artisans, and sailors who work at our four public shipyards, providing safer working conditions while cre-

ating reliable, resilient, secure energy and water sources for this infrastructure and its mission.

Infrastructure and Installation Resilience

DON installations and facilities are power projection platforms. In order for our installations to remain safe, secure, effective, and resilient, our Department has made it a top priority to tackle infrastructure deficiencies that decrease our ability to support mission requirements. This effort includes addressing facilities and core utilities that are beyond service life and in poor condition as a result of decades of under-investment and neglect. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 includes a request for \$11.1 billion for the Navy and \$4.6 billion for the Marine Corps for installation and facilities support, as well as \$4.6 billion for military construction projects, to support our worldwide infrastructure portfolio that our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families rely on every day.

While the Department continues to invest in our most critical infrastructure, we are initiating a thirty-year infrastructure plan to guide future investments and resources to fully address the gaps in modernization and recapitalization. This plan is an integrated, informed, sustainable approach that recognizes our installations are critical to our Navy and our Marine Corps' ability to project power on a global scale as well as to defend the Homeland.

We also recently initiated a Critical Infrastructure Synchronization Forum, which is designed to work through the challenges and interdependencies of infrastructure resilience and address the threats to our most critical facilities and core utilities. In support of this effort, President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 includes funding for cyber hardening, smart grids, facility-related control systems, and black start exercises, directly bolstering our infrastructure portfolio against hazards.

As I highlighted earlier, a major challenge that directly impacts our infrastructure is climate change. Climate resilience is an essential component of DON mission readiness, and the Department strives to ensure installations and infrastructure are resilient against extreme weather events, water scarcity, sea level rise, recurrent flooding, wildfires, and other environmental considerations and threats that present significant risk to our mission. Effectively responding to climate impacts is a critical component of strengthening maritime dominance and directly impacts the entire spectrum of military operations. Our National Security Strategy highlights climate change as the greatest and potentially existential shared problem for all nations, and our National Defense Strategy rightly recognizes climate change as a "trans-boundary challenge" that is transforming the context in which the Joint Force operates. We are taking actions to bolster the resiliency of our Department, while also working alongside our international partners and allies. For example, next month the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and the Environment will be hosting the Department's third climate-related tabletop exercise.

This exercise will be focused on the challenges posed by climate change throughout the Caribbean, and how we can work with and support key regional partners on topics including health, safety, and infrastructure. I look forward to sharing with you the outcome of this exercise and what lessons learned can further enhance our Department's approach to ensuring the sustainability of our worldwide infrastructure portfolio and advance our collaboration with and support of key regional partners.

Energy and energy security are critical to the DON's ability to provide global presence and ensure stability, deter adversaries, respond to crises, and, if necessary, fight and win our Nation's wars. Energy security is necessary to address how we operate in a contested logistics environment, as well as address the increasing demand for clean and reliable energy to support electrification, support data centers and power Artificial Intelligence, directed-energy weapons, autonomous vehicles, and future technologies. In recent years, the DON has begun development of the Next Generation-Medium Tactical Truck (NG-MTT) to reduce bulk fuel logistics burdens and improve fuel economy. The DON has also developed and patented a safety mitigation container solution to enable the fielding of battery-powered ground vehicles, the first step toward hybridization efforts for Navy ships. Additionally, the Department continues to invest in analytic assessments to support decisionmaking to meet fuel metering and monitoring requirements.

Red Hill

As we focus on our critical infrastructure portfolio, we remain engaged with the communities that support our installations. One example of this is the values we share with the people of Hawai'i in the community we share with them—including our servicemembers, civilians, and their families—who were affected by the fuel spill at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (Red Hill). Since November 2021,

our Department has been laser-focused on monitoring and remediating the environmental impacts and addressing the effects this spill had on the community that we committed to providing safe drinking water to. Now, with over 99 percent of the previously held fuel reserves removed 6 months ahead of schedule, we remain steadfast in our resolve to close Red Hill permanently and conduct the long-term environmental remediation and aquifer restoration efforts at this site to ensure the health of the surrounding natural environment. Last month, I was in Hawai'i to attend the transfer of responsibilities ceremony from Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH), which was responsible for defueling Red Hill, to Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill (NCTF-RH), which will execute the permanent closure of that facility. NCTF-RH's motto is "Safe, Deliberate, Engaged, Committed," and we will continue to engage with Red Hill stakeholders at all levels to rebuild the trust between our Department and the people of Hawai'i in our ability to provide safe drinking water to the communities we serve.

Safety

Safety is a critical component of our Navy and our Marine Corps foundation and a key indicator of professionalism and discipline, directly contributing to the combat readiness of our Fleet and our Force. The Department of the Navy places the utmost importance on building a culture of safety excellence, and we reject the notion that safety mishaps are simply "the price of doing business." Many mishaps are preventable when we comply with established procedures and take action to stop unsafe acts before they occur.

However, despite our best efforts, incidents do occur, and when they do, we quickly respond. The Department of the Navy re-established the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Safety) position as a Tier 3 SES, elevating the DON's Safety portfolio commensurate with the importance we place on safety. In addition, the Navy Executive Safety Board, chaired by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, was reinitiated in 2024 and took effective action on systemic issues noted by the Naval Safety Command (e.g., Shore Fire Protection Systems, Enterprise Safety Management System, and the LCS Small Boat Launch and Recovery System). The DON also established the Shore Policy Board to highlight and address infrastructure-related concerns. The Marine Corps directed the assignment of a General Officer to lead marine service safety initiatives and provide the requisite level of oversight and leadership.

The DON takes every mishap seriously and properly investigates causal and contributing factors to prevent future occurrences. Additionally, we continue to improve our analytic capability to facilitate identification of units that may be at risk of potential mishap. We continue to refine the identification of occupational exposures to things like chemicals, noise, and blast overpressure, to better understand the effects of these exposures through science and improve methods to limit exposure. We are executing efforts such as the promulgation of Lessons Learned and a continuous evaluation and refinement of safety policy and guidance.

Creating and maintaining a culture of safety within the Department of the Navy ensures our warfighting readiness, and we remain committed to prioritizing safety education and promulgation.

Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence

Building a culture of warfighting excellence is focused on training our sailors and our marines to be the very best warfighters they can be, rooted in the principles of taking care of our people and enabling strong leadership with an emphasis on treating each other with dignity and respect. This pillar of our enduring priorities emphasizes not only caring for our sailors and marines, but also our Navy and Marine Corps families and civilians. Under President's Budget for fiscal year 2025, we continue to invest in programs and infrastructure that support our people and enable them to devote their maximum effort to mission accomplishment.

Warfighting Expertise

In August 2023, the Navy and Marine Corps conducted Large Scale Exercise 2023 (LSE 23), the third and most complex iteration of the exercise, which included more than 25,000 sailors and marines across the world. LSE 23 was a Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC) exercise which spanned 22 time zones and included USS *Eisenhower* (CVN 69) and five other carrier strike groups (two live, four virtual), six Amphibious Ready Group (two live, four virtual), and 25 live and 50 virtual additional ships. Based in real-world events, the Navy and Marine Corps assessed and refined modern warfighting concepts such as Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE), and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) throughout the exercise.

The Navy is advancing warfighting tactics and development through continued implementation of integrated training environments—live platforms and simulators—across our Fleet, including Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC), Link Inject-to-Live (LITL), Navy Continuous Training Environment (NCTE), and Tactical Operational Flight Trainers (TOFT).

The Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC) remains laser-focused on forging new and advanced surface warfare tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and training Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) who bring their warfighting expertise to the Fleet. Surface WTIs, highly trained surface warfare officers, specialize in Anti-Submarine and Surface Warfare (ASW/SUW), Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD), Amphibious Warfare (AMW), and Mine Warfare (MIW) and are engaged at every stage of a ship's training cycle.

Our successes in the Red Sea are a direct reflection of our investments in high-end tactical training and advanced TTP development, spearheaded by SMWDC, Naval Air Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC), Naval Information Warfighting Development Center (NIWDC), and the WTIs in the Fleet.

We also continue to adapt the expertise of our people in uniform to match the changing character of war. Similar to the establishment of our Maritime Space Officer community in 2021 and the creation of our Maritime Cyber Warfare Officer and the enlisted Cyber Warfare Technician rating last year, earlier this year, we established the enlisted Robotics Warfare Specialist (RW) rating to plan missions and operate and maintain remotely operated and autonomous systems.

The RW rating is a major milestone in the Navy achieving a hybrid fleet. These new areas of expertise are necessary to preserve our warfighting advantage, and also require a strong foundation of education.

Education Initiatives

We continue to prioritize education in support of force readiness. We provide a range of learning opportunities for our sailors, marines, and DON civilians to further develop their professional competencies and intellectual skills that enable our Naval force to succeed against competitors and adversaries, and effectively deter aggression. The DON is taking an integrated, enterprise-wide approach to improve naval education and prioritize programs that are critical for a competitive warfighting advantage. The Naval Education Strategy provides my guidance and vision to modernize naval education over the next 10 years, and to more effectively deliver relevant, engaging, competency-focused, and outcomes-based education to the total force. The Department is implementing a continuum of learning for the entire force, integrating education into talent management frameworks for more precise and agile talent management, and strengthening the education institutions within our Naval University System.

For example, the DON is directing \$25 million toward developing the United States Naval Community College (USNCC). The USNCC ensures enhanced operational readiness by providing world-class, naval-relevant education entirely online to a globally deployable force. In September 2023, USNCC completed Pilot II and enrolled approximately 3,500 students, developed seven full associate degree programs in naval-relevant concentration areas, and validated the five Naval Studies Certificate courses that will be the core curriculum for every USNCC associate degree program.

The USNCC is currently pursuing candidacy status and accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. USNCC successfully navigated Phase 1 of the accreditation process and submitted the Phase 2 readiness report at the end of September 2023. The USNCC is on track to complete Phase 3 for academic accreditation by Fall 2024. Through the USNCC Consortium Agreement, degrees are currently granted to USNCC students through consortium partners Alexandria Technical and Community College, Arizona State University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Northern Virginia Community College, Tidewater Community College, University of Maryland Global Campus, and Western Governors University.

The USNCC headquarters has been temporarily based in Quantico, Virginia. In January 2024, the Naval Education Board (NEB), an internal DON board that I established and Chair, voted unanimously to move the USNCC's permanent headquarters to the Security Force building on the campus of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. At Annapolis, the USNCC staff and faculty will be able to better collaborate with the Naval Academy, and have access to the Nimitz Library, IT support, and ample conference facilities. The USNCC headquarters move will take approximately two and a half years to complete, and will require \$30 million for relocation of the building's current occupants and \$8 million for building renovation.

Education for Seapower Advisory Board (E4SAB)

Education is a key naval warfighting enabler, is essential for force development, and is a top DON priority for building a culture of warfighting excellence. Under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the Education for Seapower Advisory Board (E4SAB) provides the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense, by way of my role as the

Secretary of the Navy, with independent advice on matters relating to the Naval Postgraduate School, the Naval War College, and the Naval Community College. The E4SAB is a requirement for each institution's academic accreditation and meets at least twice a year. Chaired by Hon. Sean O'Keefe, a former Secretary of the Navy and NASA Administrator, the board's membership includes leading experts in academia, business, national defense and security, management, leadership, and research and analysis. I have charged the E4SAB to provide recommendations regarding the Naval Education Strategy's implementation. I expect that the board's recommendations will inform the Department's efforts to improve education across our entire Naval University System.

Recruiting/Retention

To maintain a combat-ready Navy and Marine Corps, we focus both on recruiting motivated Americans and on retaining high quality sailors, marines, and civilians to meet our personnel needs. Despite a challenging and competitive environment, we are proud to highlight that the Marine Corps met its recruitment goal in fiscal year 2023 and projects making all fiscal year 2024 recruiting missions. While the Navy fell short of its fiscal year 2023 recruiting goals for officer and enlisted sailors, both Active and Reserve, it has placed an increased emphasis on updating recruitment policies and expanding the eligible population by opening the aperture of qualified individuals within authorized parameters in an effort to address the continued challenges presented by a strong economy, competitive labor market, and other social and demographic factors.

High retention is a direct reflection of the value our members place on their military service. In fiscal year 2023, the Navy and Marine Corps exceeded their overall Active Duty enlisted retention goals and are on track to meet fiscal year 2024 goals. We are leveraging financial incentives and programs to include special and incentive pays, early promotions, and assignment incentive pays to attract and retain sailors and marines in undermanned or difficult-to-fill positions and communities.

Benefits and Pay

To attract and retain top-tier talent, the DON understands the need to care for its people through competitive benefits and pay. Initial results of the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation indicate that enlisted sailors and marines earn more than 83 percent of civilians with similar education and years working. In 2025, the Employment Cost Index (ECI)-based pay raise for our sailors and marines will be 4.5 percent, outpacing expected inflation for the second year in a row. Along with competitive pay, the Navy and Marine Corps boast attractive non-pay policies and programs, including childcare, healthcare benefits, the Career Intermission Program, spouse employment programs, graduate education, Tuition Assistance, focused geographic stability, dual-military co-location, and other programs that contribute to readiness and enhance quality of life. While the DON may provide pay and benefits beyond that of many civilian employers, we should—and will—always remember that we require our sailors and marines to serve for a minimum number of years and at times in combat, where they may make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for our defense.

To maintain our global posture and critical mission readiness, the DON has put in place aggressive strategies to recruit and retain highly skilled civilian employees. Currently, the DON uses multiple compensation systems that cover approximately 220,000 civilian appropriated fund employees to include General Schedule, Federal Wage System, Senior Executive Service, Wage Marine Pay Schedule, and various Demonstration Projects. In our effort to enhance our compensation program for civilian employees, the DON is currently reviewing our various pay systems with the goal to streamline or combine these to enhance our capabilities and effectiveness. Additionally, to mitigate challenges in recruitment and retention of our civilian workforce, the DON is working to request approval for enhanced compensation, which include special salary and wage rates as well as special pay incentives above the normal thresholds.

Other available compensation strategies include accelerated training and promotion programs, student loan repayment programs, and advanced in-hire rates up to Step 10 for General Schedule employees and Step 5 for Federal Wage System employees.

Quality-of-Service Improvements

The DON prioritizes the continuous improvement of Quality-of-Life (QOL) and Quality-of-Service (QOS) advances. In May 2023, following the investigation into the suicides aboard USS *George Washington* and at Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center (MARMC), I released a joint memo with then-Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gilday, Setting a New Course for Navy Quality of Service, which prioritized a sustained effort to correct the Navy's QOS. The memo established the Navy's QOS cross-functional team (CFT), and clear Commander's Intent provided the lines of effort focusing the CFT's efforts.

The Navy's CFT, led by Commander, Navy Installations Command, is comprised of flag officers, senior civilians, and senior enlisted personnel from approximately sixty Navy organizations across both the Secretariat and the Fleet. The CFT is establishing standards and measures for Navy QOS, bringing those standards and measures to Newport News Shipbuilding prior to scaling them throughout the Fleet. We are constantly evaluating areas in which we are missing the mark for QOL and QOS enhancements and are finding new ways to improve how we support our sailors and civilians.

Housing

Improving off-duty Quality of Life resources and initiatives for our sailors and marines is a focal point for the DON. This effort includes improving the quality of unaccompanied housing, with \$1 billion over the FYDP for barracks construction and renovations and \$144 million allocated for housing sustainment and management. Under President's Budget for fiscal year 2025, we are also investing \$41 million in food and housing options for sailors assigned to ships undergoing maintenance. We are investing \$481 million in restoration of unaccompanied housing, a 32 percent increase over President's Budget for fiscal year 2024, and we are fully funding the sustainment of gyms. We have also established that no sailors reside on-ship during maintenance availabilities and that berthing barges are available for duty section personnel.

The Marine Corps' Barracks 2030 initiative lays out an ambitious plan to improve the Corps' management of the barracks, modernize the barracks inventory, and update the refresh rate of the materials in the barracks. With the support of Congress, the Marine Corps has implemented the Capital Planning Tool to leverage a tiered approach to facility lifecycle management that reduces footprint while prioritizing investments for the most critical facilities.

We are committed to improving the living conditions for our sailors and marines who reside in unaccompanied housing, and will continue to work closely with Congress, including the House Armed Services Committee's Quality of Life Panel, to ensure transparency and collaboration on this important issue.

We are also focused on the continuous improvement of our Military Housing Privatization Initiative program to maintain resident trust. We are reinforcing DON oversight and exercising Active leadership to ensure that the community residing in privatized housing feels heard and supported. Over the past year, the DON Housing team has made great strides in moving the privatized housing program into the next phase of sustained oversight and dynamic leadership involvement. We continue to improve the tools we have developed to perform better analysis of our processes, policies, and the overall program to ensure higher levels of service and satisfaction for our sailors, marines, and their families. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 includes requests for \$245 million for construction as well as \$377 million for operations—including the management, services, furnishings, utilities, maintenance, leasing, and privatization support—in support of our family housing program.

The DON remains committed to the early identification and resolution of housing issues, as well as improving processes and oversight to improve our residents' experiences. We are dedicated to providing suitable, affordable, and safe living quarters for our sailors, marines, and their families, and President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 directly supports our efforts to do so.

Family Readiness

The DON views childcare as a workforce enabler that directly enhances the readiness, efficiency, and retention of our sailors and marines. The Navy and Marine Corps operate Child Development Centers (CDCs), Youth Centers for children ages 6–12, provide fee assistance for in-home care providers, and subsidize commercial spaces under a program titled Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood. There are seven 24/7 CDCs to accommodate shift workers and watchstanders in Fleet concentration areas and extended hours of operation at other locations.

Together, the Navy and Marine Corps have approximately 42,000 childcare spaces worldwide and employ over 8,400 child and youth professionals.

However, the demand for childcare exceeds the available inventory both on and off-base. Due to community and military capacity shortfalls and staff hiring, there are approximately 4,300 children on the waitlist. While this is a significant decrease from the 11,000 children on the waitlist in July 2021, we remain laser-focused on continuing to reduce our waitlist numbers. In fiscal year 2023, Navy Child and Youth Programs (CYP) executed a contract with a commercial childcare provider to open forty-eight additional spaces near Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and the model will be replicated in San Diego and Norfolk. We are also expanding our on-base childcare capacity through ongoing military construction projects in Naval Base Kitsap, Naval Base Point Loma, Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads, and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek/Fort Story. The Marine Corps has four projects in planning for fiscal year 2025 or fiscal year 2026 in Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Anderson Air Force Base in Guam, Marine Corps Base Quantico, and Marine Corps Base Camp Butler.

Due to frequent moves to new duty stations, spouse employment can be a concern for military families and an obstacle to financial security. The unemployment rate of military spouses is approximately 21 percent, and earnings are typically less than those of their counterparts with equal experience in the private sector. They can be at a disadvantage when it comes to finding gainful employment, from occupational re-licensure to finding new schools or adequate and affordable childcare. The Navy and Marine Corps Employment Assistance Programs provide military spouses with information, referrals, and guidance counseling to assist in making effective career and education decisions. To address the challenges faced by military spouses and lower the financial burden associated with relocating, the Navy and Marine Corps provide reimbursement for Spouse Licensure and Certification. As of February 2024, the Navy and Marine Corps have reimbursed a combined total of 1,293 licensure claims to support the careers of our military spouses.

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)

The DON is committed to providing our Navy and Marine Corps families with necessary assistance and care at their assigned locations. The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) ensures sailors and marines are assigned to locations where the required medical services and educational support are available for families with special needs. Navy EFMP employs 117 personnel to support 23,516 enrolled family members. The Navy has identified and initiated the process of establishing its central/single-site EFMP office at Navy Personnel Command under PERS-45 to coordinate health services, permanent change of station order processing, identification/enrollment/disenrollment, and educational support services; we expect full operation of the office by 4th quarter fiscal year 2025. The Marine Corps is compliant with the requirement for a central office that reports to the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

While most Navy and Marine Corps families are satisfied with EFMP, we continue to seek areas of improvement, namely in areas of medical and educational support. The Marine Corps was the first service to offer specialized legal support services to families to address education needs, and the Navy has implemented the provision of special education legal support to families. To address the medical issues, the Defense Health Agency is working to reduce the long wait times for specialty care.

Mental Health and Resiliency

Mental health is health. Mental health concerns remain a top priority within the DON. Admiral Franchetti, General Smith, and I are committed to ensuring our sailors and marines have access to the tools available to strengthen their mental health. We are also committed to ensuring that their leaders have the tools available to assist them in recognizing personnel who may require a mental health evaluation.

Prioritizing mental health includes embracing a change in culture and view toward accessing mental health services—one which acknowledges that seeking help is a sign of strength. We are working to ensure our commanders, leaders, supervisors, and civilian and uniformed managers at all levels continue to normalize talking about mental health issues to destigmatize seeking mental health care, and ultimately encourage sailors and marines to make use of well-being resources throughout their careers.

Brandon Act

In July 2023, under ALNAV 054/23 and in alignment with the DOD Directive-type Memorandum 23-005, the DON implemented the Brandon Act. The Brandon Act honors the life of Petty Officer Third Class Brandon Caserta by allowing servicemembers to self-initiate a mental health evaluation at any time, for any rea-

son, and in any environment. There is a direct tie between mental health, overall well-being, and combat readiness. In order to ensure we are ready, we prioritize mental health as we do physical health and will continue to increase awareness of resources and services available to our sailors and marines. I will stress again that seeking help is a sign of strength.

Military Justice Reform

The DON has answered the call for meaningful change to our military justice practice. We are deliberately and comprehensively delivering the most significant reforms to the system in more than seventy years. The Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA military justice reforms and SECDEF's Independent Review Commission (IRC) recommendations are top-priority initiatives for the Navy and Marine Corps judge advocate communities, and shortly after I became Secretary I established an Implementation Advisory Panel comprised of senior DON leaders whom I directed to oversee and expedite the adoption of the NDAA and IRC recommendations, including the timely establishment of the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) for each service, implementing independent prosecution offices for personal violence offenses, known as covered offenses.

In October 2023, in advance of the December 2023 deadline set by the NDAA, both the Navy and Marine Corps OSTCs became fully operationally capable and are staffed by experienced, specialized, and well-trained legal professionals to ensure independent review of the most serious personal violence offenses in each service. The fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 NDAA's expanded upon the military justice reforms enacted by the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA, and the budget request for fiscal year 2025 includes funding to support the sustainment and staffing of both OSTCs. My Implementation Advisory Panel proposed, and I agreed, that the independent investigation of sexual harassment allegations in the DON should be conducted by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. We have provided additional resources to NICS for this important mission. We have also strengthened collaboration by integrating local OSTC counsel with NCIS Family and Sexual Violence squads.

The Naval Court-Martial Reporting System (NCORS) is the DON's new electronic case management system, currently in its final stages of development to meet statutory requirements. It is a modern, cloud-based system that is easily configurable system and will enable the Navy and Marine Corps to better track and analyze military justice data and to respond to congressional requests. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 includes additional funds for NCORS for expanded roles and functionality.

Other important reforms include a new, military judge-alone sentencing system with parameters and criteria, expanded access by convicted servicemembers to the appellate court system, broader notification rights for crime victims, randomized selection of servicemembers detailed to court-martial panels, new procedures for complaints of sexual harassment, and increased resources for defense counsel.

Military justice reform remains an ongoing and evolving effort, and both services are continually assessing the efficacy of new policies and practices and are ready to adjust as needed. The Navy and Marine Corps judge advocate communities, in close partnership with the OSTC regarding covered offenses, are spearheading initiatives for the Department of the Navy to develop a comprehensive, ongoing assessment framework using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative factors. These assessments include a newly developed military justice reform survey to obtain victim and other user input on their perception and confidence in the system as the significant military justice reforms are implemented.

Audit Process

After a 2-year audit cycle across fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023, the Marine Corps passed its financial statement audit with a clean opinion, successfully accounting for more than \$46.3 billion in assets. The Navy is undergoing its seventh full financial statement audit of the Navy General Fund (GF) and the DON Working Capital Fund (WCF) in fiscal year 2024. We continue to execute our proven strategy focused on transformational changes geared toward our most impactful areas that includes consolidating the number of feeder and accounting systems the Navy uses, accounting for and valuing the Navy's mission-critical assets, supplying the warfighter, and enhancing cybersecurity.

In fiscal year 2023, the DON sustained all prior year material weakness downgrades and downgraded three additional material weaknesses ahead of schedule—GF Fund Balance with Treasury and GF and WCF Oversight and Monitoring. In addition, the Navy closed 306 financial and information technology audit findings, leading all Services in fiscal year 2023 closures, and concluded the fourth year of 100 percent physical inventory testing, achieving 99.5 percent inventory accuracy for

11 million items. Even with the size and complexity of the DON, our audit strategy is generating proven results validated by our auditors.

Enhancing Strategic Partnerships

In addition to Strengthening Maritime Dominance and Building a Culture of Warfighting Excellence, the President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 enables us to continue our work in enhancing our Strategic Partnerships, both at home and abroad.

International Partnerships

In every region where our sailors and marines operate, we do so alongside our international partners. The relationships we enjoy with our allies and partners are unparalleled by our potential adversaries, and we are proud to enjoy the friendship of like-minded nations who share our commitment to upholding the rules-based international order that has brought relative stability and prosperity to billions of people over the last several decades. Foundational to our international partnerships is the trust our sailors and marines share with their counterparts—a trust that is developed through countless exercises and operations.

Over the past year, I have been fortunate to attend several bilateral and multilateral exercises in person, including *Unitas 64* in South America and *Talisman Sabre* in the Indo-Pacific. During every exercise, I was impressed by the skills of our partners and the esprit de corps shared between our sailors, our marines, and their international counterparts. With each evolution, the power of our combined maritime forces was on full display, and I look forward to opportunities this year to observe the increasing interoperability and cooperation with our allies and partners at events such as *Rim of the Pacific 2024*, scheduled for this summer in Hawai'i.

Exercises are only one facet of our strategy to engage with our international partners and allies. At a macro level, the United States Navy and Marine Corps remain committed to supporting our longstanding NATO alliance—an alliance which now includes Finland and Sweden—especially as our European allies continue to address security concerns presented on their borders by Russia. We also are committed to our partners in Africa, where last year I attended the first-ever United States-hosted African Maritime Forces Summit, held in Cabo Verde.

In the Indo-Pacific, we are focused on ensuring the success of AUKUS, a generational security partnership that both provides our Australian allies with a nuclear-powered, conventionally armed submarine fleet and fosters advanced technology development among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States in several critical areas, including undersea capabilities, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, cyber, and hypersonics. As part of AUKUS, the Australian Government's contribution to the United States Submarine Industrial Base starting in fiscal year 2025 will supplement our own SIB investments. These investments will facilitate increased U.S. production of future *Virginia*-class submarines, which will offset the impacts to the United States submarine fleet caused by the sales of one in-service *Virginia* SSN in 2032 and a second in-service SSN in 2035 to Australia in accordance with congressional authorization, as well as a new-construction submarine which will be sold to Australia in 2038. We are grateful for the support of this Committee in our work to ensure the success of the AUKUS partnership, which will further our goal of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region for decades to come.

Guam

As we continue to strengthen our international partnerships, we are also focused on building and maintaining our relationships here in the United States with the State, territorial, and local governments across the many communities that support our sailors, marines, civilians, and their families. As such, we are deeply involved with the government and citizens of Guam. Our Department is on track to begin the movement of marines from Okinawa to Guam in support of the Defense Policy Review Initiative, with the relocation of marines slated to begin in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025. The end State of this personnel movement is projected to leave 11,500 marines on Okinawa, while stationing 7,000 marines on Guam. I am also pleased to highlight that our Under Secretary of the Navy was appointed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense to serve as the Senior Defense Official for Guam (SDOG). In this role, Under Secretary Raven will serve as the DOD's senior representative when meeting with key leadership and stakeholders in Guam. He will also provide senior leadership oversight and support to Commander, Joint Region Marianas in the execution of on-island activities and will liaise with the Army, Air Force, USINDOPACOM, USD (A&S), USD (R&E) to ensure we are aligned in the capability development and delivery of logistics and infrastructure requirements.

As we face the unprecedented pace of our mission growth on Guam, infrastructure and facilities are required to support the expansion of our on-island infrastructure footprint. In support of our military construction and family housing construction projects, totaling \$2.9 billion across the FYDP, we greatly appreciate Congress' approval of an extension of the H2B visa program through 2029, which will provide measures to offset workforce capacity challenges in support of our missions on Guam. We are committed to working with our government partners and stakeholders on Guam, as well as our partners across the DOD, to ensure the success of the transition of our personnel. We appreciate this Committee's support as we carry out this process in a disciplined, sustainable manner that will enhance the readiness of our forces throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Industry Partnerships

Beyond international and local partnerships, we are also committed to ensuring that the defense industrial base on which we rely remains responsive to our acquisition requirements. President's Budget for fiscal year 2025 invests \$4.0 billion in our Submarine Industrial Base to support submarine new construction and sustainment, as well as \$227 million in the weapons industrial base to increase surge production and suppliers for critical components. These investments are vital to maintaining the health of key industries that play a significant role in the lethality of our Fleet and our Force—industries from which we cannot afford to accept production delays.

We continue to pay special attention to increasing our engagements with small businesses throughout the defense ecosystem. As a former small business owner, I know just how critical this segment is, and I also know the incredible amount of expertise and know-how these firms bring in support of our sailors, marines, and civilians. The DON continues to explore all opportunities to increase prime awards to for Small Businesses (SB), including but not limited to increased outreach to the SB industrial base via conferences and Navy Weeks, monitoring subcontracting performance and trends of our large prime partners, and continuing to stress the importance of disaggregation of expiring contracts to give a possible greater allocation to small businesses. As a direct result of these strategic initiatives, the DON has increased spending with SBs by 30 percent over the last three fiscal years, with SDBs experiencing a similar 30 percent increase over that same time period. Both SB and SDB set new records for prime awards in fiscal year 2023, with Small Businesses receiving over \$20 billion in prime awards from the DON (an increase of \$1.5 billion over fiscal year 2022); Small Disadvantaged Businesses received \$7.6 billion in prime awards from the DON (an increase of \$680 million over the prior record of \$6.9 billion set in fiscal year 2022). For fiscal year 2024, we are on-track to meet our Small Business goals and remain committed to doing so during fiscal year 2025.

Beyond capital investments and engagements with small businesses, we continue to partner with industry and academia in workforce development initiatives. This past October, I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for a new, purpose-built regional training center in Danville, Virginia, that will expand workforce training opportunities in "new-collar" trades—those that combine traditionally blue-collar jobs with cutting-edge technologies—which are crucial to submarine and ship construction. This regional training center demonstrates the progress that can be achieved when local, State, and Federal Governments, as well as industry and academia, come together and collaborate in support of a noble cause. Danville can and should serve as a model for nation-wide training programs that provide Americans with the skillsets necessary to achieve employment in good-paying jobs while also contributing to our national security.

Last month, I received the results of the 45-Day Shipbuilding Review, conducted by my Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition and Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command. This review illuminated the delays we are experiencing across several major shipbuilding programs and highlighted the challenges faced by both industry and the Navy to deliver ships and submarines on time. Our Department undertook this review to both provide transparency to Congress and identify steps we can take to develop a more realistic, pragmatic approach to shipbuilding. We are building a process and a team to reduce delays in ship and submarine deliveries with our industry partners, and we appreciate the continued support of this Committee as we endeavor to "Get Real, Get Better" on shipbuilding.

As we invest in the capacity, workforce, and capabilities of our industry partners, we must also give due consideration to holding industry accountable for the work they are contracted to perform. It is of utmost importance that the American people receives the best value for taxpayer dollars, and the Taxpayer Advocacy Project (TAP) ensures just this. TAP leverages DON subject matter expertise to research recurring contractor issues and legal solutions, educate Program Executive Officers,

Program Managers, Contracting Officers, and DON attorneys on available legal tools to improve contractor performance, and assist those same stakeholders in identifying and clearing any Pentagon or vendor barriers to deliver contracted material and services on behalf of the warfighter and the taxpayer. TAP supports my priorities by positively impacting readiness improvement, ensuring that our sailors and marines are well-equipped, that contract cooperation is flowing both ways, and that the DON receives what it paid for on-budget, on-schedule, and on-performance.

Maritime Statecraft

This past September, during my remarks at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, I called for a new vision of Maritime Statecraft to prevail in this era of intense strategic competition. Maritime Statecraft encompasses not only naval diplomacy but also a national, Whole-of-Government effort to build comprehensive U.S. and allied maritime power, both commercial and naval. Our Nation's most prominent naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, argued that naval power begets maritime commercial power, and control of maritime commerce begets greater naval power. The PRC's leaders have read Mahan, and their actions show it.

As the PRC has built up its commercial and naval fleets and gained influential ownership in ports around the world, United States commercial maritime power has declined precipitously. Today, the PRC is the world's largest builder of commercial, ocean-going ships, with over 40 percent of the global market being built in Chinese shipyards. More concerning still, Beijing leverages its dominant commercial shipbuilding capacity and modern commercial shipyards and infrastructure to efficiently produce its naval fleet. Chinese shipping firms have come to dominate the worldwide commercial shipping industry. They have established an ownership stake in 95 ports across 53 countries worldwide, including in many of our own ports and those of our allies. They also field the world's largest global fishing fleet and the third largest merchant marine fleet with more than 7,000 ships, compared to the United States—ranked 70th—with 178.

Since entering office in August 2021, I have engaged across our Federal Government—with the White House, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Commerce, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and throughout the DOD—to bring attention to this issue and explore what authorities we can leverage to support the revitalization of our national shipbuilding industry. For example, Secretary Buttigieg and I had a productive discussion regarding our shared Title 46 authority in the Construction Differential Subsidy that allows the U.S. Government to offset the higher cost of building a commercial ship in the United States relative to foreign shipyards provided the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of the Navy certify a national security purpose for the vessel. I have likewise welcomed the United States Trade Representative's in-depth engagement on boosting the proportion of U.S. international trade carried on U.S.-flag vessels—today, less than one half of 1 percent of U.S. international exports and imports sail on U.S.-flagged merchant ships, almost all of which are foreign-built.

My team and I have toured private shipyards across our Nation, from Bayonne, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Vallejo and Richmond, California, to better understand the capacity and workforce challenges these yards face. In February, I held engagements with the leadership of major shipbuilders in Japan and South Korea to gain a better understanding and appreciation for how they construct commercial and naval vessels in modern shipyards. I was enormously gratified by the strong interest expressed by the leaders of these world-class shipbuilders in establishing U.S. subsidiaries and investing in shipyards in the United States—and I could not be more excited at the prospect of these companies bringing their expertise, their technology, and their cutting-edge best practices to American shores.

In mid-November, I convened the inaugural meeting of the Government Shipbuilders Council at the Coast Guard's only public yard in Baltimore, Maryland. This new organization, comprised of representatives from the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Homeland Security, and Defense, and our five government shipbuilding partners—MARAD, Coast Guard, NOAA, and the Army—will discuss how we can work together to collectively engage with industry, address common challenges, and share best practices.

All of these are early steps, and there is still much work to be done. We welcome Congress' collaboration and support as we continue our Department's work on Maritime Statecraft with our counterparts in other Federal departments and agencies, industry, academia, and our international allies and partners. Revitalizing our comprehensive maritime power is a generational endeavor, requiring sustained, bipartisan commitment at the national level. Though the road ahead may be long, not

a moment's time should be lost in embarking on a task so essential to our country's security and prosperity.

CLOSING

As I close, it is important to remember that the missions we send our sailors and marines on every day are anything but routine and, in most cases, extremely dangerous.

In January, we suspended the search for two U.S. Navy SEALs we lost at sea—Petty Officer First Class Christopher Chambers and Petty Officer Second Class Nathan Ingram—during the seizure of lethal, Iranian-supplied advanced conventional weapons to the Houthis.

In February, we lost five marines in a training accident—Lance Corporal Donovan Davis, Sergeant Alec Langen, Captain Benjamin Moulton, Captain Jack Casey, and Captain Miguel Nava—assigned to the “Flying Tigers” of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361.

As we mourn the loss of these brave Americans, their fellow sailors and marines continue to deploy around the globe. We honor their legacy by protecting the families they left behind and by upholding the ideals and principles that they gave their lives for.

The investments we ask you to make in our Navy and Marine Corps represent more than just buying ships, aircraft, and submarines, developing new capabilities, or bolstering the resiliency of the critical infrastructure we rely on. It is about supporting our men and women, both uniformed and civilian, and their families, who have committed their careers and indeed their lives in defense of our Nation.

I am grateful for the continued bipartisan support of this Committee, and I look forward to working with all of you to advance our Nation's security with a Navy and Marine Corps that possesses the enduring advantages required to uphold our Nation's interests in peacetime, deter potential adversaries in crisis, and win decisively in war.

May God continue to grant the United States of America and its people fair winds and following seas. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.
Admiral Franchetti, please.

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL LISA MARIE FRANCHETTI, CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify on the posture of the United States Navy.

On behalf of the sailors, Navy civilians, and their families deployed and stationed all around the world, thank you for your leadership, and your continued support in providing and maintaining the Navy the Nation needs. I'd also like to thank my teammate, General Smith for his exceptional partnership and collaboration as we guide our services under the leadership of Secretary Del Toro.

Flanked by two oceans, the United States is and always has been a maritime nation whose security and prosperity rely on access to the sea. For over 248 years, the U.S. Navy has guaranteed that access, operating forward, defending our Homeland, and keeping open the sea lines of communication that fuel our economy and underwrite our Nation's security.

The events of this past year and the actions taken by our Navy Marine Corps team in the Indo-Pacific, in the Mediterranean, in the Red Sea, and beyond, underscore the enduring importance of American naval power.

With an average of 110 ships and 70,000 sailors and marines deployed at sea on any given day, the Navy Marine Corps team is delivering power for peace, deterring potential adversaries, and standing ready to fight and win our Nation's wars if deterrence

fails. I could not be more proud of this team. No other navy in the world can train and deploy and sustain such a lethal combat, credible force that operates from the seabed to space at the scope, scale, and tempo that we do.

This year's budget supports the National Defense Strategy and my priorities of war fighting, war fighters, and the foundation that supports them. It enables the Navy to continue to meet our congressionally mandated mission, both in peace and war. It is strategy-driven, maintaining our focus on the People's Republic of China as the pacing challenge, the acute threat of Russia, and other persistent threats like the DPRK, Iran, and VEOs.

Given the discretionary spending caps prescribed by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and a top line increase of 0.7 percent, the Navy had to make tough choices favoring near-term readiness, investing in our industrial base, and prioritizing our people, while assuming risk in future capabilities.

Within this fiscally constrained environment, the budget request fully funds the Navy's top acquisition priority and the most survivable leg of our strategic deterrence; the *Columbia*-class submarine. It provides funds for six battle force ships, incremental funding for two *Ford*-class aircraft carriers in fiscal year 2025, and continues our support to Marine Corps force design by maintaining 31 amphibious ships, procuring three LPDs, 1 LHA, and 8 medium landing ships.

In total, the budget request procures 57 ships and submarines across the fit up. This budget prioritizes war fighting by funding our operations training and readiness accounts. It invests in our foundation with funding for our installations, for our shipyard infrastructure optimization program, and for the broader defense industrial base, sending a strong signal to our industry partners on the need to increase our capacity to meet the growing demands of the present and the future.

It continues our strong commitment to our war fighters and our families through pay raises for our sailors and Navy civilians, and investments in quality of service initiatives such as unaccompanied housing, education, childcare, and sailor resiliency. These initiatives, as well as others, enabled by your steadfast support, have helped us maintain historically high levels of retention, which is imperative given the current recruiting environment.

While this environment remains challenging and our manning requirements at sea have increased, we are 2,500 recruits ahead of where we were last year at this time, and I remain optimistic that our marketing and data analytics investments will show additional progress throughout the year.

As chief of naval operations, I am committed to pulling every lever available to me to put more ready players on the field, platforms that are ready with the right capabilities, weapons, and sustainment, and people who are ready with the right skills, tools, training, and mindset to defend our Nation's security and prosperity whenever and wherever it is threatened.

I thank the Committee for your leadership and partnership in ensuring the world's premier fighting force remains ready to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in war, if called.

I look forward to your questions.
 [The prepared statement of Admiral Lisa Marie Franchetti follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ADMIRAL LISA MARIE FRANCHETTI

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the posture of the United States Navy. On behalf of our sailors, Navy civilians, and families deployed and stationed around the world, thank you for your continued leadership and support. Thank you for ensuring our Navy-Marine Corps team remains ready for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea as well as for recognizing in law our Navy's role in the peacetime promotion of our Nation's national security interests and prosperity. Your commitment guarantees that our Navy is always postured and ready to deliver power for peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in war.

AMERICA'S IDENTITY AS A MARITIME NATION

Flanked by two oceans, the United States is and has always been a maritime nation. Our economy, like the world's economy, flows through the sea. Ninety percent of global trade travels by sea. Ninety-five percent of international communications and roughly 10 trillion dollars in financial transactions each day transit via under-sea fiber-optic cables. In the U.S., seaborne trade carries more tonnage and value than any other mode of transportation, generating 5.4 trillion dollars in annual commerce and supporting 31 million American jobs. There is no doubt: the seas are the lifeblood of our economy, our national security, and our way of life.

For 248 years, Congress has provided and maintained a Navy-Marine Corps team that has preserved America's access to the seas. From the founding of our Nation to the World Wars of the 20th century, America's naval forces have fought and won our Nation's battles to keep open the sea lines of communication that guarantee our prosperity and security. In every ocean, we uphold and protect the post-World War II rules-based international order that we fought to establish and have continued to defend for nearly three quarters of a century.

THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Our Nation's security and prosperity, and by extension the rules-based international order, is under threat from multiple fronts across all domains, including the maritime. The People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) desire to rewrite the global rules-based order for their own political, military, and economic interests. They threaten access to waterways, ports, and key logistics hubs, which are critical to the U.S. and the global economy. They seek to control key maritime chokepoints like the Taiwan, Hormuz, and Bab al-Mandeb Straits in order to exploit sea control and subsequently deny the United States Navy, U.S.-flagged, and other internationally flagged commercial shipping freedom of maneuver. These challenges and others to our maritime security underscore the importance of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea.

As the National Defense Strategy (NDS) makes clear, the PRC is America's pacing challenge, representing the most comprehensive and serious challenge to our national security. It is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do so. Its coercive and aggressive behavior threatens to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences. Over the last 20 years, the PRC used its considerable economic wealth to revolutionize its maritime capability to rival and contest ours. In that short time, the PRC tripled the size of its Navy and is on pace to surpass 400 ships by 2030. Simultaneously, it has created a worldwide network of ports, railways, and roads through its Belt and Road Initiative, expanded its strategic nuclear capacity, advanced its offensive and defense cyber and space capabilities, built up its rocket force, created man-made islands to extend its vast territorial claims over the South China Sea, and developed sophisticated munitions in an attempt to keep the United States military and our Allies and partners at range.

Russia continues to challenge American interests and to pose an existential threat to our Allies and partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as evidenced by its unprovoked, unjust, and reckless invasion of Ukraine. Russia has the

world's largest nuclear arsenal, is battle-hardened, and is on a wartime economic footing. It continues to violate the core principles that uphold global peace and security, seeking to change borders of sovereign countries by force. We will continue to work with our Allies and partners to blunt Russian aggression and support Ukraine in its fight for territorial integrity and democracy.

Other persistent threats include the DPRK, Iran, and VEOs. The DPRK continues to expand its nuclear and missile capability to threaten the United States Homeland, deployed United States Forces, and our Allies and partners in the region, most notably Japan and South Korea. Iran continues to destabilize the Middle East with its support for militant groups' malign activities, its advancing nuclear program, and its harassment of maritime commerce in the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea. It continues to build and export missiles and missile architecture, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) systems, and advanced maritime capabilities to VEOs worldwide—not just in the Middle East. Most notably this year, the world saw Iranian weapons used by the Houthis to disrupt the free flow of maritime commerce in the Red Sea.

NAVY'S FISCAL YEAR 2025 STRATEGY-DRIVEN BUDGET REQUEST

The Navy's budget request for fiscal year 2025 funds a strong, global Navy that is postured and ready to deter potential adversaries, protect our Homeland, respond in crisis, and, if called, win decisively in war. Nested under the National Security Strategy (NSS) and NDS, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request is strategy driven with a focus on the PRC as the pacing challenge, while keeping a weather eye on the acute threat of Russia and other persistent threats like the DPRK, Iran, and VEOs. It supports the United States Marine Corps Force Design, implements Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO), and executes the 2022 Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan. It fully funds the *Columbia*-class submarine and the nuclear architecture that underpins it, allocates resources to our operations and readiness accounts that will keep our naval forces forward to defend our global interests, prioritizes resources to fund the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB), and maintains 31 amphibious ships per our title 10 requirement.

However, the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) imposed constraints that required us to make hard choices. Given the discretionary spending caps and the 0.7 percent topline increase, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request favors readiness for the near-term fight and the need to meet our congressionally mandated peacetime mission over the modernization we will need for the future.

As our Nation's founders recognized, naval power is—and will continue to be—an essential element of our national security. The actions your Navy has taken this year in the Indo-Pacific, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and elsewhere to defend American interests are a direct result of years of readiness investments in our Navy-Marine Corps team. Our actions illustrate how past investments and decisions made by our leaders in Congress, the Navy, and industry affect our ability to meet our mission today. More importantly, our sailors' actions on, under, and above the seas to defend the rules-based international order demonstrate the value of investing in a strong naval force.

Within this constrained fiscal environment, we must continue that investment in our Navy-Marine Corps team to meet the threats of this challenging environment. We must put more ready players on the field—platforms ready with the right capabilities, weapons and sustainment and people who are ready with the right skills, tools, training, and mindset—to ensure we are fully prepared to fight and win our Nation's wars in this decisive decade. We cannot afford to keep players on the field that can no longer contribute to our ability to win decisively. The Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget reflects that need and reflects my priorities of Warfighting, Warfighters, and the Foundation that supports them that I set forth in my America's Warfighting Navy document in January 2024.

WARFIGHTING: DELIVERING DECISIVE COMBAT POWER

The Navy views everything through a warfighting lens. Operating in support of the NSS, NDS, and National Military Strategy, the United States Navy is a critical element of the Joint Force, upholding international norms, providing access to free and open oceans, and ready to deliver decisive combat power as part of a Joint and Combined Warfighting Ecosystem. The fiscal year 2025 budget request ensures our ability to execute globally distributed sea control and sea denial and guarantees our ability to fight and win our Nation's wars, if called.

Strategic Deterrence Investments. The fiscal year 2025 Budget Request fully funds the Nation's top defense acquisition priority and the Navy's contribution to our strategic deterrence: the *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarine, the second life ex-

tension of the Trident II D5 Ballistic Missile, and the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) command, control, and communications suite.

Procurement Investments. With 88 ships on contract and 66 under construction already, the fiscal year 2025 request invests \$32.4 billion in shipbuilding, funding six battle force ships (one *Virginia*-class submarine, two *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers, one *Constellation*-class frigate, one *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport dock, and one Medium Landing Ship) and providing incremental funds for two *Ford*-class aircraft carriers (CVN 80 and CVN 81) and the USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) Refueling and Complex Overhaul. The budget request funds a total of \$189 billion across the FYDP for 57 total battle force ships.

Notably, the budget requests \$7.3 billion for the procurement of the first *Virginia*-class Block VI submarine and will initiate a nine-ship planned multi-year procurement beginning in fiscal year 2025. It funds two *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers, including completion funds for three fiscal year 2023 and two fiscal year 2024 ships, and continues investment in the *Constellation*-class frigate program, which gets more players on the field with increased lethality, survivability, and capability. Additionally, it bolsters our investment in the Navy-Marine Corps team and our commitment to USMC Force Design and the Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations concept by maintaining 31 amphibious ships, providing \$1.6 billion in fiscal year 2025 to the fourth *San Antonio*-class LPD FLT II, adding funds across the FYDP to support amphibious ship recapitalization in LPD Flight IIs in fiscal year 2027 and fiscal year 2029, and funding 8 Medium Landing Ships through the FYDP.

Ship Decommissionings and Divestments. The fiscal year 2025 budget requests the decommissioning of 19 ships, 9 of which have completed their normal lifecycle and 10 that are divestments before the end of their expected service life. This is a return on investment decision, based on a hull-by-hull assessment of each ship's material condition, life remaining, cost and time to upgrade, and warfighting relevancy.

Readiness Investments. Our Navy must be able to put players on the field that are ready with trained crews, ships and aircraft ready to operate, and with capable weapons systems and munitions. Despite FRA constraints, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request provides \$34.6 billion—an overall increase of \$200 million from the fiscal year 2024 request—to Fleet readiness to support flying and underway steaming at levels that support our Fleet's global operations. It funds the reality that readiness is the key enabler for naval superiority and that ship, submarine, and aviation operations are the Navy's core capability and the foundation of maritime dominance.

The fiscal year 2025 request funds \$7.6 billion—an increase of \$600 million from the previous year—in ship operations, providing the fuel, parts, and support necessary to train the Fleet and deploy it worldwide and investing in the critical maintenance for Military Sealift Command's support ships. The budget request supports a Fleet average of 58 days underway per quarter for deployed ships and 24 days per quarter for non-deployed ships. Out of the total \$10.6 billion in Navy-Marine Corps flight operations funding, the budget request funds \$6.8 billion in Navy flight operations, funding approximately 600,000 Navy flying hours to resource Fleet preparation and execution of training and operational requirements.

In regards to maintenance, we must get our ships, submarines, and aircraft in and out of their availabilities on time and on cost. The budget request funds \$14.5 billion in ship maintenance, including 58 ship availabilities, and covers private contracted availabilities as well as the Navy's four public shipyards, regional maintenance centers, and intermediate maintenance facilities. It also provides \$1.3 billion in aviation maintenance that paces the Fleet Flying Hour Program, funding 328 airframe and 1,486 engine events and sustaining aviation investments in depot overhauls and aircraft spares to increase mission capable aircraft numbers.

Sealift Investments. The Navy is committed to meeting Strategic Sealift mobility requirements by recapitalizing the Ready Reserve Fleet and the Maritime Prepositioning Force with a combination of used vessels and new construction vessels. To achieve this, the Navy is building a Sealift Campaign Plan to focus on a whole-of-strategic-sealift approach across the entirety of sealift prepositioned and surge assets. A key element of this plan is continued implementation of the congressionally provided authorities to address strategic sealift readiness and recapitalization through the Buy-Used Program, which purchases used sealift vessels to replace older, aging vessels currently in the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Ready Reserve Fleet. To date, the

Navy has procured five ships through the Buy-Used Program and plans to procure two more in fiscal year 2024 and two more in fiscal year 2025, which will meet the congressionally mandated limit. The Navy supports modifying the current congressional restrictions on the Buy-Used Program to allow the Secretary of Defense authority to purchase foreign built, used vessels without limitations. This authority

would allow the Navy to accelerate surge sealift Fleet recapitalization immediately, while continuing to support U.S. shipyard industrial base.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request continues this current recapitalization strategy to buy and modify two used vessels per year across the FYDP, while executing the current planned retirement schedule. The Buy-Used program provides a stable acquisition profile with forecasted maintenance and repair costs to meet strategic mobility requirements at a moderate level of risk. Additionally, the Navy is partnering with MARAD and USTRANSCOM to develop requirements for a range of new sealift construction options from basic sealift vessels for the Ready Reserve Force to purpose-built Maritime Prepositioning Force vessels.

Investments in the Hybrid Fleet. The Navy continues to invest in its hybrid fleet and in the enabling capabilities that will support all current and future unmanned programs of record. By leveraging America's unmatched innovation base, the Navy intends to augment our highly capable, existing platforms with a host of optionally manned and unmanned platforms operating under, on, and above the seas. This will extend our reach, expand our ability to distribute our forces, and enable us to deliver larger volumes of kinetic and non-kinetic effects across all domains to fully support the Joint Force. These technologies are being developed in Navy laboratories, with industry partners, and onboard the Navy's unmanned prototypes and tested in real-world scenarios.

To deliver these capabilities at the speed of relevance, the Navy is working to improve the acquisition process. The Navy's newly established Disruptive Capabilities Office (DCO) is focused on the most promising, game-changing technologies and getting them from prototype, to scale, and into the hands of our warfighters as quickly as possible. The DCO reports directly to me and the Secretary of the Navy. Simultaneously, the Navy is fully supporting OSD's Replicator effort and Defense Innovation Unit to rapidly procure and scale technologies that will ensure our warfighting advantage.

Network Investments. In order to ensure warfighting advantage, we must guarantee decision superiority for our warfighters. With this in mind, the fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$140 million in fiscal year 2025 with a total of \$716 million across the FYDP in Project Overmatch. Through Project Overmatch—the Navy's contribution to Combined Joint All Domain Command & Control—we are fielding the connective tissue for today's Fleet, while developing and experimenting with what is needed for our hybrid fleet. Using modern software methods and pipelines, we are fielding software-based networking technologies to provide as many pathways to connect and share information as possible, as well as software applications that aid decisionmakers and planners in executing DMO. To date we have fielded our first increments of Project Overmatch across multiple Carrier Strike Groups and shore command nodes. The fiscal year 2025 budget request will fund our follow-on increments of this capability, while growing the architecture, adding resilience and redundancy to our communications paths, and expanding into additional domains in conjunction with our Joint partners and Allies.

To provide more secure, resilient, and reliable means to C2 our naval forces, the fiscal year 2025 request continues procurement and installation of satellite communications systems to include Satellite Terminal (transportable) Non-Geostationary Terminals, and Portable Receive Terminals as well as a wideband anti-jam modem system that protects vital SATCOM links. Our investments will result in the modernization of the Automated Digital Network System to a Software-Defined Network that will increase capacity and capability afloat and ashore for operational continuity. This investment supports our operational architecture and creates tangible warfighting advantages by providing access to resilient, high-speed, low-latency bandwidth at sea.

Cyber Investments. The fiscal year 2025 budget requests invests \$1.55 billion in enhancing maritime cyber capabilities while also maximizing our investment in joint cyber capabilities defined via U.S. Cyber Command's goals and objectives. In 2023, the Navy released our Cyber Strategy to ensure alignment with national strategic guidance and to define context-specific lines of effort and outcomes across the intersection of the maritime domain, information environment, and cyberspace to enhance national security. The fiscal year 2025 request executes that strategy and continues investment in cyber, which includes procurement of software, upgrades, and technical support and increased development of support for cryptologic modernization solutions. These investments explore, test, and accelerate integration of non-kinetic capabilities that provide our forces with cost-effective offensive and defensive options.

The budget request also invests in cryptographic and cybersecurity modernization, reducing the threat in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. We have increased support for cryptologic modernization solutions, upgrading all operational devices so

we stand ready to operate against future quantum computing threats. In cybersecurity, network modernization will allow us to rapidly integrate learning from initiatives like Project Overmatch in order to provide our sailors the best-in-class technology, at speed, across all of our platforms. Our Cyber Mission Forces stand ready to conduct full spectrum cyberspace operations in all domains.

Workforce Modernization. The Navy is updating its human force structure to ensure it has a workforce well-versed in cyber and unmanned technologies. To advance a truly hybrid fleet, we need to develop warfighters for the next generation who ruthlessly pursue warfighting excellence, who can deliver the advantage of autonomous and unmanned systems and who can operate and innovate alongside their systems. To meet this challenge, the Navy established the maritime cyber warfare officer designator and the cyber warfare technician rating in fiscal year 2024. With this new designator and rating, the Navy now has a holistic group of cyber warfighters trained to address the most challenging cyber threats. We have also established foundational Navy-provisioned offensive cyber training, adjusted tour lengths, and maximized incentives, improving our cyber team readiness by 20 percent over the last year. In February 2024, the Navy established a new robotics warfare specialist rating to build and develop a team with experience in sensors, platform autonomy, and mission autonomy program. These sailors will serve as the operators, maintainers, and managers of our hybrid fleet, planning and controlling our future unmanned systems.

Allies and Partners Investments. The Navy recognizes that we will never fight alone. Our Allies and partners are our true strategic advantage and a fundamental component in putting more players on the field. They are force multipliers. Moving forward, we will design and drive interoperability with our Allies and partners into our systems and processes to deliver combined lethality in support of the rules-based international order we protect together. A cooperative deployment program, combined with a robust international exercise program, highlighted by the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise this year, underscores our commitment to working alongside our Allies and partners.

The Navy is committed to strengthening the bonds with two of our closest allies and fulfilling our United States commitments to the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) enhanced security partnership. This once-in-a-generation opportunity demonstrates our shared interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific based on international law and serves to uplift the warfighting capability of our three nations. Through the establishment of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine capability in Australia and the development and operationalization of advanced technologies and warfighting capabilities, we will build our collective technical and industrial capabilities to deliver next-generation interoperable systems that deter aggression and win in war, if necessary.

Investments in the Arctic. The Arctic is critical to America's safety and economic prosperity. Maritime presence and competition in the Arctic has grown to include many non-Arctic nations, as faster and cheaper trade routes become available due to increasingly navigable waters. To meet this challenge, the fiscal year 2025 budget request provides \$47 million in fiscal year 2025 and \$252 million across the FYDP for Arctic research, training, and operations. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard must ensure all navigation and exploration—fishing, oil, and natural gas—remains in accordance with internationally recognized rules and norms. We will continue to work with our Allies and partners in the region—Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and the United Kingdom—to ensure a peaceful and stable Arctic. The U.S. Navy remains ready to respond to changing geopolitical and climate conditions in the Arctic.

WARFIGHTERS: STRENGTHENING THE NAVY TEAM

The Navy's Active and Reserve sailors, our Navy civilians, and our families are our asymmetric advantage and give our Navy the decisive edge. I could not be more proud of our Navy team, who executes our Navy's mission every day. We must continue to build strong warfighting teams, recruit and retain talented people from across the rich fabric of America, and provide them world-class training and education. We remain committed to improving our sailors' Quality of Service, which includes Quality of Life and Quality of Work. Within FRA Caps, the fiscal year 2025 budget request provides \$41 billion—a 2 percent increase over fiscal year 2024—for an Active Duty force of 332,300, which includes a 4.5 percent pay increase for our sailors, and invests \$2.8 billion for 57,700 Reserve sailors, aligned with Fleet force structure changes.

We appreciate the support of Congress and the commitment to improving the Quality of Life of our sailors and their families. The focus on ensuring appropriate

pay and compensation, access to affordable child care, adequate and safe housing, access to quality medical care, and support to programs for military spouses is critical to recruiting and retaining our world-class All-Volunteer Force. We must continually review the entire compensation package to ensure we are keeping stride in a competitive job environment and the Navy is viewed as an employer of choice.

Manning. Simply put, the Navy needs more people to meet our mission requirements around the world. Over the last year, we averaged more than 18,000 manning gaps at sea, primarily in our apprentice ranks. Because of this, the Navy continues to prioritize seagoing billets for deployed and next-to-deploy forces to ensure all operational units are fully ready to support national tasking. We are offering increased incentives for our sailors to remain at sea or return to seagoing billets through programs like the Advancement-to-Position program.

Retention. Our first line of effort in ensuring our Fleet is manned is to retain the sailors we currently have. Overall, Navy retention remains healthy, having maintained historically high levels of retention over the past few years.

We ended fiscal year 2023 meeting or exceeding our retention benchmark forecasts across most of our zones of service and are on-track to meet fiscal year 2024 retention targets. To continue this momentum, the fiscal year 2025 budget's personnel funding paces a strong economy by offering our sailors a complete compensation package, providing competitive pay and benefits as well as basic pay increases and cost increases for housing, subsistence, and basic needs allowances. It invests \$84 million more than the fiscal year 2024 request in enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses. The Navy also extended the High Year Tenure (HYT) Plus pilot program indefinitely, which allows our sailors to negotiate new orders to valid, vacant billets, or to extend their current assignment to the normal tour length to stay in past HYT gates.

Recruiting. The root cause of our manning challenges is our recruiting challenge. Although the Navy missed its fiscal year 2023 recruiting goal by 7,000 sailors, we contracted 6,000 more sailors than we did in fiscal year 2022. While this environment remains challenging and we have increased our recruiting goals to address our new work requirements, we are 2,900 recruits ahead of where we were last year at this time. To that end, we are using all available levers to maximize the effectiveness of recruiting for fiscal year 2024 by seeking innovative ways to attract individuals who are qualified and willing to serve. This starts by connecting people that live in every zip code to our Navy story and by spreading our message to areas of untapped potential, far from our bases and installations, and with little or no exposure to the Navy. We are recruiting in previously under-served markets, presenting in new places like gaming events and in the virtual world to create awareness beyond our traditional talent base, and expanding our market penetration through enhanced marketing and advertising via multi-channel means (social media, connected television, and online presence).

The Navy is also evaluating organizational and policy initiatives to improve recruiting and expand the pool of qualified, motivated, and capable applicants that meet our standards. This past year, the Navy established the Recruiting Operations Center to establish a more effective enterprise approach to recruiting, elevated Commander, Navy Recruiting Command to a seasoned 2-star Admiral position to provide better oversight and direction, and increased recruiter manning for greater reach and production. To expand opportunities to join our team, we raised the recruiting age from 38 to 41 years old, established the Future Sailor Preparatory Course, both Physical Fitness and Academic, increased enlistment bonuses to attract high quality recruits for high demand ratings, increased the number of Category IV recruits to match rating demand, and began recruitment of Future Sailors without educational credentials, but who score a 50 or above on the AFQT.

Education & Training. In an effort to prepare our warfighters for the future fight, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request prioritizes sailor education by investing \$25 million in the expansion of the United States Naval Community College (USNCC) to 25,000 students by fiscal year 2026 and by fully funding Tuition Assistance Programs. The Navy is committed to Naval University System wholeness, giving our Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, our officers at the Naval War College, our officers, enlisted, and civilians at the Naval Postgraduate School, and our enlisted sailors across the Fleet every opportunity to succeed. We continue to see great results from the USNCC with over 3,500 sailors, marines, and coastguardsmen currently enrolled in eight different academic programs. Additionally, through other initiatives like Live, Virtual, and Constructive training, Ready Relevant Learning, and the Fleet Learning Continuum, the Navy is ensuring our sailors have the professional knowledge, skills, and training to be ready to meet and excel in its national security tasking.

Quality of Service (QOS). QOS remains among my highest priorities as CNO. The Navy remains resolute in our obligation to care for and deliver QOS to our sailors, both Active and Reserve, our civilians, and our Navy families because they are our most important resource. Within a constrained budget environment, the fiscal year 2025 budget request continues our significant investment in QOS with \$816 million to Quality of Life (QoL) and \$536 million to Quality of Work (QOW) initiatives. The budget request includes a \$523 million increase in Quality of Life initiatives over fiscal year 2024 and pulls every lever to sustain deserved pay increases for our sailors, increase BAH and BAS allowances, and fully fund barracks sustainment and operations.

To demonstrate the Navy's commitment to improving QOS, the Navy established a QOS Cross Functional Team (CFT) to improve our sailors and families' QoL. Reporting to the Secretary of the Navy and me, the QOS CFT is sailor-centric and focused on achieving both short-term and long-term goals to improve our sailors' QOS. The CFT has made significant progress in addressing challenges faced by sailors serving on ships and submarines at Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding, including off-ship berthing, the availability of quality food, internet connectivity, and improved access to medical care and resources. The Navy intends to scale these initiatives Fleet wide.

Unaccompanied Housing (UH). The Navy's fiscal year 2025 request fully funds barracks operations and sustainment and fully funds barracks recapitalization for fully scoped and ready projects. The budget request invests \$1.2 billion across the FYDP for barracks construction and renovations to repair poor and failing UH facilities. It invests \$206 million in fiscal year 2025—an increase of \$41 million from fiscal year 2024—for UH repair and addresses repairs to five CONUS facilities (Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore, NAS Oceana, Joint Base Pearl Harbor, Naval Base Kitsap, and Submarine Base Kings Bay) and one OCONUS facility (Naval Support Activity Bahrain). The fiscal year 2025 budget request commits \$10 million in planning and development for UH projects across the FYDP and is expanding privatized UH in San Diego and Hampton Roads.

The budget also invests in adding Wi-Fi to all our UH. Beginning in February 2024, we commenced a Wi-Fi pilot (12 facilities/4,000 sailors) in unaccompanied housing facilities at Naval Station Norfolk, Portsmouth Medical Center, and Norfolk Naval Shipyard. This pilot will run through the end of the fiscal year and will ensure the program is optimized to deliver connectivity and value to our sailors prior to a wider roll-out across the Navy.

Child care. Childcare is a priority for the Department of Defense. The Navy is committed to meeting Active Duty servicemember child care requirements and is focused on recruitment, retention, and the compensation and staffing model of the child care workforce through targeted efforts. We are making steady progress on reducing the waitlist. As of March 2024, Navy has a Child Development Center (CDC) and School Age Care (SAC) waitlist of approximately 3,600 children, down from 5,300 at the start of fiscal year 2023. To expand capacity and drive down the waitlist, the Navy is focused on child care workforce, facility expansion through military construction (MILCON), and the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) Fee Assistance Program for those on the CDC and SAC waitlist. Currently, all Active Duty families on the waitlist have received MCCYN fee assistance. The Navy is extending the MCCYN program to Navy civilians this year.

In regards to MILCON, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request adds \$22 million in Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization funding for CDCs, \$23 million for CDC Planning and Design for future MILCON, and \$437 million for child care operations. The following locations are areas of ongoing CDC construction projects: Naval Base Kitsap, Naval Base Point Loma, Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads, and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek/Fort Story. The Navy has 12 additional CDC MILCON projects programmed across the FYDP.

Healthcare. The Navy remains committed to our families and the need to provide affordable, high quality health care. Working closely with the Defense Health Agency and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$1.9 billion across the FYDP to stabilize the health system and fully restore military medical manpower. This will ensure our ability to generate Navy operational medical capabilities to support high end competition, crisis, and combat, ensuring more players remain on the field.

Mental Health. The Navy is committed to ensuring our sailors have access to the full continuum of mental health resources with the right care, at the right level, and at the right time. Our fiscal year 2025 request increases funding for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention services by \$52 million—a 173 percent increase from fiscal year 2024—and fully funds the 21st Century Sailor Readiness and Resiliency and Suicide Prevention and Response initiatives, which enable sailors to seek help ear-

lier and often, but before a crisis. We continue to assign more chaplains to seagoing units and provide more mental health specialists to Fleet concentration areas. Right now, 43 percent of our mental health providers are embedded with the Fleet, providing proactive prevention and treatment.

Additionally, in 2023, the Navy implemented the Brandon Act, which honors the life of Petty Officer Third Class Brandon Caserta. The Brandon Act streamlines access to mental health support for all our sailors and reduces stigma by fostering a culture of support for those seeking help. Also, in 2023, the Navy published the Mental Health Playbook, which assists command leaders in preventing mental health issues from occurring, and, when they do, shows them how to connect sailors with the proper mental health care. We remain committed to providing our sailors the support they need.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response. The Navy is committed to providing a safe work environment free of sexual assault and sexual harassment for all our sailors and to advancing a culture of Great People, Great Leaders, and Great Teams that drive healthy command climates. The fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$353 million in the recommendations made by the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC-SAM) with a focus on prevention, climate and culture, and victim care lines of effort. The budget requests includes funding for the phased hiring of Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce, the phased drawdown of collateral duty SAPR personnel, and for training and education. On December 28, 2023, the Navy's Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC), led by a rear admiral (O-7) who reports directly to the Secretary of the Navy, became fully operational. This independent prosecution office, staffed by experienced, specialized, and well-trained professionals, now exercises disposition authority over the Navy's most serious personnel violence offenses, including sexual assault. Beginning in January 2025, the OSTC will also review formal, substantiated complaints of sexual harassment further supporting a safe and secure working environment for all sailors.

FOUNDATIONS: BUILD TRUST, ALIGN RESOURCES, BE READY

The Navy must have a robust, strong, and resilient foundation that supports our warfighters and warfighting. This begins by recognizing installations and shore infrastructure as warfighting platforms—as aircraft carriers that do not get underway—and investing in the shore as a weapons system. The fiscal year 2025 budget request continues our investment in installations, shipyards, the SIB, and the weapons industrial base to ensure they are resilient and mission-ready and can generate and sustain our warfighters and our warfighting.

As in fiscal year 2024, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request provides large investments in the health of the industrial base, providing clear headlights to industry on our build plans. In line with the Secretary of the Navy's Maritime Statecraft initiative, we are exploring additional ways to further invest in industry and increase shipbuilding capacity through multi-year, block buy purchases and investments in workforce development and supply chain resiliency. This requires a whole-of-government effort. In order to deliver the Navy the Nation needs, the Navy is pulling every available lever to expedite the necessary ships, aircraft, and weapons to our warfighters—by continuing to partner with industry, academia, interagency and allied partners to solve our most pressing challenges and by improving our ability to maintain existing platforms.

Installation Investments. The fiscal year 2025 budget requests allocates \$10.5 billion across the FYDP to piers, airfields, aviation facilities, maintenance facilities, and core utilities to meet the Nation's needs. Because shore infrastructure is vital in enabling global logistics, the Navy is repairing and updating critical waterfront utilities, making structural repairs to wharves and docks, and building and repairing taxiways and hangars. We are investing in our critical utility systems, upgrading water, wastewater, and electrical generation, distribution, and treatment capabilities to improve resiliency, quality, and reliability and minimize risk to mission. In energy, we are pursuing micro grids and continuing to aggressively conduct and learn from black start exercises, which are designed to test an installation's ability to continue mission during a total loss of commercial power. Because most of our power originates off-base, the Navy continues to partner with local and State communities and Allies and partners, to improve resiliency inside and outside our fence line to support the Fleet.

Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) Investments. Our fiscal year 2025 request invests \$2.8 billion in SIOP and provides \$9.0 billion across the FYDP, continuing our commitment to this once-in-a-generation investment in our four public shipyards. This is on top of our fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 requests of \$1.9 billion and \$2.7 billion. We must ensure our shore enterprise is

fully funded, reinforced, and upgraded to prepare for war. The average age of the Navy's shipyard facilities and related infrastructure is 61 years old and the average age of our dry-docks is 101 years old. SIOP is a needed investment in repairs, modernization, and recapitalization to deliver dry-docks that can support current and future classes of our nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carriers, optimize workflow through changes in the physical layout of the shipyard, and increase productivity through technology and equipment upgrades.

The fiscal year 2025 budget request funds the following: the fifth increment of the P-381 Multi-Mission Dry Dock Extension (\$401 million) at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the third increment for the P-209 Dry Dock 3 Replacement at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam (\$1,199 million), first increment for P-1062 Dry Dock 3 Modernization at Norfolk Naval Shipyard (\$54 million), P-859 CVN 78 Aircraft Carrier Electrical Upgrades at Naval Base Kitsap (\$182 million), and planning and design requirements (\$183 million) for future construction efforts.

SIB Investments. The Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request reflects our prioritization of and significant investment in our undersea warfare capability. The Department of Defense's fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$4.0 billion and \$11.4 billion in the FYDP in the SIB, sending a strong signal to and increasing the health of industry, building our supply chain resiliency, bolstering our long-term capacity and supporting the AUKUS partnership, all while ensuring readiness for today. The fiscal year 2025 request doubles the approximately \$2.0 billion SIB investment Congress provided in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024. We appreciate congressional support for the President's fiscal year 2024 supplemental request, which included \$3.3 billion for the SIB. These actions meet a generational demand for an increase of at least 100,000 skilled workers over the next 10 years to build the *Columbia*-class submarine, deliver the *Virginia*-class submarine, and maintain our in-service submarines.

This is a national effort. The SIB, including the supply chain that supports material and readiness for all submarine classes, consists of over 15,000 industry partners spread across every State in the country. The Navy will continue to partner with industry to make investments that will deliver a production cadence of 1 *Columbia* and 2.3 *Virginia*-class submarines per year to replace the aging *Ohio*-class submarine, achieve our required force structure of 66 SSNs, and support our AUKUS commitments.

Weapons Industrial Base (WIB) Investments. The Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$6.6 billion in critical munitions and builds on the fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 weapons industrial base and procurement investments. The budget request continues the multi-year procurement for four critical munitions across the FYDP: Standard Missile (SM), Naval Strike Missile (NSM), Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM), and Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile (AARGM). The Navy remains committed to working with industry to identify manufacturing challenges and provide investment opportunities to streamline testing and increase production.

Additionally, the Navy is investing in industry and in its organic industrial base to ensure we can ramp up munitions production in the immediate future. Building upon the fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 requests, the fiscal year 2025 budget request invests \$227 million to expand capacity for Trident II, Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles, Standard Missiles, and MK-48 torpedoes. We appreciate Congress' recent support for supplemental funding help replenish munitions expended in the Red Sea.

Typhoon Mawar. The Navy is committed to repairing the damages done by Typhoon Mawar in Guam. Current estimates for damage exceed the \$6 billion in facility repairs and reconstruction in fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025, complicating our ability to meet the NDS and impacting QoL for residents and servicemembers. With the accelerated degradation of our shore installations and infrastructure compounded by the increased demands of our QOS investments, we also welcome supplemental funding to support the Guam Disaster Recovery efforts from the damage caused by Typhoon Mawar.

Red Hill. The Navy remains committed to rebuilding trust with the people of Hawaii and servicemembers, civilians, and families affected by the Red Hill fuel leaks. Joint Task Force-Red Hill has safely removed 104.6 million gallons of fuel—over 99 percent of previously held fuel reserves—6 months ahead of schedule, and turned over responsibilities to Navy Closure Task Force-Red Hill (NCTF-RH) on March 28, 2024. Protecting the environment, the aquifer, and public health are top priorities of the Navy as Navy Closure Task Force—Red Hill (NCTF-RH) works toward remediation and eventual closure of Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. The Navy team in Hawaii continues to work alongside the EPA and Hawaii Department of Health to provide water that meets all Federal and State safe drinking water standards,

while transparently communicating with elected representatives, community groups and the public.

Industrial Base Workforce Development. Our recruiting efforts are about more than recruiting Active Duty sailors. It is about a broader “call to service” to Active Duty and Reserve sailors and workers supporting the industrial base that covers the spectrum of support to our Nation. The Navy appreciates Congress’ continued support and is working closely with industry partners to strengthen and grow the defense industrial base workforce through the SIB, multi-year procurement contracts, and SIOP to help build a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development system to deliver skilled trade workers. For example, the SIB is working closely with regional training partners across the country to improve workforce attraction, recruitment, training, and retention in order to achieve the increased capacity to design, build and sustain the platforms and systems the Navy and Nation needs.

Additionally, the DDG 51 multiyear procurement contract for fiscal year 2023 included a workforce development incentive that supports essential enhancements, including workforce housing and transportation, expansion of local talent pipeline programs, facilities modifications in support of workforce development, attraction and retention bonus programs, and augmented on-the-job training. And, through SIOP and our recapitalization of century-old infrastructure, we are improving QOS for our 30,000 shipyard employees. But, we must do more. Alongside government and industry, we must explore ways to support QoL concerns in order to ensure that these workers have affordable housing, commutes, and food options.

CONCLUSION

The Navy continues to meet its Title 10 mission to be organized, trained, and equipped for the peacetime promotion of the national security interests and prosperity of the United States and for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea. Our operations around the world demonstrate that an investment in America’s Navy is an investment in America’s security and prosperity. We answer the bell, from the seabed to space, in cyberspace, and in the information environment. No other Navy in the world operates at this scale and no other Navy in the world can train, deploy, and sustain such a lethal, globally deployed, combat-credible force.

As our Nation’s founders recognized and as seen this year, naval power is—and will continue to be—an essential element of our national security. The Navy’s fiscal year 2025 budget request invests in that reality and prioritizes warfighting advantage to win in this decade. Through our Performance to Plan, Get Real Get Better, and Culture of Excellence 2.0 initiatives, the Navy is instilling a mindset that makes the most out of each dollar we receive to build the best Navy possible. We are committed to ensuring the American taxpayer knows that each dollar invested in the Navy is a dollar well spent on their safety, security, and prosperity.

The credibility of our Nation’s deterrence rests upon ready and capable ships, aircraft, and submarines. The investments we make now will shape the global maritime balance of power for the rest of this century. I could not be more proud of our Navy team that guarantees our prosperity and security, deters our adversaries, and is ready to fight and win if needed. The Navy will continue to work alongside all stakeholders and our Allies and partners to deliver the Navy the Nation needs. On behalf of our more than 600,000 Active and Reserve sailors, Navy civilians, and Navy families, I am grateful to this Committee and to your colleagues in Congress for your steadfast commitment to your United States Navy.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Admiral.
General Smith, please.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL ERIC SMITH, COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

General SMITH. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, ladies, and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to represent your marines today.

I’d like to start by sincerely thanking this Committee for its enduring support and your advocacy for a timely, predictable, and sufficient budget that enables the Marine Corps to remain first to fight. I would also like to express my deep gratitude for the part-

nership between Admiral Franchetti and me as we lead our respective sea services under the leadership of Secretary Del Toro.

Whether deterring, responding to crises, or in conflict, it will be the Navy and Marine Corps' expeditionary forces who make first contact with partners seeking help or adversaries seeking a fight. Our partnership, collaboration and integration is a decisive advantage.

Last month, I published my updated guidance to the Force entitled *Maintain Momentum*. I chose this title as I firmly believe the Marine Corps is on the right path under Force Design. A few points from that document. First, I believe that Marine Corps must continue to strike a balance between high-end modernization and our commitment to persistent forward deployed Naval expeditionary forces that campaign and respond to crises globally. This effort is represented by our Marine Expeditionary Units, the coin of the realm.

Second, we must prioritize our operations with the Navy and its amphibious ships, and we must provide marines with the organic mobility to rapidly maneuver from shore, as shore, ship to shore and back again.

Third, on recruiting. Our performance speaks for itself. We'll continue to make mission without ever diminishing our standards. Additionally, our top performing marines are reenlisting at record rates, and we must sustain this trend.

Fourth, we must maximize the capability of our Reserves to ensure that our Nation has a ready bunch of warriors that they've relied on since the founding of the Marine Corps Forces Reserve in 1916.

Fifth, I'm dedicated to ensuring a quality of life for our marines that matches the high demands we place on them every day. That means nutritious food, high quality and accessible gyms, and a safe, quiet place to recover from a hard day's work. Our Barracks 2030 initiative is our most consequential barracks investment ever, and it is sorely needed.

While aggressively pursuing these priorities, I commit to you that our Corps will always be frugal and accountable with the resources you and the American people provide. I'm extremely proud of my marines and civilian marines who enabled the Marine Corps to receive an unmodified audit opinion earlier this year, the first of any service to do so. They told us what we have long known that when you entrust us with the taxpayers' money, it is money well spent and fully accounted for. All these things are critical to maintaining the strength and dominance of your Marine Corps.

This year marks 249 years since the founding of our Corps. That is 249 years of battles won and peace upheld in the name of democracy and prosperity for our Nation and for all nations who abide by the international rules-based order.

But increasingly, world events demonstrate this order is being challenged. Free trade, unrestricted access to the seas, peaceful cooperation between nations, big and small, are under assault. Our nation's prosperity is underwritten by a strong Navy and Marine Corps who maintain a global presence and keep malign actors at bay.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to represent your marines today. I pledge to continue to work closely with each of you to ensure your Marine Corps remains the most lethal fighting force on the planet.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL ERIC SMITH

Chair Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to report to you on your marines and your Corps. Your support has been critical to your Corps' ability to remain the Nation's Force-in-Readiness, all the while modernizing to stay ahead of our adversaries and those who would seek to threaten our Nation or its Allies and partners.

WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE FIGHT

The Marine Corps is, first and foremost, a warfighting organization. We exist to fight and win our country's battles. Everything we do is with that one goal in mind. The character of war may change, but its essence never will—it is the violent struggle between two irreconcilable wills. That struggle is where marines thrive. We ask for nothing more than the chance to be First to Fight.

We are and will remain a naval expeditionary force that fights from the sea as task-organized, multi-domain combined arms air-ground task forces. With Force Design in progress, we continue our proud history as our Nation's expeditionary shock troops who can deliver combat power from sea to land—and we have added the additional capability to project power from land to sea. As a globally present and persistent force, we are inextricably linked to naval campaigns, and we are forward deployed in competition, ready to respond in times of crisis at a moment's notice.

Our foundation as our Nation's expeditionary force in readiness and as its elite soldiers from the sea will not change. But the formations, capabilities, and methods we use against our adversaries must evolve. Combined arms operations today are more than coordinating ground maneuver, indirect fires, and close air support—already the most difficult task for any fighting force to master. To fight and win against a peer adversary, combined arms must now be all-domain, incorporating effects in and from cyberspace, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum. The mastery of this evolution in warfare is what allows us to punch above our weight class. It is what will keep the Marine Corps—a relatively small service—respected by our friends and feared by our enemies across the globe.

Maneuver Warfare, encapsulated in our Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, is integral to how we fight, but our understanding of “maneuver” must evolve along with the changing character of war. Marines at the tactical edge will maneuver under all-domain supporting fires to seize terrain and destroy the enemy. This challenge will require a greater proliferation of capabilities that can provide those all-domain effects down to the lowest level. This requirement includes autonomous systems; precision fires; intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting (ISR-T); integrated command and control; and increased ground and maritime mobility.

Marine Stand-in Forces are task-organized, mobile, low-signature, sustainable formations, built to maneuver across all domains, sense and understand the battlefield, enable combined kill webs, and apply all-domain combined arms. They persist forward in contested areas, operate alongside allies and partners, contribute to deterrence, and, if deterrence fails, fight to win. Adversaries will attempt to deny and degrade the joint force's ability to see and sense. Marines at every echelon are now using the platforms and capabilities that our aggressive modernization efforts are delivering. Our Force Design efforts have enabled our marines to conduct all-domain and multi-source collections and intelligence in support of the joint force. We are the eyes and ears for the joint force, ideally positioned within the weapons engagement zone (WEZ) to conduct both reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance, to act as a joint tactical air controller for the combined joint force, and to strike the enemy from land to sea with organic sensors and precision fires.

Sustaining those forces will be both vitally important and exceptionally difficult. Contested logistics can only succeed through a combination of technology and tactics. Forces will have to coordinate the deliberate application of multi-domain fires and maneuver to create the physical and temporal conditions necessary to support logistics networks. Make no mistake—a peer fight requires both the large traditional avenues for supply as well as a global network of tailored nodes to support

specialized units distributed across the battlespace. The Globally Positioned Network ashore, including Maritime Prepositioned Forces afloat, will become nodes within a larger, resilient sustainment web that will not rely on single points of failure. This is a wicked problem to solve, but for marines, it is not insurmountable. We became marines to do hard things.

Today, across the Indo-Pacific, approximately 23,000 marines are forward-deployed or stationed West of the International Dateline. Building upon the longstanding ability of III Marine Expeditionary Force to deter, campaign, and respond to crises, I would like to highlight several initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region: a new integrated naval Task Force called TF 76.3; our Marine Littoral Regiments—one of which will be forward postured in Japan's Southwest Islands; an expanded Rotational Force in Australia; and a new Rotational Force—Southeast Asia. This forward posture is a critical requirement for integrated deterrence and reinforces a national source of strategic advantage, our global network of Allies and partners. Just as important, our forward posture contributes to the core mission of the Naval Force—presence.

- Marines with the I and III Marine Expeditionary Forces continue to reinforce joint warfighting advantages through their ongoing activities across the Indo-Pacific with our allies in the region, including Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea. Exercises Resolute Dragon and Iron Fist with the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade are two of the best examples of our active campaigning in the theater. Those operations and activities directly support Japan's efforts to reinforce its maritime domain awareness in the Southwest Islands, enhance its reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance capabilities, and further develop its capability to use land-based anti-ship systems to effect sea-denial. Some of this training occurs at the JGSDF's Camp Ishigaki on a southwestern Japanese island approximately 160 miles east of Taiwan.
- In Australia, Marine Rotational Force—Darwin (MRF-D) continues to demonstrate advanced interoperability between the Marines Corps and Australian Defense Forces (ADF) across each warfighting function, power projection with non-traditional assets, and the ability to overcome mobility challenges in the littoral environment. Because of the years of working closely with the U.S. Marine Corps to address the changing threat, the ADF are developing two amphibious brigades that have much in common with the Marine Littoral Regiment. This year, MRF-D will integrate with the ADF in at least 13 operations, activities, and investments (OAI), including exercises that seek to validate theater planning assumptions and enhance overall interoperability. The MRF-D 2024 rotation will further focus on simulating and overcoming the logistical challenges we envision facing in a high-end fight in the Pacific.
- The largest bilateral military exercise between Australia and the United States, Exercise Talisman Saber, is well known; what is perhaps less well known is that TS23 integrated amphibious vessels from the United States and Japan, as well as German naval infantry, and introduced field training exercises with several Pacific Island Countries for the first time. For the first time last year, we were able to include the Indonesian National Armed Forces within our combined training alongside the Australians. We look forward to expanding upon this new opportunity to extend our campaigning.
- In October 2023, we initiated the second rotation of our newest expeditionary force—Marine Rotational Force—Southeast Asia (MRF-SEA), to counter ongoing PRC maritime gray zone operations. MRF-SEA operations and activities included coastal defense training, raid and reconnaissance training, and amphibious operations training with Allies and partners in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.
- Our most important campaigning event in support of deterring North Korean aggression, Ssang Yong, resumed in 2023 and involved an amphibious landing with elements of the ROKMC, 1st Marine Division, and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). Ssang Yong 24 is planned for August 2024 to allow for the utilization of the America ARG (LHA 6) and 31st MEU.
- In August 2023, marines of the America Amphibious Ready Group and 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) conducted humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations in the vicinity of Papua New Guinea following the eruption of Mount Bagana on 31 July 2023.

Our efforts across the EUCOM AOR have also significantly expanded, and now include tailored efforts with NATO's newest members—Sweden and Finland. Since 2018, Exercise Archipelago Endeavor has been the primary venue for Marine

Forces, Europe, to develop interoperability with the Swedish marines. Beginning in 2022, the Royal Swedish Navy also offered the exercise as a medium for the Marine Corps to develop and evaluate modern concepts such as maritime domain awareness. This generous offer and the close relationship with America's newest Ally are further evidence of the strategic impact of our network of Allies and partners. In 2023, Low-Altitude Air-Defense (LAAD) marines participated in exercise ADEX with the Finnish Navy, and Combat Logistics Battalion-6 (CLB-6) participated in Exercises Atrain and Freezing Winds with the Nyland Brigade (naval infantry). This year, Exercise Freezing Winds will be the primary bilateral exercise between the Marine Corps and Finnish Navy and naval infantry forces. In addition to those exercises, marines from 2d Marine Division conducted several HIMARS Rapid Infiltration (HIRAIN) events throughout the theater, including Finland, Poland, and Greece. These visible demonstrations of combat credibility and operational reach involve inserting HIMARS via fixed-wing aircraft, conducting fire missions using U.S. and NATO C2 architecture, and then extracting via fixed-wing aircraft.

Your Corps' worldwide campaigning activities, alongside the Navy, help nurture our Nation's source of strategic advantage on the world stage: our network of allies and partners. Through our persistent presence, we are forging close and lasting relationships—every day—and building a network of friendly forces who have common operating concepts and increasingly, interoperable systems and procedures.

Following the terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the 26th MEU and BATAAN Amphibious Ready Group immediately responded and provided simultaneous contingency support to EUCOM from the Mediterranean Sea and CENTCOM from the Red Sea. Their rapid response demonstrated the ARG/MEU's ability to provide expeditionary sea-based contingency response packages during times of crisis without the constraints and restraints of access, basing, and overflight. Additionally, the 26th MEU(SOC) aboard the BATAAN ARG conducted maritime security operations in vicinity of the Straits of Hormuz to deter malign influence and assure free flow of commerce.

Throughout 2023, Marine Security Guard Augmentation Units (MSAU) operating under title 22 authorities augmented security at designated U.S. diplomatic facilities overseas to protect U.S. diplomats and prevent the compromise of national security information and equipment. MSAUs conduct on-compound security and defense at these facilities when Department of State (DOS) deems there is a need to augment the resident Marine Security Guard detachment due to an increased threat. In 2023, there were 18 MSAU deployments in support of our diplomats in Ukraine, Central African Republic, Ecuador, Mali, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Liberia, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Bangladesh.

All these examples, from maritime security to embassy reinforcement, demonstrate the diverse range of missions that our crisis response forces are ready to execute at any time and place. The breadth of those capabilities is simply unmatched across the joint force and continues to be a source of strategic advantage.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Upon my assumption of duties as Commandant of the Marine Corps, I outlined my top five priorities: 1) Balancing Crisis Response and Modernization, 2) Naval Integration and Organic Mobility, 3) Quality of Life, 4) Recruit, Make, and Retain Marines, and 5) Maximize the Potential of our Reserves. Those priorities remain at the heart of my direction to your Corps.

Balancing Crisis Response and Modernization

By balancing crisis response and modernization, we will continue our modernization effort under Force Design while remaining unwavering in our commitment to a persistent, global forward presence and to our Marine Expeditionary Units.

Force Design and Modernization. I remain fully committed to Force Design and all its supporting efforts. The following assumptions inform our modernization efforts: (1) The long-standing trend of increasing dispersion on the battlefield will continue and likely accelerate—frontages will increase, battlefield depth will increase, and sanctuary will be difficult to achieve; (2) winning the all-domain reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance fight provides significant warfighting advantage and losing this fight will be increasingly difficult to overcome; (3) the Marine Corps' ability to task-organize for specific missions will continue to be a source of competitive advantage for the service; and (4) the future operating environment requires threat-informed modernization of Marine Corps capabilities.

We will continue to provide our Nation with forward deployed Marine Forces who campaign and are prepared to respond to crisis alongside our Navy shipmates. Employing our crisis response capability as a subset of campaigning is how we will be postured to deter malign actors and provide our Nation's leaders with strategic deci-

sion space. Despite the threats from operating inside an adversary's WEZ, forward-deployed marines can shape the operational environment and cause our adversaries to think before committing to a course of action. Should our adversaries foolishly choose to fight, marines will be ready with the tools necessary to destroy and defeat them in combat.

Marine Littoral Regiments: As an example of our dispersed, task-organized units that possess modern equipment for the future of warfare, the 3d Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR)—headquartered at Marine Corps Base Hawaii—reached Initial Operational Capability in 2023 and is planned to reach Full Operational Capability in fiscal year 25. 3d MLR is actively experimenting with innovative tactics, techniques, and procedures to enable its unique mission as a distributed unit that must possess resilient communications, air defense, and precision fires. On the other side of the Pacific, the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment—headquartered in Okinawa, Japan—stood up in November 2023.

Contested Logistics: The ability to conduct logistics in a contested environment will underwrite the success of any future naval campaign in the current age of ubiquitous counter-intervention strategies. Contested logistics remains a service priority but will require a combination of solutions from the Service, joint force, and allies and partners. Connecting the industrial base, depots in the United States, and ports of embarkation with forward nodes in theater and tied to a resilient tactical level sustainment web, supported by multi-domain distribution platforms, will take a monumental effort across all the services. The Marine Corps will continue to work in stride with the joint force, Allies, and partners to ensure we have the integrated systems, architecture, global logistic awareness, doctrine, and training to sustain our forces.

The Marine Corps, in close collaboration with the Navy, is currently experimenting with over a dozen new manned and unmanned technologies and potential future capabilities focused on enabling logistics in a contested environment. These operational experiments include well-known capabilities such as the CH-53K, the stern landing vessel (SLV), as well as lesser-known, emerging capabilities like the tactical resupply unmanned aircraft system (TRUAS), the Medium Aerial Resupply Vehicle for Expeditionary Logistics (MARV-EL), and the autonomous low-profile vessel (ALPV). Concurrently, the Marine Corps has commenced the formal establishment of the first of three near-term Global Positioning Networks located in the Western Pacific.

Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance (ISR) Enterprise Transformation: As an essential element of transformative efforts behind our modernization, the Marine Corps ISR Enterprise will continue to expand and strengthen the Corps' dynamic—and growing—cadre of ISR professionals. The Marine Corps exceeded our goals in qualifying marines to expand signals intelligence and electromagnetic warfare specialties. Integrated within our infantry battalions, some of these marines have already begun contributing to the Joint and Naval Forces' ability to sense and make sense in complex maritime and littoral environments. Other groundbreaking efforts throughout the Fleet Marine Force include integration and experimentation with innovative maritime sensing capabilities such as surface-search radars, automatic recognition software, advanced electromagnetic support capabilities, and various tactical airborne platforms.

Autonomous Systems at Scale: The Marine Corps is actively engaged, participating, and, in some instances, leading efforts within the Department of Defense's Replicator Initiative, which aims to field attritable autonomous systems at scale and in multiple domains. To accomplish this task, the Marine Corps is aggressively leveraging AI, robotics, and commercial technology. I see Replicator, if managed carefully, as an opportunity to build on the momentum of Force Design to accelerate modernization and alignment with the emergent needs of the Joint Force. The USMC has worked tirelessly to scale some of the identified capabilities already, so we appreciate Replicator's holistic approach to breaking down policy barriers while we strengthen our industrial base. As Replicator continues to rapidly develop, the Service will emphasize unmanned systems that can support a range of military operations in the Indo-Pacific and other geographic regions.

Complementing these efforts, the Marine Corps takes advantage of the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve to rapidly transition promising prototypes into production. An example of one such initiative is the Marine Corps' XQ-58A Valkyrie, a highly autonomous, low-cost tactical uncrewed air vehicle, which successfully completed two test flights, one in October 2023 and the other in February 2024. These flights mark key milestones in the Marine Corps' Penetrating Affordable Autonomous Collaborative Killer—Portfolio (PAACK-P) experiment. Future test flights will inform Marine Corps requirements for the Marine Air-Ground Task Force Unmanned Aerial System Expeditionary (MUX) Tactical Aircraft (TACAIR) program.

The XQ-58A will complete six planned test flights with objectives that include evaluating the platform's ability to support a variety of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions; the effectiveness of autonomous electromagnetic support to crewed platforms; the potential for AI-enabled platforms to augment combat air patrols; and other manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T) capability objectives. We are committed to the development of a robust Combat Collaborative Aircraft capability and think this model of manned-unmanned teaming is just as relevant on the sea and under the sea. We are exploring options that would provide our future MEUs with such capabilities.

Training and Education. Last summer, the Navy and Marine Corps team conducted our most expansive and stressing live and virtual training to date in Large Scale Exercise 23 (LSE 23) using Carrier Strike Group 2, anchored on the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN-69), to help us better understand how we would fight the next war at sea. We were able to connect six carrier strike groups (two live, four virtual), six amphibious ready groups (two live, four virtual), and an additional 25 live and 50 virtual ships. To add to the realism of the event, exercise planners added 25,000 sailors and marines to the exercise with very little additional preparation outside of normal training. All these factors make both the learning and findings more authentic. LSE 23 required the use of nine Maritime Operations Centers. Testing warfighting concepts and challenging ourselves at this scale is exactly what is required to generate the warfighting readiness we need in the future against a peer threat.

Readiness. Critical to our ability to remain forward postured and ready for any crisis is our commitment to operations and maintenance funding of ground and aviation training, maintenance, safety, and readiness. This funding allowed us to respond to the many crises around the world in 2023, and it will help ensure that we are organized, trained, equipped, and forward-postured to do so again this year and into the future. We will continue to emphasize the importance of a full and predictable budget to fund modernization programs, advance our logistics capability, which is the pacing function, and advance the role of our installations as power projection platforms.

Unmodified Audit Opinion. As we invest in new platforms, barracks, and training, it is our responsibility as good stewards of taxpayer funds to continue to prove that when the Corps is provided a taxpayer dollar, we can show exactly where and how it has been invested—a responsibility I take very seriously. Following a rigorous 2-year audit, the Marine Corps achieved an unmodified audit opinion, the best possible outcome—and the first time in the Department of Defense's history that any service has received an unmodified audit opinion. These results demonstrate how seriously the Marine Corps takes its stewardship of taxpayer funds and our ability to account for and put to best use every dollar trusted to the service. This audit supports what we have believed for a long time—when Congress provides the Marine Corps a dollar, we invest it wisely, and we can tell you exactly where and how it was spent to further our Nation's national security objectives. The Marine Corps worked with Independent Public Accountants to validate budgetary balances and records and to audit physical assets at installations and bases across the globe. These actions included counting military equipment, buildings, structures, supplies, and ammunition held by the Marine Corps and our DOD Partners. The audit's favorable opinion was only possible through the support and hard work of numerous dedicated marines, civilian marines, and many other partners across DOD. Nonetheless, we will not rest on our laurels; the audit report pointed out some areas for improvement, and we will use these recommendations to make our fiscal practices even better.

Naval Integration and Organic Mobility

The Marine Expeditionary Unit remains our crown jewel, and the Navy's Amphibious Warfare Ships and surface connectors are key enablers in campaigning, crisis response, and contingency response. Our MEUs remain in high demand by Combatant Commanders, Allies, and partners alike; our MEUs respond to crises all over the globe and prevent crises from turning into a larger conflict. Amphibious Warfare Ships enable our global, persistent presence—that presence has been the guarantor of peace and worldwide prosperity for the better part of the last century. No platform or unit is capable of a more diverse set of missions from the low-end to the high-end of military operations. No other unit is purpose-built for campaigning and deterring maritime gray-zone operations. No other part of the fleet is purpose-built to satisfy the naval presence mission. Bottom line, Amphibious Warfare Ships with embarked marines are the only tool in the U.S. arsenal that can strengthen our relationships with Allies and partners across all domains while being capable of rapidly transitioning to crisis or conflict. As an assurance for Allies and partners, the

Navy and Marine Corps ARG/MEU team has no equal and is a primary source of strategic advantage.

Amphibious Warfare Ships. The CNO and I have locked shields, and there is no space between us on the requirement for Amphibious Warfare Ships—to include construction, maintenance, and modernization, and the availability of ships for training and deployment. The Fiscal Year 2025 Thirty Year Shipbuilding Plan continues the LPD Flight II Program on 2-year centers and LHA production on 4-year centers across the FYDP. This includes full funding for LPD33 in this fiscal year 2025, the calendar year 2024 delivery of LPD 29 USS *McCool*, and funding to maintain a scheduled delivery of LHA 8 in fiscal year 2026—sustaining no fewer than 31 amphibious warfare ships. The CNO and I continue to work to improve amphibious warfare ship readiness to ensure global, persistent presence of MEUs in support of Combatant Commanders' demands.

Amphibious warship procurement, like other Navy shipbuilding programs, can benefit from multi-ship procurement contracts that stabilize the industrial base and provide significant cost savings for the Department. New ship acquisition using authorities already granted by Congress yield potentially significant cost and schedule benefits, accelerates delivery of amphibious warfighting capability to the Fleet, and provides critical stability and predictability to the shipbuilding industrial base. By procuring the amphibious warfare ships in the 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan (3 LPDs and 1 LHA) on a multi-ship procurement contract, the Department can save hundreds of millions of dollars for the American taxpayer. Multi-ship procurement supports the industrial base and is a critical tool for reaching and maintaining the amphibious warfare ship requirement and meeting the objectives of the 2022 National Defense Strategy, as long as industry produces those ships on schedule and on budget.

Littoral Mobility. Mobility is a critical requirement to enable the dispersion and persistence of stand-in forces. In the case of MLRs in the Indo-Pacific, littoral mobility will be essential to maneuver through the complex geography of the region. We recognized this capability gap early as we developed concepts for the Indo-Pacific and designed the associated Medium Landing Ship (LSM) as a critical enabler for this theater. Separate and complementary to the Amphibious Warfare Ships, the LSM is a maneuver asset and, as a shore-to-shore vessel, is unique and critical to expeditionary littoral mobility. LSMs facilitate campaigning and can support diverse missions such as security cooperation, humanitarian assistance / disaster relief (HA/DR), logistics support, and the launch and recovery of uncrewed systems for maritime domain awareness.

Quality of Life

When we improve our Marines' Quality of Life (QOL), we do right by our Nation's most precious resource—our marines and their families—and we retain our lethal edge by retaining our top talent. To this end, we have recently undertaken several targeted efforts to improve our marines' QOL and further promote the retention of our best marines:

- Rapid execution of “Barracks 2030,” the most consequential barracks investment plan we have ever undertaken.
- Improvements in quality and accessible healthcare.
- Acceleration of investments in Marine Corps Total Fitness and focused investments in our gyms, chow halls, Child Development Centers, and family housing.
- Increased creative incentives for overseas and Pacific-based marines.

Our recent Talent Management efforts are data-informed and comprehensive. Additionally, we recognize that Quality of Life does not just mean facilities and incentives. Talent Management drives us to make better data-driven institutional decisions and personnel policies for our marines and their families. All marine leaders know instinctively that we have a sacred and personal responsibility to lead, mentor, and care for our junior marines, but there is still more the institution can do to help our youngest marines.

Barracks 2030. The Marine Corps has recently initiated Barracks 2030, our strategy to pursue improvements in our unaccompanied housing. This strategy codifies many initiatives the Corps began in February 2023 and is certainly informed by the 2023 Government Accountability Office report on barracks. The Marine Corps' Barracks 2030 strategy takes an aggressive approach in improving housing for our marines along three lines of effort: Management, Modernization, and Materiel. Our strategy is data-driven—to the “room level.” I recently directed the inspection of the over 58,000 barracks rooms in the Marine Corps—not as a replacement to our junior leaders' weekly inspections for cleanliness and repair—but to establish a systematic approach toward barracks maintenance using a standardized repair checklist. In the

coming weeks, the data from this inspection will inform our prioritization of efforts and future year budget requests.

As an example of our management efforts, and as directed by the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, we plan to implement a civilian management structure in our Military Housing Offices by October of this year, followed by civilian and contractor management of each of our barracks in the next 2 years to improve responsiveness to maintenance requests. Ultimately, we will return more than 500 marine non-commissioned officer barracks managers to their primary military occupational specialties. We further intend to consolidate family housing and barracks oversight within the Military Housing Offices, which will streamline leadership and management of all Marine Corps housing.

Our Modernization plans extend beyond new structures and include modernizing systems to enable right-size inventory and deliberate, proactive maintenance. Over the last 6 years, the Marine Corps has averaged over \$200 million annually in restoration and modernization projects for barracks exclusively. In fiscal Years 2022 and 2023, we renovated 30 barracks, improving the quality of life of 8,116 marines. In fiscal year 2024, we approached Congress with a funding request to renovate 13 more barracks to improve the living conditions of 3,517 marines. We are leveraging a tier-based readiness approach to lifecycle management to prioritize investments for the most critical facilities. Every dollar spent will be targeted to where it will have the greatest impact. Future modernization efforts include installing new air conditioning systems for barracks in the warmest of climates and targeted demolition to remove buildings not suitable for our marines.

In the near term for Material, marines can expect to see common space furniture replaced three times faster than in years past and replacement of lock systems across the entire barracks portfolio within the next 2 years. We are also committed to replacing room furniture, washers, and dryers at a much greater frequency through a centralized procurement system.

Health Care. Quality healthcare for our marines is the minimum standard for readiness and is vital to the All-Volunteer Force. Overseas, and primarily in Japan, network care in the civilian community is not as readily accessible at the standard set by the Department of Defense for our marines and their families. In recognition of this fact, the Marine Corps conducted a data-driven area assessment on delayed access to care. Guided by the results of this assessment, the Marine Corps is working with Navy Medicine and the Defense Health Agency to identify the location and need of specialties and develop a plan to address them. We are thankful for Congress' support for the Defense Health Agency implementation and its support to address the gap between DOD contract healthcare labor rates and the civilian market.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. Sexual assault is a crime, and the Marine Corps always focuses on assisting victims with care and support and holding alleged perpetrators appropriately accountable. As of December 2023, the Marine Corps Office of the Special Trial Counsel is fully staffed and operational worldwide. This program will professionalize prosecution of special victims offenses and strengthening victims' confidence in the military justice system. The Marine Corps continues to hold its commanders and senior enlisted leaders responsible for the command climate of their units and for fostering a culture of respect for all.

- Our Training & Education Command has undertaken a comprehensive review and modification of our training covering the career of a marine—from the first instance a poolee commits to the Corps to training for our Colonel-level commanders. Foundationally, this training review and implementation has leveraged the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC) training requirements.
- In fiscal year 2023, the Marine Corps worked to hire 358 positions across the enterprise and another 92 in fiscal year 2024 in support of IRC recommendations approved by the Secretary of Defense and prevention efforts. This hiring is in addition to the previously authorized 120 Marine Corps full-time equivalents (FTE) in prevention and response. As of January 2024, 162 employees have been onboarded, and another 273 hiring actions are in process. We remain unsatisfied with the pace of our hiring, especially in certain locations where labor and workforce factors limit our available pool of applicants. We will continue to work with Congress to develop policy initiatives to accelerate this effort.

Marine Corps Total Fitness. Marine Corps Total Fitness is the summation of physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness programs that equip our marines with the tools of resiliency and fortitude required to fight at their highest potential and prevent unnecessary loss due to factors ranging from non-EAS attrition to the tragedy of suicide. The Marine Corps takes a holistic approach to total fitness, under-

standing that fitness is more than simply possessing high physical fitness or mental aptitude scores. Upon assuming the duties of the 39th Commandant, I immediately directed simple but effective measures to supplement our already robust total fitness initiatives—a renewed focus on Quality of Life by improving the quality of our living spaces, our chow halls, and 24/7 access to on-base gyms. Further, I will continue to ensure access to the programs available to our marines using force-wide person-to-person engagement programs such as Unit Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training, which every marine in the Corps receives annually.

As a Corps, we apply a public health approach to prevention, focusing on ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of the entire Marine Corps community. Our efforts aim to strengthen protective factors that reduce the risk of individuals experiencing harmful behaviors. For example, social connections, social support, and positive social relationships are protective factors against a spectrum of issues including child abuse, domestic abuse, hazing, sexual violence, substance abuse, youth violence, and suicide-related behavior. Skill-building is an essential component of prevention and equips marines and their families with the tools needed to cope with stressors before they become overwhelming. Examples of skill-building include building problem-solving, coping, anger management, and healthy relationship skills.

Over the last year, the Marine Corps Behavioral Programs Office has implemented several efforts to combat the factors contributing to harmful behavior and suicide. Their efforts include the third iteration of our annual Wellness Symposium to inform unit Suicide Prevention Officers, Suicide Prevention Program Coordinators, and uniformed leaders. The office also partnered with the Lejeune Leadership Institute to reinforce prevention efforts at our Marine Corps Recruit Depots through leadership and ethics courses. Our Safety Division has also updated our Cognitive Behavioral Therapy curriculum. We have initiated a deliberate service-wide messaging campaign targeted at Total Fitness and suicide prevention. In fact, the second message to the entire force that the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps and I recorded was specifically aimed at addressing mental health and suicide prevention directly.

Safety. Safety is a critical component of our Corps and a key indicator of a unit's discipline. Operational excellence is the professional, efficient, and expert execution of our warfighting missions, functions, and tasks. It demands a culture of continuous improvement and the pursuit of the highest standards. Safety is not a restriction or obstacle to realistic or challenging training—it is a requirement. Many mishaps are preventable when we comply with established procedures and take action to stop unsafe acts before they occur. Our safety culture is strong but must be doggedly maintained and actively inculcated into our youngest marines. When I became Commandant, I directed the assignment of a General Officer to lead our service safety initiatives and provide the requisite level of oversight and leadership. I am grateful to Congress for the additional authorization of a general officer that enabled this assignment.

Childcare. Our Child and Youth Programs (CYP) provide high-quality, accessible, affordable care aboard 16 Marine Corps installations and through contractual partnerships. Some of the benefits CYP offers include Child Development Programs, the Community-Based Child Care Fee Assistance Program, and Youth Programming. We continue to make progress in recovering from the effects of COVID-19 on our childcare network. The Marine Corps Child Development Center's (CDC) unmet needs list continues to shrink, with the current total at 962 spaces.

We are addressing childcare waitlist issues by emphasizing hiring efforts and a non-competitive childcare employee transfer program.

- Beginning in fiscal year 2023, we added over \$100 million to the Child and Youth Program portfolio to hire more employees at increased wages to help retain a professional workforce. Our average CDC employee salary is now higher than those outside the gate at most installations.
- In fiscal year 2023, direct care employees' salaries were increased beyond the federally mandated \$15 per hour. The minimum wage of an entry-level employee is \$18.20 per hour. Childcare employees with children enrolled in the program now receive a 50 percent reduction in fees for the first child and a 20 percent reduction for subsequent children.
- Our current staffing turnover rate is 20 percent, a marked improvement over the fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022 turnover rates of 34 percent and 45 percent, respectively. Departing employees listed "relocation" as the primary reason they resigned in about a third of cases, which is explained by the fact that many CDC employees are spouses who move alongside their servicemember. Military spouses comprise 40 percent of the Marine Corps' Child and Youth Programs employees. Spouse employment is important for many Marine Corps

families and can be a significant factor in their financial security, readiness, and retention. Family Member Employment Assistance Program is available at each Marine Corps installation and provides employment related referral services, career and skill assessments, career coaching, job search guidance, portal career opportunities, and education centers referrals/guidance. We also reimburse eligible marine spouses up to \$1,000 for State licensure and certification cost arising from relocation to another State. We appreciate Congress' recent expansion of this program and continued support. To address the challenge of PCS cycles, we have implemented a CDC employee non-competitive transfer program that allows employees to transfer from their current position more seamlessly to a similar one at a different installation. This single initiative has enabled us to retain more than 180 spouse employees, whom we may have otherwise lost.

- To mitigate waitlists, we also offer childcare fee assistance for eligible marines assigned to an installation with a significant waitlist. Over the last 3 fiscal years, the rate of fee assistance utilization has increased steadily for both community-based childcare providers as well as children served. In fiscal year 2023, over 1,600 children were enrolled in the fee assistance program at over 620 community-based providers, at a total cost of \$6.1 million. We recently increased the maximum amount of fee assistance, which will undoubtedly help our marine families, especially those in high-cost areas.

We appreciate Congress's support to improve childcare delivery in all its forms. Access to and affordability quality and reliable childcare enables marines to focus on their duties, which directly impacts our readiness and lethality.

Overseas and Pacific Marines. The Marine Corps has established a Pacific cell to focus solely on improving the quality of life and morale for our marines, civilian workforce, and families throughout the Indo-Pacific. This cell is engaged with units stationed in the Pacific and has solicited direct feedback. One idea we are studying is the adequacy of policies regarding shipment and storage of privately owned vehicles for marines stationed overseas. Those changes would improve spouse employment, access to childcare, and other quality-of-life priorities. We are considering other monetary and non-monetary incentives to reduce the cost and stress of executing orders to overseas locations.

Recruiting, Making, and Retaining Marines

Recruiting. Our success in maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young men and women who possess the character, mental aptitude, physical and psychological fitness, and desire required to earn the title, "marine." Recruiters face a challenging environment. Labor market challenges, historic lows in qualification rates, and lower propensities to join have made it increasingly difficult to maintain our recruiting momentum. Nonetheless, we do not ask young men and women to join us, and we do not promise them an easy life—instead, we challenge them to try out for and earn the privilege to wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. Those who meet and sustain our high standards deserve our best leadership. We are a proud organization that welcomes and judges all based on one standard—the Marine Corps standard.

There is no better visible example of our disciplined warriors than our recruiters. We send our very best to recruiting—our recruiters are often the first marine a young person ever meets. One in four of our general officers have been recruiters during their career, and we pride ourselves in assigning a sergeant major to every recruiting station. We value the mission—not only for the immediate results of recruiting the best fighting force for our Nation—but also for the professional development and leadership that such rigorous duty instills in a marine leader. As it is such a challenging duty, we are paying particular attention to the quality of life for our recruiters. Incentives like monetary bonuses help, but we understand that non-monetary incentives often make the difference. Additionally, and in keeping with marines' tenet of "exploit success," I recently directed an increase of several hundred recruiters to ensure our continued success in accomplishing our mission and sustaining the momentum in re-building our Delayed Entry Pool.

Our performance speaks for itself. As you know, Marine Corps Recruiting Command achieved its fiscal year 2023 recruiting mission while sustaining our high standards. Last fiscal year, over 98 percent of our recruiting accessions were high school graduates, exceeding the Department of Defense's standard of 90 percent. While we are authorized up to 4 percent of accessions from the CAT IV mental group, we have deliberately chosen not to do so and did not access any CAT IV applicants in 2023. In addition, the average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score for marine recruits was over 60—which remains well above the AFQT average score of 50; sixty-six percent scored in the top three tiers of the AFQT, exceeding

the DOD standard of 60 percent. Marine Corps Recruiting Command has also successfully made our shipping and contracting missions every month this fiscal year. Of note, we have also surpassed the fiscal year 2023 total number of Prior Service Enlistment Program (PSEP) re-accessions back into the Active component. So far, in fiscal year 2024, we have already attained 126 PSEPs in comparison to the 121 total in fiscal year 2023. For our Officer mission, we have accessed 639 officers so far this fiscal year, which is on-pace to meet or exceed the mission by category and component.

Retention. Over the past 12 months, we have implemented five major reform initiatives: 1) the Commandant's Active and Reserve Retention Program, 2) the Expanded First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP) Retention Model, 3) the Small Unit Leader Initiative, 4) Promotion Allocation Fulfillment, and 5) Marine Corps Graduate Education Program (MCGEP) Enlisted Pilot. These programs provide demonstrable results, and I am prepared to provide the Committee with detailed briefings on each. As just one example of the impact these initiatives are having, we entered fiscal year 2023 with a persistent shortfall of approximately 2,000 Sergeants across the force. Via implementing the Small Unit Leader Initiative, we not only decreased that shortfall to 150, but also secured the retention of the top talent within our E4 ranks for years via early re-enlistment.

In fiscal year 2022, we successfully re-enlisted 5,918 (22 percent) of the eligible first-term population of 26,221 marines. In fiscal year 2023, we expanded those efforts and successfully re-enlisted 7,070 (27 percent) of the eligible first-term population of 26,121 marines. Most importantly, 5,670 of those re-enlisted remained in the FMF to provide greater unit cohesion. With even greater goals in fiscal year 2024, we anticipate continued high re-enlistment rates, particularly among first-term marines. In fiscal year 2023, we initiated a pilot program targeting our infantry community, seeking to create greater unit cohesion and individual marine and family stability via 60-month infantry-only enlistment contracts. Due to the success of that effort, on 1 October 2023, all infantry contracts became 60-month contracts. Within the first quarter of this fiscal year, we have already exceeded our monthly mission goals, and for the year-to-date, we have shipped 149 percent of the requirement. We will meet and exceed our annual infantry recruiting mission of 2,579 this year.

It is important to note that as the Marine Corps shifts from a "Recruit and Replace" to an "Invest and Retain" model, the service must incentivize the retention of the highest quality marines, regardless of occupational specialty. The idea that "there is always boat space for talent" is our guiding principle. However, if not diligently managed, MOS-agnostic retention may result in uneven retention across occupational specialties. To ensure the even distribution of retained talent across the force, we will continue incentivizing lateral move opportunities for qualified marines by reducing administrative barriers to lateral moves and offering targeted bonuses for high-demand, low-density skills. Moreover, within the next year, we can expect the delivery and enhancement of the Talent Management Engagement Portal and AI/ML enabled models such as the Retention Prediction Network, Talent Marketplace, and Modernized Enlisted Staffing Goal Model that will allow us to better identify the highest quality marines for targeted retention.

Optimizing Employment of our Reserves

By Maximizing the Potential of our Reserves, we continue to forge a lethal Total Force that is greater than the sum of its parts while taking stress off the Active component. To maximize the potential of our Reserves, we must appropriately resource our AC end strength to 172,300 and RC end strength to 32,500; research the necessary policies and authorities required to enable AC and RC permeability; and return to historic National Guard Reserve Equipment Account funding levels to ensure the modernization and readiness of our Reserves. The Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) is a service-retained force and reservoir of capabilities similar to our three Active Duty MEFs. Our world-class Marine Corps Reserve routinely provides forces to satisfy service needs from training to generate readiness, build partner capacity in SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM, and augment traditional global force management requirements. Purpose-built to augment, sustain, and reinforce the Active component, our SMCR units, Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Detachments, and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) are sources of competitive warfighting advantage.

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps will be ready to respond to any crisis or contingency in the future, just as we have in the past. I remain committed to ensuring the Marine Corps remains our Nation's Force-in-Readiness. We will never lower our standards or sac-

rifice the reputation associated with the sacred title, “marine”—and will remain innovative and agile in our approach to warfighting. With your help, we will ensure your marines are provided with world-class training and improved quality of life and are enabled with the capabilities required to win our Nation’s battles against any adversary. I promise you that every dollar invested will give you the greatest return to realize our modernization strategy, build a more lethal force, and take care of your marines and their families. I thank the Committee for your continued advocacy and support for your marines. Semper Fidelis.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General Smith.

Secretary Del Toro, the comments, both Senator Wicker and I made indicate that the shipbuilding program in the Navy is in disarray. The *Columbia*-class, which is the most critical platform that the Navy, and perhaps the Nation, is trying to build is behind schedule, and it might fall further behind.

He put extraordinary pressure on the *Virginia*-class submarine construction. They’re already behind 1.2 ships versus two ships a year. You’ve responded by sending up a request for one *Virginia* this year, and a significant investment in the defense industrial base.

The first question I have, though, is there seems to be management’s problems in all these programs. Some of it is the changing requirements on the ships so that the contractor is suddenly back to square one in some cases. Others is to the inability of sub-contracts to produce, et cetera.

I must say that one of the jobs you have, and it’s a tough job, is to find out who’s responsible and to take directed action to correct it. So, could you tell us what you’re doing to ensure accountability in the programs to get them back on track?

Mr. DEL TORO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you suggest, there are a lot of challenges in the shipbuilding industry and they actually date back to the 1980’s when we gave up on commercial shipbuilding in this country and lost so much of the talent in the shipbuilding industry. That was compounded tremendously so by COVID and the enormous challenges that we have with regards to blue collar labor in this workforce that actually impacts across all programs because the industry and even the Navy and its public shipyards simply don’t have the people that are necessary to work in our shipyards. That’s sort of the base denominator of it all.

But the recent problems that we’ve actually seen here, and I don’t agree with the characterization that this is all about management, by no means of the imagination, these are difficult challenges that are presented to the Navy and as well the shipbuilding industry that we have to deal with clear on.

So, the delay of major components for the construction of *Virginia*-class, as well as the *Eisenhower*, is the major reason for the delays in these programs. So, on the *Eisenhower*, for example, you have Northrop Grumman that’s building the main reduction gear when General Electric used to do that, and they are behind delivering the main reduction gear, in addition to the high pressure and the low-pressure turbines to that carrier, which is why it’s behind. In the case of the *Virginia*-class submarines, it’s the turbine generators that are being delivered by Northrop Grumman that are significantly behind.

In addition to the quality assurance challenges that have been presented down in Norfolk, Naval Shipyard associated with the nose cones of those submarines, that you're very well familiar with as well, that has led to significant delays such that the New Jersey that was just delivered a couple of weeks ago was delivered 3 years late.

Now, some of this isn't just maintenance problems, it's again, attributed to blue collar workforce challenges that we're having, the degrading of the workforce. You could argue that years ago, as you have stated before in another testimony, you know, we had 50-year-old supervisors working with 50-year-old naval engineers in the Navy. Today it's 35-year-olds working with each other, right? That has led to significant challenges with regards to quality assurance.

Now, in the case of the frigate, quite frankly, it's a recruiting, and a retention problem in Wisconsin. So, what we are trying to actually do is many things. One, \$3.9 billion in the submarine industrial base in fiscal year 2025, followed by \$11 billion of investment over the rest of the fed up. \$750 million investment in the defense industrial base. Just in Fincantieri alone, we provided a \$100 million of resources to the shipyard so they can provide \$5,000 bonuses to their shipyard workers for the first year if they stay in place, and another \$5,000 if they stay in place throughout the construction of the ship itself.

So, we're doing everything that we possibly can to actually help industry and work with industry to get there. Industry also needs to do its part, we have too many stock buyback plans that, you know, as we're investing \$14 billion into industry, you know, we've got billions of dollars that are going out the other side of the door into stockholders. So, they've got to focus more on the customer than just the stockholders as well, too.

Chairman REED. I concur with your final comment. We're looking at companies that are not performing, but are still being rewarded. As you point out, the contraction of our defense industrial base and shipbuilding is such that competition is not really there as it was perhaps 20 or 30 years ago. The need is great, and I think we have to put more effort behind it.

My time is expiring. There's a capacity issue. I know you have a shipyard infrastructure optimization program, \$25 billion over 25 years, so that's a billion dollar a year. I think we have to come to a real question of do we have enough shipyards to function, particularly in this environment where China has 16 major premier shipyards.

I've taken too much time. Let me recognize Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. I'm tempted to ask that you be given another 5 minutes, Mr. Chairman, but I won't do that.

Let me ask General Smith and Admiral Franchetti about medium-size landing ships. Now, let me start with you, General Smith. It's my understanding the marines originally sought an affordable landing ship of less than \$150 million based on what you saw with the logistics support vessel that Israel was having built. Tell me what the landing ship mediums will do, and again, we have only 5 minutes for this round of questions. What will they do, in a nutshell?

General SMITH. Senator, thanks for that question.

The landing ship medium transports are expeditionary forces inter-island, it's beach-able, it can get up into low watermark beaches, and it enables us to have access to the entire first island chain.

Senator WICKER. So, we're talking Indo-Pacific Islands?

General SMITH. Focused on the Indo-Pacific, but certainly employable in the Mediterranean.

Senator WICKER. Okay. So, there's been requirements growth and I think everyone on both sides of the dais are concerned about this. The CBO now estimates that the landing ship medium will cost two to three times more than this \$150 million Israeli landing ship.

How many of the original Israeli logistic support vessels could you use, and what reason would we have for not being able to use those? Where you're going to need them?

General SMITH. Senator, the Israeli version does not meet our requirements for beach gradients. The beach gradient of 1 to 40 is critical because it opens up—

Senator WICKER. 1 to 40?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator WICKER. That doesn't—

General SMITH. It means the curvature of the beach, its ability to beach itself, and then back itself off.

Senator WICKER. Are there islands where it would work?

General SMITH. Senator, there are, but they would limit us in our ability to spread throughout the first island chain to counter the PRC.

Senator WICKER. Okay. So you are telling this Committee that you really can't use any of these logistic support vessels that the Marine Corps initially planned to use?

General SMITH. Senator, they would not be purpose-built. We could use them, but we would lose capability. We'd lose access to parts of the Indo-Pacific that we currently need to have access to in order to counter the PRC's continued aggression.

Senator WICKER. To what extent could they be modified without going two to three times more than the original budget?

General SMITH. Senator, I'll have to get back to you on that, on the ability to modify them without increasing costs?

Senator WICKER. Well, obviously, it would increase cost. But how is it that—I suppose, the Israelis are interested in different kinds of different islands in different areas and it works for them, but to what percentage of the islands in the Pacific could you use the existing vessel?

General SMITH. Senator, I don't have an exact number for you. I can get back to you on that.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, please do. Let me ask Admiral Franchetti to answer that question on the record.

Senator WICKER. Let me just ask you this in the time we have, the minute we have, Secretary Del Toro. There's a lot of interest in this Committee about a Force ship buy of Amphibs.

Will you commit to a multi-ship buy of amphibious warships?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I am highly enthusiastic for the 4-year multi ship procurement. I always have been. We are in final nego-

tiations with the shipyard to actually put forward the proposal, obviously, depending on what the numbers come back. But we are aggressively pursuing all negotiations with the shipyard to get to a 4-year multi ship procurement on amphibious ships.

Senator WICKER. When will you be able to give us a more firm answer there?

Mr. DEL TORO. I hope within the next 30 to 60 days, sir.

Senator WICKER. All right. But can we assume that we're all working toward a yes answer?

Mr. DEL TORO. Absolutely, sir. We have the authorizations, we have the appropriations, and I just want to move forward with the final negotiations to get the best price on behalf of the American taxpayer.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Thank you very much.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good morning. Thank you all for being here, and for your service to the country.

One of those initiatives that I think has been helpful to expanding capacity are the Supplier Development Funds. They can flow down to small businesses, which are so critical to the innovation that we need if we're going to expand in the way that we want to.

We have an important subcontractor in New Hampshire called Granite State Manufacturing, who's been able to use those funds to expand their capacity to support both the *Virginia*- and *Columbia*-class submarines. As the direct result of receiving this funding, they've also formed a partnership with the local community college, which has been critical in providing skilled workers.

So, can you speak, Secretary Del Toro, to the importance of those submarine supplier development funds and how other small businesses might be able to take advantage of them?

Mr. DEL TORO. Very much so, Senator. They're extremely important, and our PO SSPN actually is working very, very closely with industry as we actually obligate the submarine industrial-based moneys as well with small and medium-sized companies to ensure that they have stable funding to be able to sustain themselves. Extremely important, and we're highly committed to it, and there's no reason to think otherwise.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good. Thank you.

You mentioned along with Admiral Franchetti, the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan, the SIOP, and the Navy's called that a once in a generation investment. But what we're seeing in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, for example, is that cost overruns have thrown that schedule off.

I wonder if you could speak, maybe Admiral Franchetti, to your commitment to ensuring that that project stays on time, on schedule, and how confident you are that that's going to happen?

I should say, as part of that, how much I appreciate, as the Chairman said, Senator Wicker's commitment to getting the \$3 billion for the submarine industrial base, that's been really critical to a project like the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Well, thank you, and the SIOP program is incredibly important, as you said, once in a generation. A 100-year-old dry docks. This is really critical for our future, both to improve

the cadence and the throughput on maintenance, but also to be able to fit our new platforms that we'll be developing. So again, really thankful for the investment in this.

I think I'm very committed. You know, Portsmouth is our first big project that we're doing. I've been up to see it a few times and they are about 47 percent complete. You know, they are on track to meet their deadline in August of 2028, and the really good thing is that they've been able to continue to do maintenance while doing the optimization, and it's very exciting.

So not only the dry dock, though, as you know, we're looking across all four public shipyards to do the optimization with both layout to increase, again, the efficiency of the yard as well as in upgrading the industrial equipment.

So, the lessons that we're taking from Portsmouth are already having a positive impact in Pearl Harbor, and we look forward to continuing to learn.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, the 2023 Inspector General audit on environmental threats to naval dry docks at the four public shipyards talked about the vulnerabilities and the need to address sea levels and flooding. Portsmouth is one of the only four to have implemented those requirements for resiliency.

But we saw in January in a storm that water levels came within inches of the top of one of the caissons. So, it's not clear that those resiliency plans are actually going to be good long-term. Can you talk about how you're continuing to look at maturing those climate action plans to address resiliency?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Resiliency not only of our shipyards, but of also of all our bases. We're continuing to focus on that. You know, all of those projects are designed to be resilient to any sea level rise, as well as seismic, and we're continuing to work to address those needs as we design the remainder of the projects as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Finally, I just wanted to speak to the comments that you-all made in the beginning about the Indo-Pacific and the freedom of the seas. I just returned with Senator Gillibrand and some other Senators from a trip to the Indo-Pacific.

One of the things we heard in our visits to the Philippines, to Vietnam, to South Korean, to Japan, was great concern about the PRC's continued incursion into the South China Seas and their territorial waters, the importance of maintaining that freedom of navigation, and their appreciation for the work that our Navy has done to help them.

So, thank you very much for that. I think that's a very important mission that we've got to continue to support.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Budd is recognized now.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman, thank you, Ranking Member, for allowing me to go just a few minutes early, and thank my colleagues as well as I'll be attending the unveiling of the new statue of the Reverend Billy Graham. A great North Carolinian, a great American. So, thank you all for being here. General Smith, certainly glad to have you back with us for many, many reasons.

General Smith, this year's Marine Corps' request, it included significant investments in Cherry Point, North Carolina. These

projects support F-35 aircraft maintenance and operational readiness. I visited the station in February, and I was impressed by the great things the marines are doing there, especially with VMFA-542, the East Coast first operational F-35B squadron.

So, if I recall correctly, VMFA-542 recently achieved full operational capability. So how will this capability impact the Marine Corps' operational flexibility and technological edge?

General SMITH. Senator, having a full-up round F-35B squadron enables us to move to the next level of combat. Those aircraft are able to collaborate through a classified system in air to target adversaries. They're able to run at low signatures, and they're able to penetrate enemy air defenses like no other aircraft we have.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General.

Secretary Del Toro, thank you again for being here. So as proud as I am proud of our marines, I have got deep concerns with the Department of Navy, particularly when I hear about some unfunded priorities.

So why was the F-35 Flightline Utilities Modernization Project, why was that on the unfunded priorities list and not integrated into the 2025 budget?

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, sir, as I stated earlier, we've have been pressurized by the Fiscal Responsibility Act in a significant way, and we had to prioritize readiness over modernization and capacity as well too, and also prioritize our personnel, first and foremost. It led to very difficult decisions that I otherwise perhaps might not have made if it wasn't for constrictions. So that's the reason why.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. You know, my concern is that the taxpayers have invested heavily in facilities at Cherry Point, but it seems like you were hoping that we here in Congress would pick up the tab to make sure that the proper utilities were supported. So deep concerns there.

General Smith, as you know, the 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit from Camp Lejeune was extended during their deployment back in March because of operational needs involving evolving mission requirements. So how does the Marine Corps balance maintaining crisis response readiness and at the same time pursuing force modernization in these types of situations?

General SMITH. Senator, it's not easy. Every time we extend a marine expeditionary unit, we put an additional strain on those ships, and we get the cycle out of balance. So when we have a lack of ready shipping then you throw the cycle out of balance and you get a misshape so to speak.

So it puts a strain on the forces that are forward deployed because they're extended and it throws out balance the forces who are home preparing to train because the ships they need to train with are forward deployed.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, General. If I understand correctly, the 15th MEU was supposed to deploy aboard the USS *Boxer*, and that's now unavailable, and the 24th MEU was from Camp Lejeune is supposed to sail aboard the wasp, but that was delayed. So what are the status of these amphibs, and do you have enough ships to support pre-planned deployments and crisis response? Then, what are the long-term impacts of ship availability on these deployments?

General SMITH. Well, Senator, the CNO and I have locked shields. 31 is the appropriate number of amphibs. That's 10 big decks and 21 LPDs, and through the SIOP, the ship optimization program, we're working to increase the readiness of those ships.

But again, the CNO and I have locked shields on the required number, and we're working to get the readiness rates up so that we can deploy as three ship amphibious-ready groups.

Senator BUDD. General, if you would go specifically to the Wasp and the USS *Boxer*, what is the status of those?

General SMITH. Senator, I'll defer to the CNO on the status of their maintenance and their readiness.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. So the Wasp is underway doing her certification exercise, probably be delayed from maybe just a few days from her original plan deployment. The Boxer has a material casualty on her rudder, which is being repaired right now. We expect if the maintenance progresses as it is on track, to be able to get her out on deployment later this summer.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Budd.

Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just last Friday, Senator Sullivan and I took a bipartisan group of our colleagues to the battlefield at Antietam, which was the deadliest bloodiest day in American history. One of the units that day that suffered almost 50 percent casualties was the 7th Maine Regiment led by a fellow named Thomas Hyde.

Thomas Hyde received the congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery that day, leading basically an unsupported charge into the Confederate lines. The relevance today is that after the war, he came back to Maine and founded Bath Iron Works. Bath Iron Works is the yard that built the *Carney* and the *Arleigh Burke* that are now defending the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

I just think that's a nice circular history right there, and I can tell you from Senator Sullivan and I point of view, it was a very moving and important day that we spent at Antietam last week.

Mr. Secretary, you know what I'm going to ask? Whenever I hear about what's going on in the Red Sea, I hear about knocking down Houthi missiles, and my first reaction is, that's great. Our Navy's doing a great job. My second reaction is, we just shot down a \$100,000 worth of missiles with about \$15 million worth of our missiles directed energy. I hope that the Department can reprioritize, because the entire defense department has cut directed energy, R&D expenditures by 50 percent, by half over the last 3 years.

I see directed energy as a crucial part of the Navy's future. Can you commit to me that you'll advocate for renewed research development and deployment of directed energy weapons to defend this country across the globe?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I took my first laser course at the Navy Postgraduate School in 1986, and even back then, I thought that we needed to invest far more significantly in laser and high directed energy systems.

I regret that we haven't done that for the past 30 years or so. We need to do that moving forward. There's no question in my mind to get to a place perhaps 5 to 10 years from now where we could actually start aggressively employing those capabilities on our ships. We currently——

Senator KING. I hope——

Mr. DEL TORO. Go ahead, Senator.

Senator KING. I hope it's on the 5-year range and not the 10-year range.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. I like it that you say we're going to move forward. I want it to be urgently because, again, just from the point of view of economics, shooting down a \$20,000 UAV with a \$4 million missile does not—we can't do that very long. Plus, we're talking about a very potentially powerful weapon in defense against—as we've learned in recent conflicts, aerial defense is what it's all about.

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, to the extent that I have authorities to do so in Palm 26, I will absolutely do so.

Senator KING. Thank you. Mr. Secretary, again, the DDX is the next level of surface combatant. In our 2023 National Defense Act, we talked about collaboration. That collaboration is continuing between the shipyards and the Navy.

We can't let that falter because first-in-class ships tend to be very expensive. One way to avoid that, and what I'm looking for is, is collaboration still a priority for the Navy between the Navy and the shipyards in the design and conceptualization of this new service combat?

Mr. DEL TORO. Certainly, Senator. Not only is there a priority, but we're actually living it right now, and as we actually had to shift DDGX to the right a bit. Partially because we want to be able to fully develop the technologies and the design of that ship so that we get it right.

So, greater collaboration between industry and the government before we actually go to a full production on a fully designed ship is absolutely the right answer.

Senator KING. I couldn't agree more. Maturity of design is critical. I'd rather move it to the right and not do the R&D and design as it's being built. That's what we've learned in the past.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. It does not bode well for the taxpayers or the defense base. Also, I want to be sure there's a smooth transition for the DDG Flight III to the DDX. We can't have a gap, a trough, if you will, because as the Senator from Mississippi knows, you can't turn off and on a workforce, the kind of skilled workforce that's necessary to build these ships. So I hope that that's part of your planning, is a smooth transition between the two classes of ships.

Mr. DEL TORO. Absolutely, Senator. If I'm afforded the opportunity to be here another 4 years, I'd be more than happy to do that. We have to ensure that whether it's me or another secretary, that DDG Flight III actually overlaps with DDGX, so that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past. We'd done that years ago, for example, with regards between *Columbia* and *Ohio*. We wouldn't be facing the gap that we currently have or may have in the future.

Senator KING. Final point, in 4 seconds. We've talked a lot about shipbuilding. We need to focus and talk about maintenance and improving the throughput of our maintenance facilities, because ships that are sitting at the dock for a year or more are not serving the taxpayers or the defense of the country.

So, I hope that can be something that we could discuss further, perhaps take for the record.

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, Senator, we're doing more than just talking about it. From 2019 to the present, actually we reduced maintenance delays on surface ships by 56 percent. That is a significant, achievable milestone that we simply just don't amplify, but we are making tremendous progress in terms of the maintenance delays on our ships.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King.

Senator FISCHER, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Smith, it's good to have you back with us in good health, and I thank the rest of our witnesses for their service and also for being here today.

However, I do share the concerns of many of my colleagues about the Navy's performance across the board, and whether it's adhering to the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA. Last year after months of hearings and briefings on known capability gaps in our nuclear deterrence, this Committee determined that SLCM-N was the best option to fill this capability gap.

In the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, Congress on a bipartisan and a bicameral basis, formally established a program of record for SLCM-N and appropriated significant funding to NNSA to develop the warhead and to the Navy to develop the missile itself.

Admiral, during your nomination hearing last September, you testified before this Committee that the Nuclear Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile is, "a tailored option that the President should have." Do you still agree with this statement?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes, I do.

Senator FISCHER. Mr. Secretary and Admiral, I am deeply concerned that the Navy did not request any funding for SLCM-N in their base budget or in the Navy's unfunded priorities list letter. This is a stark contrast to NNSA, which did include a robust funding request for development of the SLCM-N, the warhead, in their unfunded priorities list.

Although the production decision remains years away, let me be clear, we expect the Navy to take all actions necessary to develop this missile so that if a decision is made to move to production, we can do so without delay. I expect to see this program included in your base budgets moving forward.

For the first time since World War II, to shift gears here, we have Navy ships continuously operating inside the weapon engagement zone of enemy forces on a near daily basis. We're expending significant, highly capable and expensive munitions to defend against low-cost missiles and drones.

Mr. Secretary, we just heard concerns from Senator King, and those concerns come from others as well, that we need to be invest-

ing more in directed energy so that we can get on the better side when it comes to the cost per shot curve.

But I am also concerned about our ability to reconstitute the missiles that we're expending right now. So, Mr. Secretary, how's the Navy reconsidering its industrial-based strategy to account for higher-than-expected levels of munition and/or weapon attrition?

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, first and foremost, Senator, thank you for your support of our Navy and Marine Corps. I know how deeply passionate you are around these issues.

We just in the Red Sea, over the course of the last 6½ months, have expended close to \$1 billion in missiles, and thank you for the authorities that you provided us in 2024, for example, for multi-year procurements for missile systems.

We actually are starting to make progress now working with the industrial base, both the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and myself, have been working with industry. Those production rates are actually starting to come up now so that we actually will see some increases in SM-2 and SM-6 productions.

Obviously, the more sophisticated the missile, the harder it is to produce them, but nevertheless, we are starting to see some progress being made in the production base.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. Thank you. Also Mr. Secretary, I understand that the next rim of the Pacific exercise, it's scheduled for later this year, and that gives the Navy and the Marine Corps an opportunity to demonstrate their maritime combat capabilities. This is one of the many exercises that we have with our global counterparts.

How's the Department of the Navy investing in these exercises to prepare for a potential power competition in the Pacific?

Mr. DEL TORO. Exceptionally well, Senator. To give you just two examples, the investments that we've made in Operation Overmatch, and perhaps, you know, just talk a little bit, although that is classified program, but will be exercised during REPAC 24, basically. We've also increased our collaboration with allies and partners for REPAC 24, which is very, very exciting.

On the autonomous side of the house, the unmanned Navy side of the house, we're actually looking to actually employ all for overlord projects as well, too, in an incredible way. So we're very excited about REPAC 24.

Senator FISCHER. Thank, General.

How's the MRF-Darwin integrating with the Australian Defense Forces

General SMITH. Senator, the Marine Rotational Force-Darwin are down there during the dry season. They're integrating very well. They're exercising with them. They're in position to forward deploy from the southern end of the first island chain to secure those routes and to defend against the PRC's aggression. So, they're doing very well.

It's a well-done program. It involves our CH-53s, and it involves an infantry battalion worth of marines. It's task-organized to distribute through the first island chain.

Senator FISCHER. Good. A few years ago, I led a CODEL when they were getting the containers ready for the first marines that were going to be deployed there. So, good to hear. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, the Navy acquires everything from night vision goggles to aircraft carriers through contracts with big defense contractors. But the contractors often place restrictions on these deals that prevent servicemembers from maintaining or repairing the equipment. Won't even let them write a training manual without going back through the contractor.

Now, the contractors say that since they own the intellectual property and the technical data underlying the equipment, only they have the right to repair that equipment. These right-to-repair restrictions usually translate into much higher costs for DOD, which has no choice but to shovel money out to big contractors whenever DOD needs to have something fixed.

So, take the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship. General Dynamics, and Lockheed Martin considered much of the data and equipment on the ship to be proprietary. So the Navy had to delay missions and spend millions of dollars on travel costs just so that contractor-affiliated repairman could fly in rather than doing this ourselves.

Secretary Del Toro, when a sailor isn't allowed to repair part of their ship at sea, and a marine isn't allowed to access technical data to fix a generator on a base abroad, one solution is for the Navy to buy the intellectual property from the contractors. So, can you say a little bit about what the benefits are of the Navy having technical rights for the equipment that it is purchased?

Mr. DEL TORO. The benefits are enormous, Senator, and we've actually had tremendous success, I'd say, in the last year and a half to 2 years through the Taxpayer Advocacy Program that we initiated when I came in.

There have been three examples. One, gaining the intellectual property rights for the new CV class of ships that will replace the AAVs. The F-35 negotiations really proved themselves out in a significant way as well, too, and last, the 20 F-18 ENFS that the Congress authorized in 2022 and 2023. We were able to make significant gains in terms of the government finally getting the intellectual property rights that were necessary for us to be able to properly sustain those moving forward.

Senator WARREN. I am very, very glad to hear this. I like the Taxpayer Advocacy Project and how you're training contract officers to secure technical equipment that the Navy buys, but I think you should have the support of Congress on this.

Senator Braun and I have introduced the Stop Price Gouging the Military Act to give DOD more tools to get cost and pricing data so that you'll be in a better position to negotiate better deals with the contractors.

There's also more that we can do to ensure that the Navy and the rest of the services have the rights they need to bolster readiness. So let me ask you, Secretary Del Toro, would having a stronger focus on right-to-repair issues during the acquisition process, like prioritizing contract bids that give DOD fair access to repair

materials and ensuring that contract officers are looking into buying technical rights early on, would that help the Navy save costs and boost readiness at the same time?

Mr. DEL TORO. Very much so, Senator. In fact, one of the things that we have prioritized since I came in as Secretary of the Navy, given my acquisition background, is actually those negotiations need to happen as early as possible even as we developed the acquisition strategy for that contract to go out to bid.

By doing so, we will reap tremendous returns, and in the case of the LCS, Senator—by the way, and I applaud former CNO Mike Gilday, now our current CNO Lisa Franchetti, for actually moving the LCS maintenance strategy from a contractor service-focused strategy to a sailor-focused strategy.

Senator WARREN. Well, I very much appreciate the direction you're going in this. I want Congress to be able to help you on this. Ensuring that our servicemembers' equipment works shouldn't depend on whatever price some contractor wants to set after the fact. DOD should be able to follow your lead and secure the rights to repair in all of its equipment early on. So, thank you very much.

Mr. DEL TORO. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator ERNST, please.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of you for testifying in front of the Committee today.

I'm proud to have served for over 23 years in our Nation's uniform, and I was first inspired actually by Ukrainians, and these are the Ukrainians that I met on an agricultural exchange program in 1989. Then under Soviet control, my Ukrainian brothers and sisters asked me about what it was like to be free and what it was like to be an American.

Those moments outside of the comfort of my rural Iowa upbringing, my Iowa home, inspired me to give back to the country that I love. I came back from that exchange, and I joined Army ROTC at Iowa State University where my patriotism was solidified. I'm grateful that my daughter and her husband have followed in those footsteps, and both are proudly now serving in the United States Army.

But today, folks, young people are not being inspired to serve. Frankly, the perks of service are tarnished when an Administration attempts to cancel everyone's student loans. Others have witnessed and quite possibly been influenced by the anti-American rhetoric they see and hear from the left, both on campus and online.

Further, students who were kept out of the classrooms by COVID lockdowns are still reeling from the consequences. We have seen this by the lowering of ASVAB scores by as much as 9 percent. Currently, only 23 percent of 17-to 24-year-olds are fully qualified to serve. Our military is facing a dire recruiting crisis, and our service branches must address it.

So, Secretary, I will start with you, and let's focus on this recruiting challenge. This year, the Navy is on track to be short, roughly 16,000 sailors. Just a few years back in November 2022, the Navy raised its maximum enlistment age to 41 years old. Now, I would consider that young, but that's a little old for an initial en-

listment. What is the Navy doing right now to remedy these challenges and increase recruitment? How do we overcome this?

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, first and foremost, Senator, thank you for the comments that you made with regards to Ukraine. Someone who was born in a communist country myself, and lost my Homeland to communists and autocrats, I cannot thank you enough for your support.

With regards to recruiting, it does remain challenging for many of the reasons that you mentioned, and it is all hands on deck. But I want to be clear, we're not going to be 16,000 sailors short. We may be somewhere less than 6,200, and I think it's going to be far less than that, in fact.

But we actually decided to actually raise our goal to recruit more sailors this year unlike the other services. So we set the goal at 40,600 because of the shortfalls that we will have at sea. So therefore, it's all hands on deck. Perhaps the CNO can comment briefly on the multiple steps that are being taken to actually close that gap.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Thank you. I'm going to go back to the comments I made about education, because historically, education benefits have produced more of our high quality recruits, and there was a study that found the number of high quality recruits increased after the passage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

Do you believe that extending similar benefits to that of the GI Bill for non-serving individuals through the Administration's so-called Student Debt Cancellation Plan has impacted recruitment efforts and undermine the fundamental principles of military service.

Mr. DEL TORO. Ma'am, I'm focused on recruiting, you know, recruits into the Navy and the Marine Corps. One of the—when you talk to our recruiters, the biggest challenge that they sometimes have is actually getting access to the high schools themselves. So we're working very closely with the Department of Education and with supervisors from across the Nation to try to break down those barriers that our recruiters can actually get access to the high schools.

Currently, they're being allowed two times a year. We want to increase that to about four times a year. I've written over thousands of letters to high school principals, in fact, allowing our recruiters back in. That's the number one challenge that our recruiters have in terms of getting to the high school students themselves.

Senator ERNST. I am really glad you brought that up, Secretary, because last year I did have an effort to force high schools to allow recruiters into those high schools. It is law that they be admitted into those high schools. 5 percent of our high schools across this great United States of America don't allow recruiters on their campuses. So we'll continue pushing that effort for you, Secretary.

I'm going to double back because I will tell you that I've had so many of my former soldiers come to me and say, I served multiple deployments overseas for GI Bill benefits, for those education benefits, and now others are getting them for not serving.

I think it's absolutely unfair what is going on across the United States today. I think we are wiping away the benefits that we have promised to those that have stepped up and worn the flag of these

great United States. We have to do better, and we need to reward those that serve.

I think part of our recruiting challenge is that we don't reward those that serve enough, or we give their benefits to others that don't deserve them. So, thank you all very much for testifying today.

Chairman TESTER. Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Kelly, please.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Del Toro, I'll talk in a little bit more detail about the Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, or SLCM-N. I want to make sure that we're clear on the direction of the system and understand the opportunity costs that may come with fielding it.

You know, I get that there is an arms control rationale here. That there is a possibly we could provide Russia with an incentive to both reverse development of, you know, a new land-based cruise missile that's nuclear armed. This could be part of a negotiation, you know, I get that part of it. You know, at the same time, my understanding is we're developing the W76-2 low yield SLBM warhead that could fill the same need for a low-yield weapon.

My concern though is that fielding the SLCM-N would likely necessitate removing some conventional munitions from our submarines. I'm especially concerned about the *Virginia*-class submarines and possibly having to sacrifice torpedoes for cruise missiles.

You and I were aboard USS *Indiana* and we spent some time in the torpedo room, and, the modification of weapon systems aboard a ship is significant. There would have to be changes in the safety system, security, storage, launch, communications, command and control for nuclear weapons secure comms authorization protocols.

So, Mr. Secretary, I know you've previously voiced concern over development of a nuclear armed sea launched cruise missile. Does the Navy currently have plans for how we would integrate SLCM-N into a *Virginia*-class submarine? Have we considered that, if we were to do this, we're likely going to replace weapons that we would need and we are more likely to use in a conflict with China?

I mean, when you consider the number of ships we're dealing with and the number of torpedoes that we would need, we would have to replace those torpedoes with nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles a board of subs. So, I just want to get your take on where we're going with this plan.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir. Well, I think you hit the nail on the head, Senator, and to be clear, we are moving forward with standing up the program management office as required by the law.

But having said that, I'm concerned about how it will operationally impact our submarine force and their ability actually to conduct the tactical and operations that they actually need to do in the Pacific and elsewhere around the world.

That actually will prevent us, perhaps from doing the things that we need to do tactically and operationally by providing this SLCM-N capability to the submarine. It will fundamentally change the mission of many of those submarines themselves.

The second issue that I'm very concerned about is the opportunity cost here associated with the cost of the missiles themselves.

This will be a multi-billion-dollar program that will prevent us from doing other things that are equally important, I think, throughout our naval enterprise.

Senator KELLY. Well, thank you. The probability of us in the future using a torpedo against a warship is much higher than the probability of using a nuclear launch cruise missile against a target. So, thank you.

In my remaining time, Secretary Del Toro, you've talked about the need for a renaissance in American shipbuilding. You mentioned a little bit as I was walking in the door here. I think you labeled it maritime statecraft. I agree with that wholeheartedly.

Right now, China, Republic of Korea, Japan, they build about 98 percent of global ship construction. China's the world's largest ship builder, controls most of the merchant ships in the world, 5,500. We have about 80 or 85, I think, merchant ships flying the U.S. flag.

I'm concerned with the size and the status of the U.S. Merchant Marine and how it's a risk to our national security. As you know, insufficient commercial maritime capacity impacts peacetime trade and supply chains, but also has a great impact on our ability to move things we need to move if we're engaging in combat somewhere across the globe.

This isn't a capability that can be turned on overnight, as you know. We need to invest in this now, so we're ready in the future. That's why last week I released a bipartisan bicameral report with Congressman Waltz, and Garamendi, and Senator Rubio called the congressional Guidance for a National Maritime Strategy.

Our report provides a comprehensive vision to revitalize the Nation's maritime sector, and now we're working to turn the recommendations from the report into legislation. I don't want to go over my time, but I'm going to submit some questions for the record to you on this subject.

Mr. DEL TORO. I've read the recommendations and agree with all 10 of them.

Senator KELLY. All right. Thank you.

Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank the witnesses today. General Smith, it's good to see you back, sir. We're all really glad you're back.

By the way, little discussion on 31 Amphibs, what you're talking about. Remember we directed that, so the debate is over, right? That's a congressional direction. So, I think it's important.

One of the themes from this hearing is the shipbuilding crisis that we are facing. I met with the CRS experts, Congressional Research Service experts, best in government. Some have been doing this for decades. This was a quote from them. "This is the worst position the Navy has been in over the past 40 years for designing, building, maintaining, and crewing ships."

That's what the Congressional Resource Service experts said. Senator Wicker already said, this is acquisition malpractice. The Chairman said it's in disarray. I want to get more to the issue of who's responsible and what should be done to fix it.

But let me begin, General Smith, would you agree that as a leader in the Marine Corps, no matter what level you're serving at, accountability and responsibility is critical component of leadership?

General SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, if a marine platoon commander has a marine who loses his rifle on an exercise, what typically happens to that marine platoon commander?

General SMITH. That platoon commander would be relieved.

Senator SULLIVAN. That's not a hypothetical issue. In 2020, a battalion commander and a sergeant major were relieved after two rifles went missing on a training exercise in Camp Lejeune.

Admiral Franchetti, paragraph 0802 of the Naval Regulations titled "Responsibility of a Commanding Officer" says that the responsibility of the commanding officer, his or her command, is absolute. What happens in the Navy if a captain of a war ship is asleep in her cabin and an officer standing watch collides with another ship?

General SMITH. Historically, they've been relieved of command.

Senator SULLIVAN. So that's also not hypothetical. Since 2012, the CO of the USS *Porter*, USS *Jacksonville*, USS *Antietam*, USS *John McCain*, USS *Fitzgerald*, USS *Connecticut* have all been relieved. Mr. Secretary, Congress under title 10, has given you the direction to, among other things, oversee the construction of outfitting and repairing of naval ships in an effective and timely manner.

One thing that I think hasn't been brought up here as my assessment, respectfully, of your tenure is you haven't been focused on that. One of the things you've actually been focused on a lot on is climate change; where in your nomination hearing, you devoted a full paragraph on climate change. You never mentioned ship-building lethality or war fighting.

In your strategic guidance you issued to your Department, you mentioned climate change nine times. You don't address trying to increase the fleet. You got to this Committee, your climate action plan, a year before your ship building plan. Can you point to your title 10 responsibilities for climate change, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I spend 75 percent of my time on ship-building, so I don't agree with your characterization.

Senator SULLIVAN. Can you answer my question? Where's your title 10 responsibilities on climate change?

Mr. DEL TORO. On climate change, it actually impacts everything. Senator, it impacts—

Senator SULLIVAN. Where are your title 10 responsibilities that we gave you—

Mr. DEL TORO. Manning equipment, training, sustaining—

Senator SULLIVAN. They don't exist.

Mr. DEL TORO. No, they do exist. Senator, I disagree with—

Senator SULLIVAN. No, I'm looking at title 10 right now.

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm telling you that climate change and the impact that it has on installation-readiness actually has an effect on readiness.

Chairman REED. Senator Sullivan, let the witness answer the question.

Senator SULLIVAN. I'm actually trying to ask questions.

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, to suggest that climate change does not have an impact on climate readiness and installation-readiness is just not—

Chairman REED. I would ask the Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. I'm asking for a little more time here.

Chairman REED. Actually, Senator, you usually have a little more time. First ask the question—

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me answer the question—

Chairman REED.—and allow the secretary to answer.

Senator SULLIVAN. No, I'm going to answer it for him. It's not in title 10. There's nothing on climate change in title 10. The shipbuilding crisis that we have right now is not just a fiasco. It's amplified by this. Our main adversary, it was building ships at the rapid rate in 2021. The PLA had 341 ships. This year, they have 370. In 2025, they will have 395. By 2030, they will have 435 ships, 141 more ships than we have. Our fleet, as we've discussed, is shrinking.

So, Mr. Secretary, I'm going to ask this final question. Marines and sailors that you lead have a strong culture of responsibility and accountability. In light of that, I feel compelled to ask.

If a marine platoon commander gets relieved because one of his marines loses a rifle, in the Navy, captain gets relieved because his crew hits another ship while the captain is asleep. Should the Secretary of the Navy be relieved or resign for failing on his number one mission shipbuilding, particularly when he's spending so much time on issues that are not even part of his title 10 responsibility?

Mr. DEL TORO. Actually, a good leader, what they do is they actually take assessment of the conditions that exist when one comes in, and, you know, well, Senator, that the acquisition issues that we're dealing with go back decades. What I'm trying to do and have been doing from the day that I became secretary was to be honest, transparent, and deeply committed to turning things around. That's exactly what I've done.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask one final question.

Chairman REED. No. I must say, Senator Sullivan, your time has expired.

Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To Secretary Del Toro, and Admiral Franchetti, I want to begin with a question that goes back a ways, and that is the mental health of our sailors. Secretary Del Toro, I thank you for accompanying me in the Hampton Roads area. In the last couple years, we've had some serious issues with suicides among our sailors.

We had two different units in Hampton Roads, very different circumstances, but there were some commonalities. One folks who were connected with the refueling of the *George Washington*, which was in dock for a very long time.

Second, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center, two-thirds of whose personnel are sailors assigned to that billet, but one third of whose personnel were sailors in the fleet who became assigned to the billet on a limited duty status because they were pregnant, because they had a physical injury, because they had a mental health issue, because they had a disciplinary challenge in the fleet.

The suicides that happened at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center were all among the limited duty staff who were there for kind of an unknown period. They weren't, unless it was for pregnancy, didn't know when or if they would be returning to the fleet, and they didn't know when they would know the answer to that question.

Folks on the *George Washington* had trained as a surface officer, and then they end up in a long-term status where the ship's in dock and they're not really doing the thing for which they trained.

So in each instance, this grouping of suicides, and each one was different of course, but the grouping of suicides happened among people who were probably experiencing a little bit of lack of purpose or confusion about their status. This Committee has passed bills like the Brandon Act, and in other ways tried to encourage more focus on mental health issues.

Can you give us the Committee a progress report on implementation of the Brandon Act? The Navy was first to move out on it, but also just more generally what you're trying to do to make sure that people feel that sense of purpose, and that their colleagues don't miss obvious signs that they need help.

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, thank you, Senator. Thanks for your commitment to this cause, and it's a very important cause, the mental health of our servicemembers, Marine Corps and the Navy.

First, it starts with treating people with dignity and respect across the board, specifically in regards to the limited duty status delays that existed. I would argue a year ago or so, the CNO and the Commandant actually worked hard at trying to limit the amount of time that personnel have to actually spend in a limited duty status.

But we've done a long list of other investments thanks to the lessons that we actually learned about sailors working in shipyards, and particularly the *George Washington*, that have led to tremendous improvements and perhaps the CNO can comment on a few of those.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and, you know, mental health is health. We're really focused on all of our sailors and being able to contribute to the best of their ability every day to get after that war fighting spirit, and be able to do the job that they came into the Navy to do.

You know, after that, we stood up at the direction of the secretary, quality of service, cross-functional team to really dive into a lot of the challenges that were experienced by the sailors there in the Hampton Roads area, and we're continuing to make good progress on those.

In terms of mental health, specifically, though, we put out a mental health playbook. It's a really one stop shopping first for sailors of every level of leadership to be able to provide all the different resources available to someone to be able to connect them, whether it's a chaplain, whether it's mental health, whether it's military family life counselors, to really no wrong door of folks being able to get assistance that they need.

The other one is that we found, you know, to reduce the stigma of potentially seeking assistance is to put the assistance closer. So

we have a lot, 43 percent of our mental health and behavioral health techs are with our operating forces right now.

But a couple of the things that we've done already are establishing a coordinator at each command to be able to really coordinate what each one of those people are doing. Then, we're looking at what is the limited duty condition and what can they actually do to give them meaningful jobs, meaningful work, and that sense of purpose. That's helpful until that is remedied.

The other last one is on, you know, looking very closely at our shipyard manning for extended overhaul periods to make sure that a sailor doesn't do their entire first tour enlistment in a 5-year overhaul. That they actually have an opportunity to go and do what they came in the Navy to do. Those are just a couple of examples.

Senator KAINE. One last question very quickly. The industrial base is currently producing *Virginia*-class subs at 1.3 a year. We need to be two a year for our sake, and 2.3 a year to meet our commitments to AUKUS. Based on the current investment levels of ours and the Australian investment, when will we hit two a year and when will we hit 2.3 a year?

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, Senator, I'm proud to report that in the immediate, actually, we're at one point—just slightly less than 1.4 now, so the investments that we have made in the shipbuilding industry and the submarine industrial base, for example, are starting to finally pay off.

Keep in mind as well, too, the continuing resolution of 6 months delay prevented us from making those investments until just recently as well. So, I'm hopeful that by 2028, 2029 period, hopefully, we'll be able to get back up to the 2.0, 2.33 production rate that's necessary to be able to support AUKUS and support our submarine base as well, too.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator KRAMER, please.

Senator KRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to all of you for your service, and for being here.

I want to followup a little bit on the discussion, Mr. Secretary, with Senator Sullivan. Would you admit that you have said climate change is very high priority for you, whether it's 75 percent, or 25 percent, or 2 percent?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I will tell you exactly what I said. That climate change is a top priority. I think anybody who denies that climate is having an impact on our environment and our operational readiness is just insane.

Senator KRAMER. You've said it plenty already. So your rationale for focusing on climate change is that climate change is in everything, therefore you can focus on anything and everything and justify—

Mr. DEL TORO. But I don't.

Senator KRAMER.—on climate change.

Mr. DEL TORO. I don't. I'm focused actually on climate rise along our sea bases and our Marine Corps bases.

Senator KRAMER. Ah, different topic. That's an outcome perhaps, but that's not a cause, and I think the tendency is you focus on climate as though we're the cause of it or the Navy is the cause of it, as opposed to how you defend against it.

But here's what I want to get to. You rationalize focusing on climate change because it's in everything and anything, and therefore whatever you want to focus on, it all comes back to climate change, and the message matters, Mr. Secretary. The message matters.

Let me ask each of you this question. Other than climate change, what is our most significant threat to the United States, and to our freedom, and to our liberties, and let's just keep it to nation states. What would those priorities—who would those priorities be?

Mr. DEL TORO. You'd like I start first?

Senator KRAMER. Sure.

Mr. DEL TORO. Sure. Look, the main threat, again, with regards to climate change is installation-readiness and our ability to actually be able to deploy our ships from the ports that we still rely upon, and to train our marines, and bases that are along the coast that we rely upon.

Senator KRAMER. So do you think that China's going to wait for us to fix all of that before they—

Mr. DEL TORO. No.

Senator KRAMER.—say, make a move?

Mr. DEL TORO. Nor is it interfering with the things that we're doing, actually, to deter China around the world as well.

Senator KRAMER. How much do you think China worries about climate change? How much does the China Navy worry about climate?

Mr. DEL TORO. Obviously, they don't worry about it a lot because they're the biggest contributor in the world to climate problems, right? So, if—

Senator KRAMER. Yes.

Mr. DEL TORO.—they don't care about their environment, they don't care about the people. Those aren't the cultures and values that our military actually commits themselves.

Senator KRAMER. So while our military is sitting around, you know, being focused on climate change and the Chinese military is not, somehow we win because we've got more hydro?

Mr. DEL TORO. No. We're focused on building very capable ships. 57 of them. They have the best capabilities in the world to deploy against the Chinese, in addition to all the things that I can't talk about here that I'd be happy to talk about in a closed session, which are the SAP Programs like Operation Overmatch and everything else.

For the past six and a half months, our Navy and Marine Corps has proved to the world how capable we are. We are the very best, but that also includes worrying in the future about the impact that climate has on our installation-readiness.

Senator KRAMER. Well, when I look at this chart that Senator Sullivan put up, I see a really big problem that's not being addressed, nearly as enthusiastically as climate change, is with the Navy.

Let me go to something that I think maybe you can all answer for me. I've been focusing a lot with the various services and asking

them about, okay, we have a flat budget, it's a cut. When you consider inflation, you are all trained to say or required to say, well, it still meets the National Defense Strategy. It allows us to increase capacity and, and you pretend like it's all going to be okay, and I get it. You have to. I got it. You've got a boss in the White House that wants you to say those things. But could you tell me in what areas do you think this flat budget presents the greatest risk, the most risk?

Senator KRAMER. Again, it's plenty.

Mr. DEL TORO. Sure.

Senator KRAMER. According to you-all, what areas are most at risk because of this?

Mr. DEL TORO. I think that given the difficult decision—and I also like to, you know, point out that, you know, we just didn't come to the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

Senator KRAMER. I understand that.

Mr. DEL TORO. It was members——

Senator KRAMER. I'm not blaming——

Mr. DEL TORO.—of Congress who actually were negotiating the debt limit ceiling——

Senator KRAMER. I not blaming——

Mr. DEL TORO.—that led to the Fiscal Responsibility Act that caps our funding.

Senator KRAMER. I agree.

Mr. DEL TORO. I can't spend. I have to follow the law.

Senator KRAMER. I'm not blaming you. I'm asking you what areas are the most at risk as a result.

Mr. DEL TORO. Three areas, installation-readiness, the Air Wing of the Future, and—well, those are the two primary ones. Installation-readiness and the Air Wing of the Future, and just MilCon in general.

Senator KRAMER. Admiral Franchetti?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. So, as I said, our budget focused on current readiness people and we've taken risk in the future. So Air Wing of the Future, SSNX, DDGX, CVNs, and a lot of our money is going into SIOP. From a MilCon perspective right now, 60 percent.

Senator KRAMER. General Smith?

General SMITH. Senator, Barracks 2030 initiative is most at risk, and that's a quality-of-life issue because the main thing is the marines. Without the marines, the equipment is irrelevant.

Senator KRAMER. So if those of us on this dais and within the chambers, and frankly in the other chamber, we're to try to provide more than the FRA—which the FRA number was a mistake. I wish we didn't have to deal with it, and we don't—if we change the law, we're in the changing the law business, would we reduce risk if we provided you with a lot more?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, Senator, you would.

Senator KRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kramer.

Senator ROSEN, please.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed. I'd also like to thank Secretary Del Toro, Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith. Appreciate you being here testifying today.

I'm going to focus a little bit mostly on Nevada and Fallon Naval Air Station. We're starting to implement Fallon Modernization. So, Secretary Del Toro, you know, Nevada, we are so proud to host Naval Air Station Fallon, home to Top Gun. This our Nation's premier air carrier wing, and our SEAL training centers.

Again, I want to offer you and your staff my personal gratitude for working with me and the Nevada delegation on a consensus proposal to modernize the Fallon Range Training complex, which was included in the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA, as you know, offer authorizing FRTC Modernization.

It was no small feat, and it was the result of input from the Navy, the Department of Interior, Tribal Governments from Nevada, local governments, and so many stakeholders. It was a compromise that the Nevada delegation will continue to provide support to so that we can ensure the proper implementation.

So, as you know, the Navy's currently working with other Federal agencies and my constituents to meet the requirement of making full payment to impacted grazing permit holders. We got a lot of ranchers there.

So as the Navy goes through the process of appraising the loss of these permits, it's critical that my ranching community and Nevada stakeholders to really adequately be compensated. So, this is going to include the loss of their impacted ranching operation, improvements made to include water access, and FSA loans that they might have associated with their allotment.

So, I raise this because I've heard concerns from ranchers in Nevada, Northern Nevada, the Navy isn't—they're not considering all of the variables when it comes to payouts of their grazing allotments.

So, Secretary Del Toro, can I get your commitment that the Navy will ensure that all grazing permittees impacted by implementation of FRTC Modernization are fairly compensated?

Mr. DEL TORO. You have my commitment, Senator. It's my understanding we've been working very, very closely with the ranchers. I can't guarantee that every single one of them is going to be satisfied with the negotiations, but we are engaging with them very transparently and very seriously to compensate them for all the reasons that you just mentioned.

I also want to thank you personally for your leadership. Actually, the expansion of Fallon is critically important to our current and future war fighters. By expanding that range, we could expand the training associated with the F-35 associated with the advanced missiles that we've been focused on as well.

That's what I've been focused on actually for a long, long time now, and I thank you for your efforts to make this a reality.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. We'll continue to work with you, and I also am going to ask if you'll commit to briefing my staff on the amount of funding you have today, and what—

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes ma'am.

Senator ROSEN.—you believe you'll need in fiscal year 2025 and beyond to meet some of these commitments, specifically as it relates to Fallon. So, thank you for that.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, ma'am.

Senator ROSEN. I'm going to talk about housing. We've talked about military housing. Fallon, again, a major asset, provides a range space needed to ensure the fleet's deployable and operationally ready. The base has been designated a remote duty installation since 1989, and of course, the quality of life challenges that accompany that.

So, we're the only Navy base naval, Air Station Fallon, in the continental United States designated in a critical housing area with housing in very short supply. So the vast majority of those stationed at Fallon live in Reno or Carson City, which are both at least an hour away.

So I understand the Navy anticipates entering into some public-private ventures to build about 172 new homes in Fallon, but we need a lot more infrastructure required to support them, such as expanding existing wastewater treatment plants.

So, given the long distances sailors have to travel between their home and Fallon's designation as a critical housing area, remote duty installation, are you considering providing some stipend or as assignment incentive pay to help alleviate the costs? We also have to attract that civilian workforce you need.

So, could you speak to those issues?

Mr. DEL TORO. So, the challenges in Fallon have been significant, and we're well aware of them. I so wish that we actually, given the Fiscal Responsibility Act, had more resources to devote to housing and everything else. We are investing in 2025 a lot NFSRM to try to improve the existing housing as much as we can.

We hope to make greater investments in MilCon in 2026 and 2027, but we are deeply focused on this, and we will look at this specifically to see if there's anything that we can do to alleviate the conditions in Fallon.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator Tuberville, please.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. Thanks for being here.

General Smith, I was able to recently meet with some marines that came from the Indo-Pacific. Great people. Let me tell you, they're exactly what we need in our military. You know, what resources can Congress assist with to better support our mission in the Indo-Pacific?

General SMITH. Senator, thanks for that question, and thanks for the praise of our marines. I share it. My own son is a marine although, you know, he's, he's still, he's still on the on the——

Mr. DEL TORO. Got a media recruiting call, right?

General SMITH. He's got to meet his recruiting goals. He's still on probation. What I would say, sir, is we need predictable, steady funding for our amphibious warfare ships. We need LHAs on 4-year centers and LPDs on 2-year centers, because that provides us the operational flexibility and mobility that's required to counter the PRC.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I know you've kept an eye on the Middle East, and we have seen unmanned drones, small unmanned

drones. Talk about what we've learned and what we can take from there to the Indo-Pacific in this next incursion.

General SMITH. Yes, sir. What we've learned is that directed energy weapons are going to be a thing of the future because we can't get into a reverse cost curve where we're expending, you know, million-dollar missiles to shoot down \$100 drones. We've got to invest in the technology and the capability to disable drones in flight, to disable their targeting infrastructure, and to knock them down without shooting a missile at them.

Because that's, again, putting us on the wrong side of the cost curve, and we're working on that now at the Marine Corps War Fighting Lab.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. I think Senator King would agree with you on that. We've talked about it quite often.

Secretary of Del Toro, the Navy recent released their 45-day ship building review last month, and there are significant delays. The *Columbia*-class are now 12 to 16 months late.

We make components in Mobile for the *Columbia*-class, and we hear a lot about studying this and doing a report on that. You know, we need results, obviously, and I know you're on top that. What are we doing to fix this?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir. Well, just as one example, Senator, and I know your commitment and passion for this. You know, down in Austal, for example, the Navy actually worked very closely with Austal over the last couple years to turn it into a steel production facility. I have been encouraging the big primes over the last two and a half years that I've been secretary, aggressively, to actually outsource more of their work hours to companies like Austal and the smaller shipyards so they can help with production.

So, in 2023 alone, we had 3 million additional hours of outsourcing that's taken place. We hope to increase that in 2024, hopefully to 6 million. It's the smaller shipyards that actually help as part of the team to then increase the production rates.

So that, along with all the other investments, the \$14 billion over the fit up, basically, I think, we're going to see production rates continue to grow in the future because of those efforts.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, and we're also running into a problem. You know, we budget it, we appropriate it, but we're having a tough time allocating money for some reason.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We're running in a stonewall of people not doing their job, to be honest with you, and you know, if we can't get the money allocated, we can't build anything. We can't pay people for working. We're having a tough time now getting people to work and people that are trained to work, and it's getting worse and worse. It is not getting better. You have obviously been addressing that.

Mr. DEL TORO. No, sir, and I agree with you, and you know, with the continuing resolution, we can't allocate those funds until the funds are actually given to us. So I'm actually increasing our contracting workforce in 2024 so that we can actually provide resources to the vendors far quicker once we get the authorizations and the appropriations in place.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You know, we're working very hard to train people. We're actually recruiting out of McDonald's, Walmarts—

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE.—training welders and all those things. I mean, we're in a tough time right now, getting people actually off the couch, back to work, and getting them trained, and you're obviously talking with people about that.

Mr. DEL TORO. I think we need to get innovative, Senator. I'll give you an example of something we just recently did over the last few weeks in Ohio, for example. So, we met with the Boiler Makers Union in Ohio because they have experienced slowdowns basically in their, in their workforce. So Bartlett Industries in Ohio, for example, is training those boiler makers on how to actually work in their shipyards. So, then hopefully we're going to be providing those to Wisconsin to help with the *Constellation*-class frigate in Wisconsin.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, and Admiral, we're running low on people, and you talked earlier about recruiting. Please tell me we're not dropping our standards to recruit. That'd be the worst thing that we possibly could do. We need well-trained, obviously, a group that wants to do it for the right reasons. Your thoughts?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Senator, we are not lowering our standards. We are working really hard to improve our recruiting enterprise, to improve throughput per recruiter, and really look broadly at getting out to every Zip Code in America to bring that talent that we need. People that meet our standards, we want them on our team. Every single one of them.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Are we taking non-citizens, non-American citizens in the Navy?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. We only take people that are legally allowed to enter the Navy.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Blumenthal, please.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks Mr. Chairman. Thank you-all for being here, and thank you for your service.

Secretary Del Toro, I know you visited Electric Boat a number of times. You share my passion for undersea warfare. If I were to propose an amendment to the NDAA increasing the number of submarines for fiscal year 2025 to two instead of the one, would you oppose it?

Mr. DEL TORO. I wouldn't oppose it, Senator, but I certainly would be hopeful that the resources aren't taken away from other critical programs that we're trying to execute on right now as well.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, would you agree with me that the best way to increase the number of submarine production from 1 to 2.3 is not to cut, but to send a signal to the defense industrial base, including suppliers, that we're going to be making real steps toward that goal of 2.3?

Mr. DEL TORO. I think we need to help industry by making the investments that you have made in the submarine industrial base of the tune of \$15 billion. We have currently 11 additional submarines that are in construction, three additional ones under con-

tract in order to get the production rate up. But if we can't deliver those submarines on time, that also presents opportunity cost. Where in a year where we're fiscally constrained, we basically won't be able to do other things that are critically important to the enterprise as well.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, I think you appreciate that the suppliers, the defense industrial base take a very strong signal from that cut. I'll give you an example. Collins & Jewel in Bozrah, Connecticut is a critical supplier of structural welding fabrication. Before the fiscal year 25 budget release, they were preparing a \$2 million investment with Micro Precision, another critical Connecticut supplier to expand their facilities in the State so they could hire more workers from the manufacturing pipeline initiative in the State of Connecticut. After that budget release, on hold.

Hillery Company in Groton. They specialize in solid modeling software for advanced design fabrication, metal welding, and joining. They plan to upgrade their water jet in order to increase capacity to serve production at Electric Boat. On hold. I could name so—

Mr. DEL TORO. So that's exactly what the resources in the submarine industrial base investment are designed to do to actually help those companies. I'd be happy to reach out to those companies and see where we could actually provide them with the funds to make the CapEx investments that they need to make.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, they need a signal that we're moving from one submarine this year to two submarines, so they can plan. They need dollars. They don't need words from me, or with all due respect, from you.

Mr. DEL TORO. But I'm not just providing words. We're prioritizing resources in the submarine industrial base of \$15 billion.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, they need purchase orders is what they need.

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, there—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. They need purchase orders that come from Electric Boat, which are using dollars that come from the United States of America.

Mr. DEL TORO. We have 11 submarines that are actually under construction right now, and we have three additional submarines that are under contract. 14 submarines is an enormous investment in what we need for the future.

If the production rates had been, and if the industry actually had invested more of their own money as well too, and the CapEx investments and other investments they need to make to get the production rates out, we'd be in a better place overall.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I see no plan. I see an explanation for why we're behind, but no plan to recover.

Mr. DEL TORO. There is a plan, Senator. We are working very aggressively with all those vendors and with the primes as well to—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Can you give us a plan?

Mr. DEL TORO. Absolutely, sir. We have plans in place, and we'll show you exactly what we're doing with the entire submarine industrial base investment you've been so helpful to us in providing.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you about the Xavier Sandor Act. It's named after a young man from Connecticut who committed suicide because he was on the USS *Washington*, which was under repair and maintenance. He was confined to the ship, or he was on the ship living there while it was under maintenance.

We passed a law that provides that base allowance can be provided to enlisted men when they are on ships that are in maintenance. Maybe you or Admiral Franchetti can update me as to what progress is being made in implementing that law.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes, sir. We basically want to make sure that our sailors have a separation from their work and their life space. So when they are on the ship in the shipyard, we've given the flexibility to move them off the ship to have housing outside of the ship, and when it is not habitable—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. My time has expired, but I would appreciate in writing a update from you elaborating on that answer.

[The information referred to follows:]

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The existing Israeli Logistics Support Vessel supports a beach gradient of 1 to 30 compared to the Medium Landing Ship beach gradient which is required to be 1 to 40. The 1 to 30 beach gradient permits access to 13 percent of the beaches in the Indo-PACOM region while the 1 to 40 beach gradient permits access to twice as many beaches (26 percent) in the theater.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator SCHMITT, please.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you.

Secretary Del Toro, I have a question. Recruiting is down 20 percent last year. So far it's on pace, it's down 30 percent this year. Do you believe that the obsession that the political leadership has right now with DEI has helped or hurt recruiting efforts?

Mr. DEL TORO. No, sir. I don't think DEI has hurt recruiting efforts at all.

Senator SCHMITT. You don't?

Mr. DEL TORO. No, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. You don't think it plays any factor at all?

Mr. DEL TORO. No, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. You don't think your obsession with race essentialism and immutable characteristics turns off a lot of people?

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm not obsessed with any of that, Senator. Whenever you, on the record, heard me say anything to that effect?

Senator SCHMITT. Well, no, it's in your materials.

Mr. DEL TORO. What materials?

Senator SCHMITT. Your DEI 101 materials and the indoctrination that you're putting through, this cultural Marxism. You don't believe that it has any impact?

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm not indoctrinating anybody, Senator.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Secretary, I want to read to you from your materials what allyship is. "Allyship is to take intentional actions such as listening, learning, and uplifting those who may be disadvantaged. To ensure all voices are heard and respected, being an authentic ally is to form genuine relationships to advocate for fair treatment and increase feelings of inclusion and belonging for all."

Do you believe that you——

Mr. DEL TORO. Do you not want all the members of your team to feel like they're included?

Senator SCHMITT. Well, I have a question. Do you believe that you were an ally for the 1,878 soldiers who were fired or the 3,746 marines who were fired for not taking the COVID shot? Were you an ally for them?

Mr. DEL TORO. Sir, I followed the laws. They disobeyed the law.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, did they feel included?

Mr. DEL TORO. They disobeyed a law.

Senator SCHMITT. They were fired

Mr. DEL TORO. They were fired because they disobeyed the law.

Senator SCHMITT. Do you regret that? Do you regret that?

Mr. DEL TORO. As it currently existed—I have no regrets.

Senator SCHMITT. You have recruitment challenges. You refuse to——

Mr. DEL TORO. You know what Senator——

Senator SCHMITT. You refuse to admit, the DEI is a part of this. You're firing qualified people who are well trained, and you sit here so smugly to act like none of that has any impact on the readiness of our Navy.

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, we recontacted 3,500 of the 4,800 people who were fired. You know how many actually decided to come back to the Navy and report? Two.

Senator SCHMITT. Shocker.

Mr. DEL TORO. Two.

Senator SCHMITT. Shocker, at the level of disrespect they received from their government.

Senator SCHMITT. General Smith, I understand that on May 3d, two individuals were detained by gate guards after lying to gate guards, and then trying to forcibly bypass security checks. Now, anonymous sources are reporting that one of the detained individuals was a Jordanian national who recently crossed the United States Southern border. Also, one of the two is on the terror watch list. What do you know, what have you been briefed by ICE on this?

General SMITH. Senator, I'm not familiar with that. I can get back to you on it after I check with NCIS.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. I don't have any other questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt.

Senator——

Senator SCHMITT. Mr. Chairman, I do have one more question before——

Chairman REED. You have——

Senator SCHMITT. I have some time remaining.

Secretary Del Toro, I do want to understand, based on your previous conversations, I really do have to get you on the record. Do you believe that climate change is a bigger threat to the American people than Communist China's ambitions?

Mr. DEL TORO. They are different.

Senator SCHMITT. No, but do you—I'm asking you to weight them. We all make decisions.

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm not going to weigh them. One impacts the other in different ways.

Senator SCHMITT. So, you can't sit here and tell us that Chinese Communist ambitions are more dangerous to the American people than——

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I don't think you've been following all the things that I've been doing since day 1.

Senator SCHMITT. I'm asking you a question.

Chairman REED. Senator Schmitt, excuse me.

Senator SCHMITT. I'm asking you a question.

Chairman REED. Ask a question, Senator. The secretary will respond, and then, I think you've yielded your time——

Senator SCHMITT. I just have a couple more seconds because I had about a minute and a half left.

Chairman REED. This is not an argument. It's a question and answer.

Senator SCHMITT. That's fine. I'm asking a question. Do you believe that climate change is a bigger threat to the American people than a nuclear holocaust?

Mr. DEL TORO. Of course not.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Well, thank you for actually being courageous. Thank you. I just have to say that your comments about this, Teddy Roosevelt and Admiral Nimitz will be rolling in their grave the way that you equivocate on this.

Mr. DEL TORO. No, actually, Admiral Nimitz cared deeply about installation-readiness——

Senator SCHMITT. He was a big climate alarmist?

Mr. DEL TORO. It wasn't as big a problem then as it is now.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you, Mr. Schmitt.

But I think it's appropriate right now to make a point that this Committee has operated for many, many years based on a mutual respect for the witnesses and the Senators, and to ask questions, receive answers, and if you disagree with the answer, make a comment to the effect.

But the level of argumentation at this point, I think, is something we haven't seen in a long time. It's not new, Senator Schmitt. I think, it's been on both sides, and I hope we can move on to more to your questions and answers. But I respect your position very much, Senator.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Go ahead, Senator Manchin, please.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, and I do agree as being a chairman of the Committee, the civility to how we show the respect for what you all have done. We do have agreements and we have disagreements. We can respectfully do that. But with that being said, General Smith, I'm glad to see you back in good health.

We've had many good discussions. Knowing you and the marines, in general, I can't say I'm surprised that you're fully back to work so quickly knowing you. I need to thank the Marine Corps, and you in particular. I've been advised by six marines during my time in the Senate, and this will likely be the last opportunity. I'm going

to have to recognize the Marine Corps contribution to my office, particularly my Senate office here in Washington.

I've had lieutenant Colonel Jason Lambert. I've had Gunnery Sergeant Rob Moser. I've had Major TJ Byers. I've had Major Sean Desenkowski. I've had Gunnery Sergeant Dane Ossoff, and I now have Major Greg Carroll. They've become integral parts of my staff.

During the time that I've been here in the Senate, I know every member of my staff has benefited from their professional and their personal experiences of interchanging interacting with them. So, I want to thank the marines for allowing me to have six absolutely outstanding individuals.

General SMITH. Well, we thank you for the opportunity to place them there, for them to learn how our system works.

Senator MANCHIN. Well, we learned as much from them as they might have learned. I'm hoping they got as much in return as they gave us. I really do.

General SMITH. I guarantee they did, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. Now, Secretary Del Toro, you oversee one of the most unique national security assets in our country. It's called the Allegheny Ballistic Laboratory, known as ABL, and that's in what we call Rocket City, in West Virginia. It's the only government-owned—the only one that we all own. The government-owned contractor operated munitions facility.

To lay it out plainly, that means this infrastructure is owned by taxpayers. All it may be holding to the Federal Government, not the shareholders of a private defense contractor. ABL builds components for more than 17 types of munitions used by every branch of our military and a variety of our allies and partners, including Ukraine.

However, and I'd say with us all due respect, they get overlooked. ABL gets overlooked because they don't do the final assembly for these weapons. You have the property there to do it. You have the expansion there to do it. Instead, we ship every single component out to another privately owned facility, which has received more than \$200 million in taxpayer funds to subsidize and prop up production quality issues they're having.

They can't do what we're doing. We're sending them the components. They are not adequately doing their job. I've also learned that Navy, now, this is what I can't believe, now plans to partner with that underperforming private company. The name of that company is Aerojet Rocketdyne to build another duplicate version of what we already own as a Federal Government. They're going to do it at Indian Head in Maryland, which is not that far from Rocket City. You already own all that in Rocket City.

So my question is, ABL covers more than 1,500 acres that we own, with more than adequate space for expansion? So we can't figure out why is the Department in the Navy—it just seems like they're determined, hell bent on spending more taxpayer money—you can say wasting it—to prop up an underperforming, truly under underperforming private company instead of investing in the national assets you already have.

You can do it right there and do the assembly there. You have total quality control. It's been excellent. So only thing I can ask you, publicly, if you'll come, and if we can bring Secretary LaPlante

with you, I'll accompany you and we'll go, and if something's wrong, tell me. I'll be the first to step back.

But I see no reason why we can't continue to build out what you have, what we own as a government, what we control, and to expand there to do full—it's just that they can double overnight. They're ready to go, but the money's all going different—and only thing I can say is that the private contractors have more umph than we have with our own.

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I know we're deeply committed to trying to reduce production tremendously. But I commit that I'll go with you, and I'll invite Secretary LaPlante to come with me as well, to meet with you, to take a look at the division of labor as it applies to this situation.

Senator MANCHIN. We'll do it sooner than later. It's not that far.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. We can drive over, and if you maybe have a helicopter, you may a ride in a helicopter. We'll jump over real quick.

Mr. DEL TORO. We'll, I'll be happy to drive.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Manchin.

Senator ROUNDS, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, thank you to all of you for your service to our country.

Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, are you aware of the 20-month Ember study authorized to study the sharing of the electromagnetic spectrum in the critical 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band?

Mr. DEL TORO. I am Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Are you aware of the finding of this interagency study that found sharing in this band between the Federal and commercial systems is not feasible unless, and I quote, "certain regulatory, technological, and resourcing conditions are met and implemented"?

Mr. DEL TORO. I have Senator. I'm very concerned about the—

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Are you aware also that the estimate of this interagency study was that implementing the conditions could take 30 years and \$260 billion if this portion of the electromagnetic band alone, even under the very stringent conditions were met, that could be the cost. Were you aware of that?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Are you also aware that the current legislative proposals in the Commerce Committee call for the use of the 7 to 8 gigahertz band where the Navy and other services maintain similarly critical systems for the defense of this country?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, and can you tell this Committee where you stand on these efforts, if followed through without the most stringent conditions, such as the development and implementation of dynamic spectrum sharing, interference safeguards, and a massive influx of Federal resources to maintain the defense of this country?

If those aren't included, what is your position on the current proposals to not only look at the 3.14 or 3.45 gigahertz band, but also the 7 to 8 gigahertz band for commercial production?

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm extremely defensive in any infringement on our spectrum band, and also very concerned about the opportunity costs that it would create. I just don't feel we have enough resources to be able to do what sometimes is being suggested to be done.

Senator ROUNDS. Secretary Del Toro, we have not had a single uniformed individual with any other opinion other than what you have offered just now. The challenge that we have is continuously from the Administration. There seems to be a push because they recognize that there is a 5G and eventually 6G needs, but the pieces that they're looking at involve areas that are critical to the defense of this country because of the physics involved.

There has to be within the Department of Defense, someone who will stand up and make very clear to the Administration that these proposals will be extremely expensive and detrimental to the defense of this country. Have you expressed those concerns to the Administration?

Mr. DEL TORO. I've expressed the concerns to my chain of command, yes, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

Admiral Fratti, do you have anything to add to that?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Well, as you stated and the secretary stated, this is a really critical spectrum for us. You know, it would be incredibly detrimental and very expensive if we were even able to adapt the systems to be able to do without that spectrum.

So if there were to be an agreement, the sharing the regulations, it would have to be very strict, as you described, and there would always have to be opportunity for us to have access to those spectrums to be able to both train, but potentially defend our Homeland.

Senator ROUNDS. Which means that you have to have a dynamic spectrum sharing product in place. It does not exist today. We're working on it, but it is not there today.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Secretary Del Toro—and I'm going to change the subject a little bit for both you and Admiral Franchetti. I think nearly everyone agrees that the State of the Navy's shipyards is inadequate to face, you know, the greater power competition.

To cite just one example, the USS *Boise*, you've heard me talk about it before, it has been in and out of maintenance and unavailable to our war fighters since June 2016. I know Secretary Del Toro was able to meet with the leaders of HD Hyundai and February this year and see firsthand how they are using AI enabled capabilities to enhance and manage their shipbuilding efforts.

To what degree are the Navy's public shipyards currently using predictive analytics and AI to assist in optimizing the workflows, operations, and scheduling at the shipyards?

Mr. DEL TORO. So, Senator, we're finally making the appropriate investments over the last couple of years to try to get to a better place. They now actually have a platform that they're using that

does just this. But I'm also proud to say that, finally, you know, we do have actually a contract in to actually repair the Boise.

Thanks for your support as well, too, to make that happen. Those efforts are underway, in addition to the two others that were suffering problems over the long-term. These are the issues that I've been trying to fix since I came in as secretary. I'm proud to say that all three submarines now have contracts on them to get them operational and be put back to sea. Thanks for your support.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Admiral Franchetti

Admiral FRANCHETTI. I just wanted to offer, that's again, the critical reason we need to do SIOP, just in general. Our public shipyards really need to be upgraded, both in terms of the dry dock, but the industrial plant equipment, as well as the modernization of the flow and the taking advantage of the technology that we have today to modernize them.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, and General Smith, I just want to say thank you for your service to our country. Thank you, sir, and to your team as well, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Peters, please.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to our three witnesses. Thank you for your testimony today, and thank you for your service to our country. It's appreciated.

Secretary Del Toro, as other senators have noted the Navy's working hard to expand the submarine industrial base to support the state-of-the-art *Virginia*-class and *Columbia*-class submarines. Congress has supported these efforts allocating billions of dollars to support submarine builders, suppliers, and the workforce.

As part of these efforts, Secretary Guertin shared during a recent Seapower hearing that the Navy's looking to expand the submarine industrial base capacity outside of our existing shipyards, including other states like the State of Michigan, which has a great deal of industrial capacity, as you well know.

So my question for you, Secretary, as could you elaborate on Secretary Guertin's comments about expanding the submarine industrial base in Michigan, and can you commit to work with me to ensure that Michigan industrial base can provide world-class products to solve these submarine supply chain and workforce challenges? We have the ability to do that.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, Senator. Actually, in 2023 alone, I directed both the Marine Corps and the Navy to increase the amount of investment we have in small businesses and medium-sized businesses. We have pumped \$1.7 billion of additional moneys for those competitive areas to actually become more healthy.

As a result of that, we've actually added 1,000 small business companies to the Navy marketplace. These are the efforts that have to be done systematically from the very beginning to make things better, and that's what I've been doing for the past two and a half years.

In the case of Michigan, we just met with your economic development team in Wisconsin, and we actually talked to them about how we could work closely together with you to take full advantage of the submarine industrial base investments that are being made in

order to feed, particularly, Marinette Shipyard in Wisconsin, so that we can get the Fincantieri Program back on track.

Senator PETERS. Great. Wonderful. I hope you continue those efforts. Let me know how I can assist you in those efforts.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir. I appreciate that.

Senator PETERS. Admiral Franchetti, Secretary Guertin's comments in that Seapower hearing also indicated the Navy's commitment to surge capacity and personnel to move the *Constellation*-class Frigate program in the right direction, in tandem with the shipyard.

I certainly believe the additional funding Congress is providing for the frigate industrial base and workforce is also critical and will continue advocating for inclusion of resources this fiscal year as well.

But my question for you, Admiral, is can you share the Navy's long-term commitment to the frigate, and how we must get this program right, and its role and importance to the future fleet?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Well, thank you, and I just had the opportunity, with the secretary, to go up to Marinette and talk with the folks there, and really committed to supporting them in addressing their workforce challenges that they have.

The frigate is an absolutely critical ship for our Navy. It has, for a long time, and most of my career, we had frigates. They were definitely the—one of the key workhorses of our fleet. It provides lots of great capability, in conjunction and married up with our destroyers, and supporting our carrier strike groups.

But to be able to operate all over the world, with the capability that it's going to bring, at a lesser cost than the DDDGs, is very important to our Navy. So very excited to get them on board and as quickly as possible.

Senator PETERS. Wonderful. Great.

Secretary Del Toro, you recently completed a 45-day shipbuilding review, highlighting the need to address the shrinking national design and engineering workforce, and I am sure you're aware the University of Michigan is the last remaining, standalone, undergraduate, through doctoral, naval architecture, and marine engineering department at an R1 university.

So, with this in mind, how are you supporting existing naval architecture programs and growing the U.S. naval engineering workforce, for the long-term?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, I've been actually traveling quite a bit to community colleges and universities around the world, trying to get them to commit to our shipbuilding industry. I just came back from the University of Michigan, where I was very honored to actually give the commencement speech in the engineering school, for example, and meet with the tremendous staff and engineers that we have there, who provide—it's one of the two institutions in the United States that provides the naval architects to the United States Navy.

The Office of Naval Research actually made a more significant investment in the program, as well, too. So we are working all levers across the country, everywhere we can, to try to get shipbuilding back on track.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Sure. Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary Del Toro, Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, I want to thank each of you for being here. I want to thank you and everybody that works with you and all your hard work. I respect everybody that serves in the military. But as a former enlisted Navy sailor, a U.S. Senator, an American citizen, I am extremely concerned about the accountability of our Navy.

I'll tell you why, and I loved my experience in the Navy. The Navy failed in recruiting last year, and all indications point that you're going to fail this year. The Navy projects it's going to miss recruiting numbers by 6,000 sailors this year, and currently performing worse than every other service.

This is happening while the Navy has reduced minimum aptitude, education, fitness, and character standards to as low as legally allowed. This stands in stark contrast to the Marine Corps, which is exceeding expectations in recruiting, while maintaining its high standards.

When you look at the readiness in the Navy, from an equipment standpoint, things don't look much better. The first *Columbia*-class submarine is 12 to 16 months late. The fourth and fifth blocks of *Virginia*-class submarine are 36 and 24 months late. The first *Constellation*-class frigate is 36 months late. The future aircraft carrier enterprise is approximately 18 to 26 months late. The Navy is retiring ships faster than it's replacing them, and has a terrible record of getting ships on maintenance done on time.

It's my understanding, the military has a plan to recapitalize all the C-130's by 2028. These planes are critical for logistics movements and to win a war in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific commander has stated they need them to move fuel, sonobuoys, aircraft parts, supplies, people throughout the Pacific. The Indo-Pacific commander has stated that they count on this ability to prosecute a war with Communist China.

Air Force is on time with its recapitalization, which is now at 50 percent. The Marine Corps has recapitalized 100 percent. But the Navy hasn't even started to recapitalize the 32-year-old fleet of aging 130's. I would assume that you would say, if a ship runs aground leaving naval ports, Norfolk, San Diego, that the captain would be held accountable.

Here's my concern. We've got delays in our yards. We've got maintenance ended up being over budget delayed. We've got major shipbuilding delays. We've got recruiting failures, and my concern is, I've not heard anybody that's been held accountable. I assume there's an admiral over each one of these, and I've not heard that one's been held accountable, and they're all continuing to get promoted. Is that true, either Secretary Del Toro or Admiral Franchetti?

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, you mentioned a lot of challenges. I see each challenge as an opportunity to make the world a lot better. These often, are problems that have festered for decades, without the right leadership, actually applying the right lessons to avoid

the mistakes that were made in the past, of which there were many that I could actually highlight.

Yet, at the same time, our fleet actually has been battling back the Houthis for 6 months in the Red Sea, more successfully than any other Navy, or Marine Corps, for that matter, in the Mediterranean, since WWII.

In the Indo-Pacific, we've actually been deterring the Chinese, actually by establishing allies—

Senator SCOTT. Can you just back to my question real quick? Who's been held accountable? You've got delays all over the place. You've got recruiting failures. Has anybody been held accountable? I'm a business guy. If anybody takes a job, they're expected to perform the job, and if they can't, I mean, it's their fault. I mean there's—you know, don't take the job, if you can't do it.

So my question is, has anybody been held accountable for shipyard delays, maintenance delays, recruiting failures. Anybody held accountable?

Mr. DEL TORO. Different people have been held accountable at different times for different things. But we have—Senator Scott: Give me one example more specific than just that.

Mr. DEL TORO. I mean, how do I hold—I try to hold industry accountable, as well, too. Look, Fincantieri is one example. Their retention rate, actually, last year was atrocious. That is part of the reason why we have actually established up to a 3-year delay in the delivery of the *Constellation*-class frigate.

What we're trying to do is, actually put positive efforts in place to help Fincantieri get to a better place. When in the case of the *Enterprise*, the main reduction gear from Northrop Grumman has been delayed, because they actually won the contract, and it wasn't General Electric who had it before. You know, that's created problems, as well, too.

Now, back to the case of the *Constellation*—maybe if the *Constellation*, if that had not been underbid during the previous Administration, and hadn't been delayed from the very beginning, and they came in with a best value price for it, and the Navy had not accepted it back then, we'd be in a better place, with regards to the Frigate, as well, too.

Senator SCOTT. So, the answer is not one person in the Navy has been held accountable.

Mr. DEL TORO. Senator, there have been people held accountable for different reasons at different times.

Senator SCOTT. I ask you for one. Just give me one.

Mr. DEL TORO. I'm not going to invade people's privacy either in terms of individuals who've been held accountable for different problems in the Navy.

Senator SCOTT. So this is,

Mr. DEL TORO. I have a record of holding even senior leaders accountable when they falter in the United States Navy, and my track record shows that.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Duckworth, please.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to our witnesses.

Secretary Del Toro, I want to discuss the housing issues at Halsey Village at Naval Station Great Lakes. I understand housing issues have plagued Halsey Village for years, even from the previous Administration. I'm not here today to assign blame, but I do want to work constructively with the Navy on a path forward.

The Navy leased Halsey Village to Hunt Military Communities under a 50-year lease, and Hunt is responsible for day-to-day operations. The Lake County Board chair and mayor of North Chicago, where Halsey Village is located, wrote to Hunt Military Communities on October 2023, to express their concerns regarding the physical condition of Halsey Village.

In their letter, they wrote, "There is not a neighborhood in all of Lake County that is in worse condition than Halsey Village. The neighborhood has taken on the moniker of Zombie Village, given the great numbers of homes in various states of neglect."

There are 353 housing units within Halsey Village. Currently, 249 housing units are uninhabitable, with 44 of these units so badly deteriorated that they are cordoned off behind a chain link fence. It is unacceptable that the Navy is renting housing units in Halsey Village to military families and Illinois residents knowing the conditions of these homes.

The Navy also offers prorated rent for sailors to live in Halsey Village. This creates an incentive for junior enlisted sailors to live in substandard conditions. No one should be living in Halsey Village, and the Navy should not be creating an incentive for sailors to live there either.

I want to discuss the future of Halsey Village, and communicate my expectations, as the Navy finalizes decisions. One, the Navy must keep my office, Senator Durbin's office, and the Lake County community and local elected leaders updated on decisions being made regarding Halsey Village. The path to remediate and redevelop Halsey Village will take years, and I understand that. I will remain laser-focused on ensuring the interests of the community are protected and heard.

Two, there are still 22 housing units in Halsey Village being rented to military families, and 88 units are rented at market rate to Illinois residents. Until a decision is made on the future of Halsey Village, the Navy must continue to be responsive to the needs of the residents, and force Hunt Military Communities to address any maintenance issues.

Three, I understand that the Navy is discussing options to redevelop the land after the homes in Halsey Village are demolished. The Navy must ensure that no corners are cut, using a commercially compatible developer, to avoid environmental remediation costs, if such a solution would not be acceptable to the Lake County community and local elected leaders.

For example, to avoid remediation, you can't just pour concrete over it and say, okay, it's now commercial property. That way, we don't have to deal with remediation, if the community actually wants to have that property be used for future residential housing, which is desperately needed in the community.

Secretary Del Toro, I understand that remediating and redeveloping Halsey Village will be costly, and this problem preexists your tenure there. I understand that. I ask that you work with me and

my staff to ensure that remediating and redeveloping Halsey Village remains a priority for the Navy, and that we are resourcing these efforts appropriately.

Can you commit to that?

Mr. DEL TORO. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Secretary Del Toro, once the Navy finalizes plans for Halsey Village, can you provide my staff with a copy of the Navy's plan to remediate and redevelop Halsey Village, including any timelines associated with those plans?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, and if you find yourself in Illinois, in Chicago anytime this summer, I invite you to come out to Halsey Village and I will tour it with you.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, ma'am. Promise to do so.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

Senator Mullin, please.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, I just want to make an observation here. This is not trying to be confrontational to you at all. You've had enough of that. I don't really feel like doing that today. I have eaten. So I'm trying to be in a good mood. But I just say, first of all, you mentioned a while ago, and as a bragging point, that you're battling the Houthis, a terrorist organization.

You call that success, when they don't have a Navy. If we want to eliminate them, we could. If we wanted to just stop what they're doing, we could. By holding them back for 6 months, but yet they're still disrupting and still have the ability to attack shipping freighters. That's not a win. That's far from a win.

We are the United States Navy, and we were, at one time, the largest Navy. But we've seceded that to China, which goes back to what Eric Schmitt was saying about the idea of the climate being the biggest threat to China. I really don't think China is too concerned about the environment, at this point.

In fact, they're laser-focused on us, and in fact, they're running circles around us. In fact, as you know, Mr. Secretary, they have the largest navy in the world now. They built 30 ships last year alone. We barely completed two. That's a problem. Don't you think?

Mr. DEL TORO. That is a problem, sir?

Senator MULLIN. That's a huge problem. We're retiring 50. According to your records, you guys have roughly 50 that you're going to retire or have to go in for maintenance, or is going to be out of service, by 2028. We have 292 ships currently on the fleet. Not all of them are actually out to sea. They have 370. I'm sure they're laser focused on the environment.

Our concern is, are we safer today than we were? The answer to that is, probably not. Probably not, because we're trying to balance the environment with world power, and your body language would, just honestly, just aggravate people just by the way you're behaving. I mean that sincerely, because you don't take it serious.

In fact, it's serious to us, and you almost joke and laugh about it, with your body language. I'm just saying, as a constructive criti-

cism, that could be a problem, because we want you to succeed. The last thing I want you to do, is not to succeed.

But even when you was pressed by Senator Scott over here, Rick Scott, you made a reference to the previous, the last Administration, why you're in the situation you're in today because they had something under bid. But yet, we have current things that are constantly coming under bid.

You've been in the position for how long now?

Mr. DEL TORO. Two and a half years, Senator.

Senator MULLIN. Two and a half years. How long has this Administration been in place?

Mr. DEL TORO. About three.

Senator MULLIN. I think it's time to start owning your own responsibilities, and stop blaming the previous Administration, and yet, you sit there, and you go, nah, nah. That's the problem, sir. It's not that we're just trying to be confrontational with you. It's that I don't think you're hearing us. It's like, you know best. We're just Senators up here and we have no opinion. That's a problem.

So, if you want to try getting along so we can all get in the same boat, and sing, and row together, then let's have actual serious conversation about actually moving forward and what our priorities are. The Navy's need to be focused on winning fights. Let the EPA worry about the environment.

Now switching gears, totally. Admiral, good to see you. I want to talk a little bit about Genesis, and I say this, because we're having serious recruiting issues. I mean, I had a conversation this morning with three people, that their sons were all trying to get in the service.

One is a D1 track athlete, waited 8 months to finally get in, and they were giving him a hard time, because of Genesis, because he's broke a leg or two. You know, there were some other ones that had some health concerns from his past when he was a little kid, and he actually dropped out after 6 months of trying to be in. By the way, all these are D1 athletes.

Another individual had had some issues with their shoulder. Still competing, but couldn't get in the service, and I'd just kind of go around. I mean, I was a pretty rambunctious kid. I broke a lot of bones, and I would believe that, most boys, if they haven't at least broke some bones, probably didn't live a good life growing up, because you got to push yourself.

My son, currently, is a D1 wrestler for Oklahoma State. Got cleared to wrestle internationally, got cleared to wrestle by USA, by NCAA wrestling, and he's having a hard time getting cleared in because he's supposed to report to boot camp this summer, and yet he hasn't got cleared yet.

I'm not bringing it up for my son, for you to do anything. I'm just saying, is Genesis actually helping us? Because they start looking at an accident he had when he was 7 years old, when he got bucked off a horse and he broke his arm, and they asked him a question about—seven years old, broken arm? Is it really working? I mean, I understand what Genesis is trying to do, I get that. But at some point, is it getting in the way to help us recruit, or is it actually hindering our ability to recruit?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Well, thank you, and you know, we've had a lot of discussions about Genesis. Actually, all of the service chiefs and OSD, working with the DHA, which is the owner of the system, to provide this kind of feedback, of where it is potentially slowing things down.

I think, you know, just in my time as the CNO, that we've made some definite improvements in streamlining the process, in reducing the amount of times people have to go back and get paperwork, and DHA continues to take this feedback. I will provide this feedback right now, as well, to them, as we continue to move that process forward.

So, I think, you know, it's a little bit of growing pains with the new system. We're really committed to working with DHA, to make sure that it does what it needs to do to get us our recruits into the system as quickly as possible.

So again, I would like to get with your staff offline on those, because it's always good to have examples, because it helps illustrate exactly where some of the hold ups are and the reasons.

Senator MULLIN. We'd love to work with you on it.

Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Mullin.

Senator Cotton, please,

Senator COTTON. Admiral Franchetti, I want to start by commending the sailors who have been under attack by an outlaw band of rebels and brigands in Yemen, since October 7th. It's the case that the Navy is now awarding them combat awards. Is that correct?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes.

Senator COTTON. We heard testimony, we've had a briefing on the Committee, from officials from Central Command, that those sailors have now been in what was called the weapons engagement envelope for longer than any sailor since World War II. Is that the case?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Yes, it is.

Senator COTTON.

So, we should all be proud of their bravery and skill. But I do not think that is a good news story. That is a bad news story. When our sailors go into the weapons engagement envelope, the point should be to destroy the envelope, in the first place, so those outlaws don't have those weapons anymore. Yet, it seems that all we're doing there is shooting down missiles and drones that are flying at our ships, or other ships in the region, or maybe shooting down missiles and drones as they're being fueled on the launch pad.

Is that a fair assessment?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Well, Senator Cotton, I would say there are two aspects to what we've been doing there. We have Operation Prosperity Guardian, you know, working hard, with 20 other nations to keep the free flow of commerce going. That's what you're talking about, defending against missiles.

We also have another operation, which is designed to degrade the Houthi capability ashore. Again, those are policy decisions, and the Navy's job is to provide options to the CENTCOM commander and the CENTCOM commander's options do go up.

Senator COTTON. I know that the three of you are not in charge of these warfighting decisions, and ultimately, they're policy decisions. But I find it alarming that we have all these sailors that are, in my opinion, sitting ducks.

It's great that we have the defense systems that we need to keep them safe, but it only takes one of these missiles and drones to get through and hit one of our ships and cause a mass casualty event. That's what we saw a few months ago, in the tri-border region of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, when we lost three soldiers.

So, I would encourage you all, as you're discussing these policy matters inside of the Pentagon, to stress that you would like to see your sailors not sit in the weapons engagement zone, but destroy the weapons engagement zone.

General Smith, you haven't gotten to talk much today. So why don't we talk about Marine Corps recruiting. There's been a lot of talk about the challenges the Navy recruiting has faced. We've had the same conversations with Army recruiting, which I think is even more severe, so much so that they had to drop their recruiting goals to meet them.

The Marine Corps is going to meet its goals, is that correct?

General SMITH. That is correct, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Okay. So that is a good news story. So what do you think the Marine Corps is doing right, that other services can learn, not only the Navy, but especially the Army, since its challenges are more severe, and it's more like the Marine Corps?

General SMITH. Well, Senator, our recruiting environment is one that is professionalized. We have career recruiters, so each of our recruiting substations are our recruiting stations. Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio has a career recruiter, and we reward our recruiters who are out there for one tour. They are given their choice of duty stations when they finish a successful tour, or they're given their choice of school.

If they don't meet their mission, they're relieved. I mean, it's a Marine Corps mission. We're not selling anything. We're offering an opportunity, and it's part of our branding, if you will, that we're offering people an opportunity to earn the title, marine, and that's the thing that we continue to express.

While there are benefits to joining, there's the GI Bill, and that's very important. You're competing for the title, marine, and we hold that very, very dearly. You know, there's an old recruiting poster, "We don't promise you a rose garden." We still believe in that, and we still believe in the value of service to our Nation.

We're not lowering our standards, and people are attracted to that.

Senator COTTON. I think that's wise advice to heed. There are other problems, like Senator Mullin talked about, with Genesis. We've heard testimony on this Committee before. I think there's bipartisan agreement that Genesis has probably swung too far in the direction of excluding people who could serve, as opposed to making sure you don't have medical washouts in initial entry training.

There's also an issue, I think, with your doctors at MET stations around the country, and the throughput they have. But I think at the end, it's what General Smith says. The armed forces are here to defend the Nation.

They are not a skills training program for people who want a civilian job. They're not a financing program for people that want to go to college. It's not a daycare for people who have kids or health care for people who are sick. It's not a travel agency for people who want to see the world.

The armed forces may do all those things, but the armed forces, first and foremost, are designed to fight and win our Nation's wars. The one thing we will promise all of our recruits, whatever service they enter, is hard and realistic training that will enable them to win and survive in combat, in defense of this Nation.

Thank you.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you, Senator Cotton, and your words have been amplified by your own personal service. Thank you.

Senator King requests additional round.

Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Secretary Del Toro, I think there's some confusion in this hearing about your interest in climate change. My understanding is, it's not an academic interest in climate change, writ large, it's an interest in how climate change will affect the operation and readiness of the Navy. Is that correct?

Mr. DEL TORO. It is. That is my chief most responsibility as Secretary of the Navy. Is to care for the mission readiness of the Navy and the Marine Corps, and part of that is installation-readiness.

Senator KING. I went back and looked at Title 10.

One of your responsibilities is construction, outfitting, and repair of military equipment, construction, maintenance and repair of building structures, and utilities necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the Department.

Then later on, it says one of your responsibilities is carrying out the functions of the Department, so as to fulfill the current and future operational requirements of the unified and specified combatant commands.

Estimates are, sea level will rise about a foot in the next 15 to 20 years, as much as 6 to 8 feet by the end of this century. I would suggest that, if you're not taking account of that in your facilities, in everything from docks to all of the coastal facilities, that would be a dereliction of duty.

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir. We won't be able to maintain the ships, the submarines, everything else that we operate on these bases, without paying attention to what might occur in the future.

Senator KING. In fact, some of your facilities—I've been in Norfolk a couple of years ago—are already suffering the effects of rising sea level. Is that correct?

Mr. DEL TORO. Yes, sir, and the Marine Corps, as well, too. We've had to expend an extraordinary amount of resources, actually, to raise roads in Parris Island, for example, and Camp Pendleton, and Camp Lejeune, and a lot of other investments. So we have to pay attention to these things, or otherwise, they'll get the best of us.

Senator KING. Your responsibility, because of the effects on readiness and operations are to mitigate and adapt to these changes. That's correct is it not?

Mr. DEL TORO. That's correct, Senator.

Senator KING. Thank you.

I do want to change the subject just briefly. We talked about directed energy. The other technology that I think we've missed is hypersonics, particularly defense against hypersonics. I hope that is an emphasis of your R&D, as you go forward. We've got \$12 billion aircraft carriers that we don't want to be sitting ducks. We need, must develop defensive mechanisms for hypersonics.

Mr. DEL TORO. Very much so, sir, and that encumbers things that we do in cyberspace and SAP programs. But investment in CPS is also important for us, as well, too. As we address the very difficult challenges that we've had in shipbuilding for decades now, and you take a look at the *Zumwalt*-class destroyer, for example, you know, in overcoming the challenges with the advanced gun system.

Now trying to put CPS on it, it is one of my top priorities, as well, and hopefully, we'll have it on the first one, late 2025, and then, the second 2026, and the third one in 2029.

Senator KING. Well, I hope that it's an urgent priority, not just a priority, because the core of our deterrence is our projected sea power, and we have to be able to defend it. If we can't, the deterrence goes away.

Mr. DEL TORO. We just lifted the first advanced gun system on the *Zumwalt* just last week, sir. It's moving along well.

Senator KING. Where was the *Zumwalt* built again?

Mr. DEL TORO. Bath, Maine, sir.

Senator KING. Thank you, sir.

Admiral, we talked a lot about recruiting. I want to thank you for sending a ship to the coast of Maine this summer. One of the problems with recruiting, if you look at the data nationwide is, there are many parts of our country now who never see a person in uniform. They never see military assets in the northeast.

There are virtually no bases left. My own hometown of Brunswick had a naval air station for 50 years, 60 years. Now it's gone. The Navy people that were the—just, in many ways, the heart of our community, are gone. So thank you for sending the ship to Maine. I would urge you to do similar kinds of deployments, because we need young people to see their military, to see people in uniform, and I think that's an important step.

Finally, Admiral, I just want to commend to you, following up on work on mental health. This is a crisis, as you know. It affects suicide, it affects readiness, it affects well-being of your sailors. So, I hope that this is a continuing process on the ships, on the shore.

Is that something that you see as a priority?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. It definitely is a priority, and we'll continue to focus on this. Earlier this year, we put out our culture of excellence, where we look really broadly at our entire culture, and all of the things that we are doing to support our sailors. Mental health is one of them. There are a lot of other programs that we pulled all together, again, to create warfighters.

That's all about getting after their body, mind, spirit to build great people, great leaders, and great teams, and we're going to be focused on this for a long time in the future.

Senator KING. Thank you.

General Smith, I want to welcome you back, and you fought your own battle this year. You also rendered a service by proving to the American people that Marine Corps Generals do, in fact, have hearts.

[Laughter.]

Senator KING. So that was a plus.

General SMITH. I think some of my marines might debate that point with you, sir, but I do in fact have a heart and it's fully functional.

Senator KING. Thank you. Yes, sir.

Chairman REED. Well, thank you very much, Senator King.

Well, thank you very much, Senator King. Just a few points, as we close. First of all, I will relay to you that I was speaking to General Kurilla, the CENTCOM Commander, commending him on an extraordinary operation that defeated a huge missile attack in the State of Israel, and he went out of his way to commend the Navy.

I didn't bring it up, he brought it up, and for a West Point grad and a paratrooper like General Kurilla, that—you must have made an impression on him, your servicemembers.

Mr. DEL TORO. Well, and thank you for your own service, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REEDS. Well, thank you, and Admiral Franchetti, you should be proud of that. In fact, frankly, I think, before that attack, if you said that we could destroy, essentially every missile that was being fired—there were hundreds of them—and only have one casualty, unfortunately, a young Bedouin child, you'd say no, that's not possible.

You did it. It was the U.S. Navy, as well as our Air Force, our naval aviators, et cetera. So we are performing better than any other service has ever performed. But we still have lots of problems, and you're dealing with them.

The discussion on climate change here is interesting, because, when I was a kid, the Arctic Ocean was frozen, and now, I don't think the Arctic Ocean is frozen. In fact, I think it's navigable.

So let me ask you, Mr. Secretary, does a navigable Arctic Ocean prevent challenges to naval strategy?

Mr. DEL TORO. Very much so, sir, and we're seeing it, actually, with greater Chinese incursion and greater Russian activity, as well, too. As you know, our Nation doesn't necessarily have the icebreakers that are necessary to operate freely in that zone.

I'm very proud of the fact that our Navy is also stood up, and actually when Russian ships were deployed close to our islands, we actually deployed necessary destroyers out there to go meet them. That will continue to be even a greater challenge in the future.

Chairman REEDS. That is the result of the accumulating effects of climate change. So, from a strategic point of view, we have to worry about it. From an equipment point of view, we have to worry about it, because of icebreakers, which we've not really invested in we have to worry about it.

In fact, I know the military has just—the Army, I should say, excuse me, the Army is increasing its presence in Alaska, with the new airborne unit training, the interagency training. So, you know, it is an important concern. I hope that would be obvious. But thank you—all very much for your service, for your testimony.

We will adjourn the public open, session, and reconvene at SVC 217, at 12:30, for the closed session. Thank you for your testimony. The open session is adjourned.
 [Whereupon, at 11:54 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]
 [Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

IMMINENT DANGER AND HOSTILE FIRE PAY FOR RED SEA AREA

1. Senator REED. Secretary Del Toro, according to your April 24, 2024, announcement authorizing combat awards and devices for the Red Sea Area, you noted that that imminent danger pay is not currently authorized for this geographic area, and also noted that the CAR, for example, could not be awarded unless the awardee received hostile fire pay for the incident for which the award was made, or at some date within the merit dates of the award. Why is the Navy not authorizing either Imminent Danger or Hostile Fire Pay? Is this your decision to make or that of the CNO?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Imminent Danger Pay (IDP) may be paid to a uniformed Service Member who is subject to the threat of physical harm or imminent danger on the basis of civil insurrection, civil war, terrorism, or wartime conditions in a foreign area. Hostile Fire Pay (HFP) is awarded when a Service Member is exposed to a hostile fire event or serves in a hostile fire area.

The approval authority to designate a geographic area as eligible IDP is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA)). Department of Defense Instruction 1340.09 "Hazard Pay Program" requires IDP designation requests to originate from the Combatant Commander and be endorsed by the Director of the Joint Staff prior to submission to ASD(M&RA). A request to designate the Red Sea an IDP area is currently in staffing.

Hostile Fire Pay (HFP) is awarded when a Service Member is exposed to a hostile fire event. The approval authority in the case of the Red Sea is Central Command. Central Command has approved HFP numerous times in response to hostile fire events for vessels in the Red Sea.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

SIOP

2. Senator SHAHEEN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, cost overruns have previously thrown the SIOP's multi-mission dry-dock project at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard off schedule. The National Security Supplemental contains \$3.3 billion for the submarine industrial base, some of which will make up for these overruns. How will you utilize the funds in the National Security Supplemental as related to Portsmouth Naval Shipyard SIOP efforts?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Of the \$3.3 billion National Security Supplemental, \$100 million was applied to

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Dry Dock 1 (P381). The Dry Dock 1 project is performing consistent with the cost notification made to Congress in May 2024 and is expected to complete by its mission need date.

MARINE EXCESS LEAVE PROGRAM

3. Senator SHAHEEN. General Smith, my office has heard from constituents in law school that are currently receiving benefits from the Marine Excess Leave Program and accepted an offer on the condition of the Department of Veterans' Affairs confirmation of a monthly stipend through the GI Bill. Unfortunately, the VA recently changed its policy and is no longer allowing a stipend for marines participating in the ELP. Do you commit to working with Congress on a legislative fix?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has funded legal education for those officers who are statutorily eligible to switch programs from the Excess Leave Program. Some Excess Leave Program Marines were precluded from switching due to the statutory limit of 6 years' time in service.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

SEAMAN XAVIER SANDOR SUPPORT FOR SAILORS ACT UPDATE

4. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Secretary Del Toro, since the enactment of the Seaman Xavier Sandor Support for Sailors Act, how many sailors below the pay grade of E-6 and without dependents have received authorization for a basic allowance of housing while assigned to vessels engaged in a shipyard availability or maintenance period?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy appreciates the additional flexibility from expansion of authority to allow payment of BAH to junior sailors without dependents while assigned to sea duty and their ships are in the shipyard or extended maintenance. The Seaman Xavier Sandor Support for Sailors Act included provisions removing the prohibition on paying BAH to sailors without dependents on sea duty in paygrades E-1 through E-3 while assigned to vessels engaged in a shipyard availability or maintenance period. Those provisions were included in the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA. Prior to the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA, the Navy had the authority pay BAH to sailors without dependents in paygrades E4 and senior.

The Navy has not yet needed to make use of the expanded authority. E-1 through E-3 sailors without dependents are housed ashore in government owned or leased quarters, which remain the Navy's preferred housing alternatives for such sailors.

5. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Secretary Del Toro, since the enactment of the Seaman Xavier Sandor Support for Sailors Act, what percentage of sailors below the pay grade of E-6, without dependents, and assigned to vessels engaged in a shipyard availability or maintenance period were denied a basic allowance for housing after submitting a formal request?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy has not compiled the data related to:

- Requests for BAH from sailors in the paygrade of E5 are approved at the installation level, as are requests from those in paygrade E4 with at least 4 years of service. If unaccompanied housing (UH) is at full occupancy, these requests will be approved. We do not have data on how many requests may have been submitted and of those requests how many may have been denied because UH was available.
- Single sea duty sailors in paygrade E4 with less than 4 years of service are not authorized BAH and are required to live in UH or government leased housing except in limited circumstances or if authorized an exception to policy issued by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Personnel Policy) or delegated authority. We do not know how many sailors may have submitted a request but were denied at the local level because UH or government leased housing was available.
- It remains Navy policy to house E-1 to E-3 sailors without dependents in government housing and to only authorize BAH for these sailors when government owned or leased housing ashore is not available.
- It is currently Navy policy to not house any sailors aboard ship during shipyard availabilities or extended maintenance availabilities. Denial of a BAH request does not equate to a sailor living aboard ship; it equates to the sailor being assigned berthing in government owned or leased housing ashore.

CH-53K BLOCK BUY AUTHORITY FOR FISCAL YEARS 2025 AND 2026

6. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Secretary Del Toro and General Smith, if Congress grants the Navy block buy authority for up to 37 CH-53Ks over fiscal years 2025 and 2026, what are the projected impacts to the program in terms of cost and delivery timelines?

Secretary DEL TORO. The fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026 Airframe Block Buy Contract (BBC) is estimated to yield a cost avoidance of 3.75 percent, or \$135.2 million, which is already accounted for in the current budgetary documentation. This cost avoidance is attributable to a reduction in labor, material, and overhead rates, as a function of increased industrial base stability, incentivized prime/supplier investment, improved production efficiency, reduced administrative burden of annual contracts, and procurement volume. Further, the BBC is expected to result in a more stabilized and consistent aircraft build and delivery timeline, also reflected in current budget exhibits.

General SMITH. The fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026 Airframe Block Buy Contract (BBC) is estimated to yield a cost avoidance of 3.75 percent, or \$135.2 million, which is already accounted for in the current budgetary documentation. This cost avoidance is attributable to a reduction in labor, material, and overhead rates, as a function of increased industrial base stability, incentivized prime/supplier invest-

ment, improved production efficiency, reduced administrative burden of annual contracts, and procurement volume. Further, the BBC is expected to result in a more stabilized and consistent aircraft build and delivery timeline, also reflected in current budget exhibits.

REVIEW OF TRAINING AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR ACTIVE DUTY AND RESERVE SAILORS

7. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Franchetti, on May 15th, the Army announced the completion of a holistic review of online training requirements for all enlisted and officers. In response to the review's findings, the Army will cut 346 hours of online training. I am concerned that the Navy requires unnecessary or redundant training requirements. When is the last time the Navy conducted a holistic review of required online training for the Active Duty and Reserve components?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy has an established Common Military Training (CMT) Planning Board for Training (PB4T) Executive Steering Group that convenes a bi-annually and quarterly working group of all Navy stakeholders to review new and existing CMT requirements where most of this training is completed online. The steering group has reduced CMT annual mandatory topics from 23 in 2014 to eight currently (six of which are required by legislation). The last review was May 14, 2024 to confirm fiscal year 2025 CMT.

8. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Franchetti, what efforts is the Navy undertaking to identify and eliminate redundant, unnecessary, or duplicative online training?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy has an established Common Military Training (CMT) Planning Board for Training (PB4T) Executive Steering Group and supporting working group. This group is comprised of requirement sponsors for CMT topics who take a thorough look at our required training for quality and effectiveness annually. The PB4T focus is to reduce the number of mandatory trainings to minimize the administrative burden imposed on Navy commands and personnel. Currently, all required training topics are mandated by Congress, Department of Defense, or the Secretary of the Navy. The steering group has reduced CMT annual mandatory topics from 23 in 2014 to eight currently (six of which are required by legislation). We also have a discretionary training category in order to manage topics that are not required for all sailors. We encourage Commanders to use the discretionary topics to incorporate training to best meet the needs of their command.

9. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Franchetti, I appreciate the Reserve component's goal of maintaining readiness and the ability to mobilize at short notice if required. However, given the limited time Navy Reservists are obligated to their duties (one weekend a month and 2 weeks of annual training per year), what is the Reserve component doing to identify and eliminate redundant, unnecessary, or duplicative online training and administrative duties?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy Reserve continues to review its administrative and training requirements, ensuring they align with warfighting readiness while eliminating unnecessary administrative requirements when able. The Navy Reserve is currently pursuing multiple lines of effort to promote increased readiness and efficiency across the mobilization enterprise. For example, Commander Navy Reserve Force has implemented a web-based application called ZipServe to support administrative readiness for SELRES activation. ZipServe is both a routing tool and repository for all SELRES pay activation documentation. This application reduces administrative burden on the SELRES. To date, activation pay processing time has been reduced by 20 percent and eighty-nine percent on the force has initiated pay packets with seventy percent fully verified and complete.

The Navy Reserve is also working to align medical mobilization screening to the billet and specific combatant command requirements, reducing medical provider support and time. Additional pilots are in progress to assess the feasibility of moving components of the medical screening process to billet assignment rather than waiting until a reservist is called to Active Duty.

10. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Franchetti, please provide a comprehensive list of online training and administrative requirements that Navy reservists must complete at each rank and rate in order to be deemed combat ready, along with the various Navy systems used to track completion of these requirements.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Commander Navy Reserve Force (CNRFF) maintains a comprehensive list of online training and administrative requirements that Navy Reserve Selected Reserve (SELRES) sailors must complete to be combat ready. The list

was last reviewed in its entirety in calendar year 2020. CNRF conducted an expedited review from 1–2 July 2024, in order to provide the best information possible pursuant to this request.

The attached list bins these requirements into 4 different readiness categories, from most to least critical. Each requirement is listed with the source of the requirement (instruction, personnel/medical manual, etc.), the affected population, the estimated time commitment for the requirement (in hours), the training delivery method, any associated web content, and the tracking system. The annual online and administrative requirements for each SELRES totals approximately 103 hours. Of this total, approximately 13 hours are Navy Reserve-specific requirements, with the remainder Navy and DOD-level requirements.

The total comprehensive list of online training and administrative requirements that SELRES sailors must complete in order to be combat ready cannot be copied here due to size constraints, but is attached for viewing and use as desired.

Please reference enclosure Navy Reserve 2024 Training Requirements List in the Appendix

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

COST OVERRUNS AT DRY DOCK AND HAWAII PROJECTS

11. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, I recently sent a letter regarding the \$834 million cost overruns for the Navy's dry dock replacement project at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. Over \$400 million of this cost increase was a result of the Navy moving up the dry dock's operational mission need date by 11 months after initial contract solicitation. How did the operational mission need date get moved up almost a year after contract solicitation when the Navy has an annual statutory requirement to provide a 30-year shipbuilding plan to Congress?

Secretary DEL TORO. Regarding the cost variance report for the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Dry Dock 3 Replacement project, the updated estimate reflects lessons from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Multi-Mission Dry Dock and other best practices from weapon system acquisition programs, including bringing industry into the process early and including a contingency for material escalation in our contracts. One outcome of discussions with industry during the design phase indicated that providing industry some schedule flexibility would allow them to perform the work at less cost. As a result, the previous estimate provided to Congress assumed there was flexibility in the mission need date. More recent discussions with the fleet established that there was no flexibility in the mission need date and thus those projected savings were not possible.

Additionally, the period 2021 to 2023 was especially challenging for the construction industry, with significant cost increases in the labor and material market. The actual escalation experienced by our contractors was more than that used to prepare the Fiscal Year 2023 President's Budget reflected in the previous estimate. Site logistics within the operating shipyard were an additional factor in the cost increase.

12. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, what steps are you and other senior leaders taking to ensure the Navy incorporates long-term planning requirements and considerations when conducting oversight of large military construction projects?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy has implemented organizational and technical reforms to improve Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) governance and execution. In April 2022, the Navy established the Program Executive Office for Industrial Infrastructure, placing a dedicated executive in charge of the program. In August 2023, SIOP defined formal capability requirements and established key performance parameters with the rigor, discipline and oversight equivalent to the Navy's major weapons systems. Further, SIOP is starting project designs earlier to increase estimate fidelity, awarding key contract items early and/or separately to remove completion risk, and using economic price adjustment clauses to share material price volatility risk between the government and contractor.

13. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, how is the Navy planning to incorporate GAO best practices on cost estimating and lessons learned to avoid future cost increases?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy is implementing Government Accountability Office (GAO) guidance to ensure consistency and completeness of SIOP cost estimates. Independent cost estimates are being developed for all major projects in accordance with legislation. In December 2022, the Department of Defense directed the use of

the GAO best practice of comparing cost elements to available historical data for construction. Further, the Navy formalized SIOP cost estimating expectations for escalation, risk, uncertainty, format, and comprehensiveness. SIOP cost estimates, including Dry Dock 3 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard have implemented improved economic forecasting and cost and schedule risk analysis that is updated throughout design and construction. Construction contractors are now involved in the design phase to improve estimates for logistics and constructability.

SHIPBUILDING DELAYS

14. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, your 45-day Shipbuilding Review found delays of anywhere from one to 3 years for every major ship program including the *Columbia*-class submarine, *Virginia*-class submarine, and the future *Enterprise*-class aircraft carrier. You then ordered a second 45-day shipbuilding review. What is the way ahead for shipbuilding and specifically submarine production?

Secretary DEL TORO. The 45-Day Shipbuilding Review highlighted challenges facing shipbuilding programs and larger ship industrial base, including lingering effects of COVID on the supply chain and skilled workforce availability and proficiency. The Navy is actively working together with industry on initiatives to drive improvement to these challenges. Further, the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request continues to seek support for investment in the submarine and shipbuilding industrial base. This investment is key to restoring timely delivery of our submarines and ships and strengthening the Nation's defense capabilities.

The operational impacts due to delays with new major ship construction will result in a general long-term necessity to extend the service life of the current battle force. Service life extensions increases ship maintenance requirements and costs and stresses public and private shipyard repair capabilities required to support these efforts.

PB-25 allocates resources to support the Navy's operations, training, maintenance, and other readiness accounts to maximize players on the field in the near term as well as strategic investments for Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) to address inadequate facilities and industrial plant equipment at the four public shipyards to improve maintenance outcomes long term.

To simultaneously sustain and modernize the current fleet and sustainably accelerate capacity growth of our fleet, the Navy will require sustained budget growth above actual inflation as demonstrated in the 30-year Shipbuilding Plan, to include recommendations from the Chief of Naval Operations. The Navy will also need better performance from the shipyards and other contractors to deliver capabilities and capacity on time and on budget. Further, the Navy needs on time appropriations to avoid disruption to programs due to continuing resolutions.

15. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, what are the operational impacts of these delays?

Secretary DEL TORO. The operational impacts due to delays with new major ship construction will result in a general long-term necessity to extend the service life of the current battle force. Service life extensions increases ship maintenance requirements and costs and stresses public and private shipyard repair capabilities required to support these efforts.

16. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, are you concerned about the U.S. Navy's readiness or supporting the AUKUS commitment?

Secretary DEL TORO. We prioritize our people and readiness to deploy and fight today, while investing in our industrial base to build and maintain our fleet. PB-25 allocates resources to our operations, training, maintenance, and other readiness accounts to position forward naval forces in defense of global U.S. interests.

I am not concerned about the U.S. Navy's readiness to support our AUKUS commitment. We are going into this with our eyes wide open and have an agreed-upon plan for how to deliver a sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered attack submarine capability to Australia. We have made strides toward accomplishing milestones along the Optimal Pathway to include integrating Australian submariners and uniformed maintenance personnel into our submarine training and a submarine tender to build their required knowledge, skills, and stewardship for operating and maintaining SSNs.

17. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, what can Congress do to help?

Secretary DEL TORO. Continued congressional support is appreciated. Timely enactment of appropriations to fund the President's Budget is helpful.

WASTEWATER DISCHARGE IN KANEOHE BAY

18. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro and General Smith, the water reclamation facility at Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay has received multiple fines for improperly discharging sewage into Kailua Bay and exceeding permissible levels over the last several years. According to the Hawaii Department of Health, the base has exceeded limits on “numerous occasions” between August 2020 and February 2022. In 2022, the State of Hawaii fined the Navy \$8.7 million after “repeated discharges of untreated or partially treated sewage to State waters.” Secretary Del Toro and General Smith, why is it taking so long to address the wastewater treatment plant that threatens the environment and racks up millions of dollars in fines that will be incurred by taxpayers?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Marine Corps recognizes our role in protecting the waters of Hawai‘i and is taking steps to improve the Marine Corps Base Hawai‘i (MCBH) Kaneohe Bay Water Reclamation Facility (KBRF) by planning, programming, and executing projects to improve the condition and capabilities of the system.

- Work is ongoing for two major repair projects totaling \$15M in improvements to the KBRF secondary clarifier and primary digester.
- The USMC is designing a project to install a redundant disinfection system, which will correct the deficiency noted in the 2022 Notice of Violation and Order.
- The P-875 Water Reclamation Facility Improvement military construction project will provide a parallel treatment system to address maintenance and other system outages. With the \$109M in funding received from the fiscal year 2024 appropriations, the project is scheduled for award in June 2025. We anticipate a projected completion date of July 2028 subject to receiving the remainder of funding in subsequent appropriations.
- The cost of these facilities is significant, and we are grateful for congressional action to incrementally fund the WRF from the CMC’s UPL. We appreciate Congress’ continued support for the remainder of the funding in future years.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps recognizes our role in protecting the waters of Hawai‘i and is taking steps to improve the Marine Corps Base Hawai‘i (MCBH) Kaneohe Bay Water Reclamation Facility (KBRF) by planning, programming, and executing projects to improve the condition and capabilities of the system.

Work is ongoing for two major repair projects totaling \$15M in improvements to the KBRF secondary clarifier and primary digester.

The USMC is designing a project to install a redundant disinfection system, which will correct the deficiency noted in the 2022 Notice of Violation and Order.

The P-875 Water Reclamation Facility Improvement military construction project will provide a parallel treatment system to address maintenance and other system outages. With the \$109M in funding received from the fiscal year 2024 appropriations, the project is scheduled for award in June 2025. We anticipate a projected completion date of July 2028 subject to receiving the remainder of funding in subsequent appropriations.

The cost of these facilities is significant, and we are grateful for congressional action to incrementally fund the WRF from the CMC’s UPL. We appreciate Congress’ continued support for the remainder of the funding in future years.

WATERFRONT PRODUCTION FACILITY

19. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, I am also concerned about the Waterfront Production Facility at Pearl Harbor. Last year we appropriated \$49 million for planning and design and this year there is a request for an additional \$105 million, also for planning and design funds only. Secretary Del Toro, what concrete steps are you taking to make sure that we stay on time and on budget?

Secretary DEL TORO. The complexity of constructing the Waterfront Production Facility for future resiliency and agility without impacting Fleet readiness requires substantial planning and design which will increase the fidelity of cost and schedule estimates prior to key contract awards. To better manage the Waterfront Production Facility and all shipyard infrastructure projects, the Navy has implemented organizational and technical reforms to improve the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) governance and execution. The Navy established the Program Executive Officer for Industrial Infrastructure and is establishing formal capability requirements and key performance parameters for the Waterfront Production Facility with the rigor, discipline, and oversight equivalent to the Navy’s major weapons systems.

20. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, I would like your commitment that the \$105 million will cover all of the planning and design requirements to allow the facility to be built in fiscal year 2027 as currently planned.

Secretary DEL TORO. If appropriated, the \$105M requested in the Navy's PB 25 Unfunded Priorities List for the Waterfront Production Facility (WPF) at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard (PHNS) is expected to support planning and design requirements.

To better manage the PHNS WPF and all shipyard infrastructure projects, the Navy has implemented organizational and technical reforms to improve the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) governance and execution. The Navy established the Program Executive Office for Industrial Infrastructure and is establishing formal capability requirements and key performance parameters for the PHNS WPF with the rigor, discipline, and oversight equivalent to the Navy's major weapons systems. This will ensure the fidelity of cost and schedule estimates prior to key contract awards.

PEARL HARBOR SURFACE SHIP PIERS

21. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, the surface ship piers at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard are in disrepair, with a majority of the berths unavailable for use. Those that are available also require a firefighting waiver for ships in maintenance availabilities. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, what is your plan to repair the surface ship piers at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and eliminate the need for waivers?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy has developed projects to address the surface ship pier condition in Pearl Harbor. These projects include electrical capability enhancements (to award this year), phased refurbishment of the depot-level surface maintenance piers, and a floating dry dock in the mid-fiscal year 2030's.

22. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, what can be done to make pier-side maintenance more efficient?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Investment in Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam is amongst the Navy's top priorities for investment in surface ship infrastructure over coming years and has several projects in various stages of planning and design to address pier condition. Planned infrastructure projects also include pier side workforce consolidation and pier laydown configuration improvements. Investments in these infrastructure projects will collectively support more efficient execution of pier side surface ship maintenance demand in Pearl Harbor.

QUALITY OF LIFE

23. Senator HIRONO. General Smith, welcome back. It is good to see you again. The Marine Corps' number one unfunded priority is the restoration and modernization of unaccompanied barracks and housing as part of the program Barracks 2030 that you mandated to help improve quality of life. You formally approved the plan in November 2023 which is why it is included in your Unfunded Priority List. How do you think Barrack 2030 will affect recruitment, retention and readiness?

General SMITH. Our Barracks 2030 investment is consistent with the Marine Corps' promise to take care of our marines. The plan is an actionable and visible sign of our commitment to providing comfortable, clean, and well managed living spaces. This will provide marines living conditions to maintain peak readiness, attract recruits who desire to be a U.S. Marine, and ultimately influence a marine's decision to remain in the Corps. The implementation, communication, and execution of Barracks 2030 is a generational investment opportunity to provide tangible actions to get after and maintain high levels of recruitment, retention, and readiness.

QUALITY OF LIFE

24. Senator HIRONO. Admiral Franchetti, in the same vein, I am happy to see that your budget includes funds to renovate or upgrade housing at six key Naval Bases. Can you discuss what other actions the Navy is taking to ensure quality of service issues are being addressed, especially for our unaccompanied servicemembers?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Quality of Service (QOS) remains one of my highest priorities as the Chief of Naval Operations. To codify our commitment to improving QOS in Unaccompanied Housing (UH), the Navy has developed an initiative called Forging Communities of Excellence. This plan identifies three distinct lines of effort to improve QOS: Facilities Improvement, Management, and Quality of Life.

In my testimony, I identified our facility investment request to support facility improvement. Our focus is to improve facilities condition, optimize inventory through military construction, and expand privatization initiatives.

We are also improving delivery of our services through more effective management practices and increased responsiveness. The Navy will ensure consistent service through a well-sourced, adequately trained, and sufficiently equipped civilian workforce by focusing on career development, optimization, and resourcing.

In 2022, Navy introduced a QR code program that provides easy access for military UH residents to report an issue with their residence. This program has increased the number of service calls and improved maintenance reporting since its implementation in fiscal year 2023. The expansion of this program will automate the interface between enterprise Military Housing, the DOD Housing Information Management System and MAXIMO, the Public

Works Maintenance Management System. Streamlining the data transfer process will reduce redundancy, improve responsiveness and tracking, and increase visibility to maintenance issues and status of resolution.

In February 2024, Navy initiated an Internet Connectivity Pilot program to provide free Wi-Fi to sailors in 12 Hampton Roads area permanent party UH facilities, located at Naval Station Norfolk, Portsmouth Naval Medical Center, and Norfolk Naval Shipyard. The pilot is offered through the Navy's Virtual Single Sailor Program under MWR and provides a level of free high-speed connectivity sufficient to permit streaming, web browsing, communications with family and friends, remote learning, and professional training. It provides subsidized options for those sailors who desire to buy additional speed in support of advanced gaming requirements.

In addition to the Wi-Fi pilot to improve the Quality of Life for our sailors, we have:

- Expanded cooking capability within UH to facilitate and increase access to healthy food options. Sailors can utilize more types of personally owned cooking appliances in all UH rooms on Navy installations. The list of permitted small cooking appliances is approved at the installation level and is based on the buildings' electrical load capacity and adequacy of fire suppression to ensure resident safety.
- Invested approximately \$50 million this year in furnishings, with the potential to provide full furnishing replacement in over 63 buildings at 35 locations such as NAS Lemoore, NAS Key West and NS Great Lakes.
- Expanding 24/7 access to at least one MWR Fitness Centers per installation across the enterprise with no restrictions on access to certain fitness equipment such as free weights.
- Relaxed requirements at our RV parks for length of stay. We have increased prioritization of reservations and support for geo-bachelors and sailors on temporary assignment who utilize the RV parks as a cost-effective housing option when separated from their families.

Forging Communities of Excellence supports our covenant to provide safe, quality housing for our sailors codified in the UH Bill of Rights and Responsibilities released last year. This covenant sets clear expectations regarding what the Navy guarantees to provide for sailors and what the expectations are of residents. By setting a collaborative tone with UH residents, we will continue to improve the quality of UH accommodations as well as sailors' overall wellness and satisfaction with life in the Navy.

USS BOXER

25. Senator HIRONO. General Smith, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit is embarked on the USS *Boxer*. The *Boxer* left San Diego on April 1st to deploy to the Indo-Pacific to participate in exercises like Cobra Gold off Thailand and another with the Philippines. Unfortunately, the *Boxer* returned to San Diego on April 11th with a damaged rudder and remains pier-side in San Diego. General Smith, do you have concerns about the size and readiness of our amphibious fleet?

General SMITH. The Marine Expeditionary Unit remains our crown jewel, and the Navy's Amphibious Warfare Ships and surface connectors are key enablers of our critical missions of campaigning and crisis response. The MEU remains in high demand by Combatant Commanders, partners, and allies; our MEUs respond to crisis all over the globe and prevent them from turning into a larger conflict. Amphibious Warfare Ships enable our global, persistent presence—that presence has been the guarantor of the peace and worldwide prosperity for the better part of the last century. No platform or unit is capable of a more diverse set of missions from the low-end to the high-end of military operations.

The CNO and I have locked shields, and there is no space between us on the requirement for Amphibious Warfare Ships—to include procurement, construction, maintenance, or availability. My best military judgment is that the Fiscal Year 2025 Thirty Year Shipbuilding Plan adequately commits to the continuation of the LPD Flight II Program on 2-year centers—to include full funding for LPD33 in this fiscal year, the calendar year 2024 delivery of LPD 29 USS *McCool*, and LHA production on 4-year centers—sustaining the bare minimum of no less than 31 amphibious warfare ships, of which not less than 10 shall be amphibious assault ships. The CNO and I continue to work through paths to improve amphibious warfare ship readiness to ensure global, persistent presence of Marine Expeditionary Units in support of Combatant Commander demands.

26. Senator HIRONO. General Smith, how do the maintenance delays impact the Marine Corps' ability to do its job?

General SMITH. When there are gaps in global Amphibious Ready Group/ Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEU) coverage, the Nation risks not having the right assets capable of getting to the crisis in time to matter. If the U.S. is not able to perform this role, our adversaries would likely step in with their forces and their messaging. Marines deployed forward as sea-based expeditionary forces, and regularly on amphibious warfare ships, allow us to train with our partners in peace and support them when they need help.

RED HILL

27. Senator HIRONO. Secretary Del Toro, the Navy recently assumed command of the Red Hill Closure Task Force. While I know Admiral Wade and the Joint Task force worked diligently alongside State and Federal partners to safely remove all of the fuel from the facility in recent months, that is only the beginning—more hard work remains. What is your view regarding the Department's long-term responsibility for the environmental restoration and remediation efforts following the permanent closure of Red Hill in 2027 to ensure Oahu's aquifer is protected?

Secretary DEL TORO. On March 28, 2024, authority over the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF) transferred from the Joint Task Force—Red Hill (JTF-RH), who completed their defueling mission, to the Navy Closure Task Force—Red Hill (NCTF-RH). The mission of the NCTF-RH is to execute the permanent decommissioning of the RHBFSF safely and expeditiously, and continue long-term environmental remediation in coordination with State and Federal stakeholders in order to protect public health and the environment. Tank closure operations are expected to take three to 4 years while the environmental remediation efforts will be an enduring mission whose timeline will be initially defined by the results of a Site Assessment that will begin conducting environmental sampling in early 2025. The Site Assessment report will define areas requiring further investigation and/or remediation.

More broadly, the Navy is working closely with State partners such as the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to implement landscape scale watershed management projects, to improve water quality and security and provide other environmental benefits. For example, with \$16 million in support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, the Navy is partnering with DLNR to protect and restore over 7,000 acres in the Waiawa watershed to improve aquifer recharge, enhance native forests and conserve native species, and safeguard drinking water.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

SAILOR MENTAL HEALTH

28. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, during your testimony, you mentioned efforts by the Navy to “limit the amount of time that personnel have to actually spend in a Limited Duty status” to address the mental health challenges sailors on Limited Duty are more likely to experience. What are the most prevalent reasons for sailors spending an extended period of time in a Limited Duty status?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Time spent in a Limited Duty status depends on several variables, to include the nature of injury or medical condition. In arriving at Limited Duty status recommendations for patients, medical providers must also factor time for appropriate treatment and recovery based on common medical guidelines and the individual sailor's progression.

Similar to dynamics in the private healthcare sector, the availability of medically necessary specialty care services at military medical treatment facilities or within the civilian network may sometimes be delayed and thus, extend the timeframe of Limited Duty status. Additionally, treatment responses may vary between sailors based on the individual's requirement for more time to heal.

29. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, what measures have been implemented to decrease the average amount of time sailors spend in a limited duty status?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy no longer places sailors on a "standard" 6-month period of Limited Duty. Navy medical providers currently apply "Condition Based Limited Duty" where the recommended time placed in this status is based on the expected recovery of the sailor's particular medical condition.

Navy also requires local Command Deployability Coordinators across the Fleet to monitor the Limited Duty population. Deployability Coordinators will be established at the regional or Type Command level to provide support and guidance to local Command Deployability Coordinators. The coordinators manage their assigned sailors, help obtain appointments, and advocate on their behalf throughout the Limited Duty process.

30. Senator KAINE. Admiral Franchetti, your focus on developing a mental health playbook and pushing mental health and behavioral health resources into the operating forces is encouraging. You mentioned efforts to establish a Limited Duty Coordinator at each command, as well as efforts to take a look at what duties sailors can actually perform while in a Limited Duty status. Keeping these sailors engaged with their unit's mission is key to reinforcing that they are a contributing part of the team and instilling a sense of purpose. Are these efforts bearing fruit?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy must be able to assign sailors to meaningful employment in support of accomplishment of mission objectives while ensuring that they have connectedness, team integration, and a continued sense of purpose throughout their medical care plans. In an effort to provide enhanced quality of service to the Fleet, the dynamic nature of LIMDU distribution warranted transformation. Primarily, the changes focus on the targeted distribution of sailors based upon their medical limitations and the gaining command's capacity to support, as well as effectively leading sailors while providing meaningful employment.

Since September 2023, BUPERS implemented targeted distribution of sailors at each command based on tailored LIMDU percentage caps for LIMDU sailors. In July 2024, 10 months after the implementation of tailored percentages, 93.5 percent of commands were at or below their LIMDU capacity. LIMDU sailors are now more evenly spread throughout the Navy and therefore have better access to mentors, meaningful work, and resources to improve their quality of life while also continuing the path to wellness. The total number of sailors on LIMDU has dropped by 5 percent since the implementation of tailored LIMDU distribution indicating the potential for improved patient outcomes as a result of increased access to command support.

"Meaningful employment" is an intentional shift from "work in rate," which proved to be a limiting factor in the enlisted LIMDU distribution process. To support this shift, BUMED developed a methodology to identify medical limitations of LIMDU sailors, which helps inform the detailing process in order to achieve a better coupling of the inbound LIMDU sailor and the gaining command. The LIMDU Smart system has been updated to include LIMDU categories and BUMED continues to train and promote the use of these categories in order to continue toward the goal of matching the sailor to the Command where both entities can thrive.

31. Senator KAINE. Admiral Franchetti, do all commands now have a Limited Duty Coordinator and if not, when will all commands have one?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. No. As of July 2024, roughly half of commands with more than 25 personnel assigned have a Command Deployability Coordinator identified in the MyNavy Assignment system. Command Deployability Coordinators provide oversight and management of the Limited Duty/Disability Evaluation System personnel to ensure that these sailors are fully integrated into assigned commands and attend all of their necessary medical and administrative appointments. Efforts continue for all commands to have access to a Command Deployability Coordinator by December 2024. Our intent is to provide this coverage by harnessing the connectivity provided through the Regional Deployability Coordinators at the type commander level.

32. Senator KAINE. Admiral Franchetti, how are you balancing the risks of keeping injured sailors engaged in the mission with the potential for re-injury?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy has made significant changes to Limited Duty (LIMDU) distribution in the past year. Through the Disability Evaluation System (DES) and LIMDU Sprint, we have incorporated seven Regional Deployability Coordinators (RDCs) that are embedded into TYCOMs to oversee the disability system and ensure appropriate level of service and implementation.

Since September 2023, PERS-4 implemented targeted distribution of sailors at each command based on tailored LIMDU percentage caps for LIMDU sailors. LIMDU sailors are now more evenly spread throughout the Navy and therefore have better access to mentors, meaningful work, and resources to improve their quality of life while also continuing the path to wellness.

“Meaningful employment” is an intentional shift from “work in rate,” which proved to be a limiting factor in the enlisted LIMDU distribution process. As part of this shift, the LIMDU SMART system has been updated to include LIMDU categories with the goal of matching the sailor to the Command where injured sailors can remain engaged in the mission with minimal risk for reinjury, and the ability to best support the Command in which they are assigned.

33. Senator KAINE. Admiral Franchetti, you mentioned efforts to take a look at shipyard manning for extended overhaul periods to ensure sailors don’t spend their entire first enlistment in a 5-year overhaul. This represents a significant personnel management challenge, given deployment rotations and the need to ensure ships have enough sailors to complete their requirements, even during an overhaul. What strategies are you employing to ensure that all sailors have the opportunity to serve on ships at sea during their initial period of obligated service?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Navy is employing multiple lines of action to ensure sailors can serve in operational assignments, not simply in shipyards, during their first term of enlistment. First, we tasked the Navy Manpower Analysis Center (NAVMAC) to perform a requirements analysis of the manpower that is necessary for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN) in a refueling and complex overhaul (RCOH), during the period of time the CVN is actively undergoing maintenance. This study was recently completed and will serve to reduce the number of sailors required to be assigned to a CVN in RCOH during the maintenance window.

In addition, the Navy is working on a system to phase-in 24 month initial orders for first-term sailors who would be assigned to a CVN in RCOH, and rotate them off the CVN to a follow-on operational sea tour. Updated policy is being codified in the OPNAVINST 1300.21 and will meet my and the Secretary of the Navy’s direction that sailors can spend at least half of their first enlistment in operational duty.

Finally, sailors may opt to remain on the ship in maintenance, so Navy type commanders have already been sending sailors on shipyard duty to temporary duty assignments on operational assets to allow them to use the expertise we trained them for and keep them ready for follow-on assignments. About 20–25 percent first-term sailors are away at a time learning their rate, while their ships remain in availabilities.

OVERSEAS SHIP REPAIR

34. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, in light of the issues our shipbuilding and ship repair industries are facing, looking for ways to outsource work and increase our capacity makes sense. However, there are some legitimate concerns that arise when we talk about conducting ship repair overseas, even with our partners. I’m sure you’re aware of the competing narratives that are building in response to your desire to leverage our partners, particularly Japan and South Korea, to conduct more of these kinds of repairs overseas. What would be the scope of these repairs, and how would they deviate from work that has been conducted overseas in the past?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy seeks authority for the execution of limited maintenance overseas, for ships homeported in the United States or Guam. The Navy submitted a legislative proposal accompanying PB25 to this effect. These authorities provide the mechanisms required for the Navy to exercise and improve the ability to conduct preventative maintenance meant to extend military operations within highly contested environments.

Current law (10 USC § 8680) allows for the execution of overseas maintenance, repair, or overhaul on ships in the following cases: (1) maintenance and repair of ships homeported outside of the United States or Guam (also known as forward deployed naval forces (FDNF)), unless they are within a certain window of homeport change; (2) corrective and preventative maintenance or repair and facilities maintenance.

nance for Littoral Combat Ships while on deployment; (3) repair and refurbishment of submarines involved in submarines security activities between the AUKUS partners in specified circumstances; and (4) voyage repairs or repairs necessary to correct damage sustained due to hostile actions or interventions for vessels with a homeport in United States or Guam. The exclusive use of FDNF ships for the purpose of conducting such maintenance would increase the time FDNF sailors are out of homeport (also known as personnel tempo); negatively impact high-tempo FDNF operations; and fail to realistically exercise the required capability.

This proposal would also support improved coordination with our international partners in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command areas, such as: Australia, Japan, South Korea, Republic of the Philippines, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Greece, Croatia, Norway, United Kingdom, and others.

35. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, how do you plan to address the concerns of labor unions and the American shipbuilding industry regarding the proposed expansion of overseas repair?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy seeks authority for the execution of limited maintenance overseas, for ships homeported in the United States or Guam. These authorities provide the mechanisms required for the Navy to exercise and improve the ability to conduct preventative maintenance meant to extend military operations within highly contested environments. The legislative proposal was drafted to support wartime preparedness while also minimizing the impact on the US repair industrial base by limiting maintenance duration and scope. Accordingly, the proposed expansion of overseas maintenance is not expected to reduce the quantity of domestic depot maintenance availabilities.

VIRGINIA-CLASS SUBMARINES: SUBMARINE INDUSTRIAL BASE

36. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, the Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget Request includes procurement for one *Virginia*-class submarine, which deviates from the two submarines we signaled to industry and projected in the 30-year shipbuilding plan. What impact will procuring just one *Virginia*-class submarine in fiscal year 2025 have on our industrial base?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The single SSN procurement in fiscal year 2025 provides an opportunity for the shipbuilders to balance production for *Virginia*-class Submarine Block VI construction and serial *Columbia* production in fiscal year 2026 and allows for maturation of improvements in manufacturing, outfitting and assembly as well as industrial base investments.

The Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget Request maintains prior year Advance Procurement and Economic Order Quantity funding for two SSNs to ensure industrial base stability with continued material procurement activities. Additionally, Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) investments proposed in the fiscal year 2025 budget expand upon the foundational investments made in PB23 and PB24 and are critical to shore up the SIB to reduce the current backlog in SSN production and ramp up to the SSN production rate needed to support the Navy's SSN requirement and the commitment to the AUKUS partnership.

The Navy values all vendors involved in our submarine industrial base and will work with the shipbuilders to ensure stability across the vendor base.

VIRGINIA-CLASS SUBMARINES: AUKUS

37. Senator KAINE. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, Failure to keep the production of *Virginia*-class submarines on track also has impacts to our international partnerships. To meet our commitments under AUKUS Pillar 1, we need to ramp up production to provide Australia with the advanced submarine technology necessary to support Indo-Pacific security. How are we reassuring our Australian allies of our commitment to Pillar 1?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. We are assuring our allies of the United States' commitment to AUKUS Pillar 1 through our actions, starting with Congress passing both the Fiscal Year 2024 National Security Supplemental Appropriations Act that included \$3.0 billion in Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) funding, and the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act that included four provisions that explicitly support AUKUS Pillar 1. Additionally, we have inducted more than eighty Australians into our submarine training pipelines, assigned six Australian officers to operational *Virginia*-class submarines, and more than 30 Australian sailors to a submarine tender to broaden their skills.

Further, the Administration has programmed \$11.4 billion over the FYDP to uplift the U.S. SIB to meet our national requirements of building one *Columbia*-class

SSBN and two *Virginia*-class SSNs by 2028. Australia's proportional investment into the U.S. SIB will serve to increase *Virginia*-class production to 2.33 *Virginia*-class SSNs per year to replace the submarines sold to Australia.

BARRACKS 2030

38. Senator KAINE. General Smith, I understand you're taking a hard look at your unaccompanied housing and have an initiative called Barracks 2030. My concern is that your budget documents say that you have \$15.8 billion in deferred maintenance and you would need approximately \$1.5 billion per year just to bring some of your barracks up to "good or fair" condition, yet only \$274 million is slated to go toward barracks in fiscal year 2025. How do you plan to tackle this problem using the existing resources and authorities at your disposal?

General SMITH. The Barracks 2030 initiative will improve the Marine Corps' management of the barracks, right size and modernize the barracks inventory, and update the refresh rate of the materials and furnishings in the barracks. Significant investment in modernization of facilities is planned to begin in fiscal year 2026. This allows the Marine Corps to plan and align existing resources and authorities toward our three primary lines of effort (management, modernization, material). We are aligning existing resources and authorities to execute Barracks 2030 now in a fiscally responsible manner. Investments in fiscal year 2025 will address some of the Marine Corps' highest priority barracks initiatives and reflect an increase in year over year for restoration and modernization investments. Additionally, a U.S. Army Corp of Engineer-led utilization study in fiscal year 2025 will inform a multi-FYDP enterprise-wide modernization profile for our barracks inventory.

39. Senator KAINE. General Smith, is it even feasible to approach this strictly with MILCON and FSRM dollars or do you think there are other methods that the Marine Corps hasn't typically leveraged, like privatization, that would help you get to good faster?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps is exploring all levels of investment and authorities to implement Barracks 2030, to include privatization. As privatization assessments continue, we will keep you informed on the status and how privatization may fit into our ongoing barracks efforts.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS KING

KENNEBEC RIVER DREDGING

40. Senator KING. Secretary Del Toro, there is a Federal Navigation Project (FNP) with a control depth of 27' from the mouth of the Kennebec River at Popham to the Sagadahoc Bridge just north of the shipyard. In this 12-mile channel there are two areas that historically have suffered shoaling which requires dredging to maintain this control depth: Doubling Point area (south of the shipyard) and the Sugarloafs (river mouth). Recently, a third area has required dredging, referred to as North Channel Area (immediately to the east of General Dynamics Bath Iron Works Pier 2). My understanding is that Bath Iron Works is a customer of the FNP and does not have responsibility for the maintenance of it, and that the FNP is the responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The USN has provided funding to the USACE for dredging maintenance of the channel. Furthermore, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Navy signed a Kennebec River Long-Term Dredging Memorandum of Agreement in January 2020 to detail the responsibilities of each in the Kennebec River. In 2022, Emergency Maintenance Dredging of the FNP in the lower Kennebec River was conducted due to a Navy mission requirement—it was funded by the Navy, using Operation and Maintenance funds. This year, winter storms have exasperated the shoaling of the Kennebec. Does your budget request include funding for USACE's dredging project?

Secretary DEL TORO. The dredging project is planned for December 2024; and the funding required for contract award and dredging project execution is already in place.

41. Senator KING. Secretary Del Toro, what is the status of funding this dredging project for fiscal year 2024?

Secretary DEL TORO. The total funding requirement (\$2.2M) has been provided to Supervisor of Shipbuilding in Bath, ME. They will provide the funding to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who will commence the bidding and contract award process within the next few weeks to support the dredging project planned for December 2024.

READINESS

42. Senator KING. Secretary Del Toro, during the hearing you testified regarding the improvements in shipyards' performance for conducting repairs. Please provide a breakdown of how the Navy has improved throughput of submarine and ship maintenance from fiscal year 2018 to the current fiscal year.

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy's performance for non-nuclear surface ships and the nuclear fleet, which includes submarines and aircraft carriers, has improved throughput since fiscal year 2018, using the metric of Days of Maintenance Delay (DoMD). DoMD measures the total number of days beyond the scheduled maintenance period that a vessel remained in the shipyard.

- For non-nuclear surface ships, DoMD, for depot level availabilities, has decreased from over 7,000 days in fiscal year 2019 to 4,006 days, reflecting streamlined processes and improved planning.
- For submarine and aircraft carriers, utilizing a 3-year rolling average, DoMD has decreased from 1,462 days in fiscal year 2019 to 1,094 days.

Non-nuclear surface ships and the nuclear fleet rely on different maintenance providers. The Navy contracts non-nuclear surface ships work to commercial ship repair yards, while submarines rely upon the public naval shipyards (NSY). As a result, their key levers for improving maintenance differ:

- Non-nuclear surface ship key levers include:
 - Reducing unplanned work through improved planning and execution practices
 - Leveling port loading to improve contract changes cycle times
 - Improving Weekly Integrated Production Schedule First Pass Yield
- Additionally, initiatives like early identification of unplanned work and ensuring Long Lead Time Material availability by specific milestones have proven pivotal in enhancing maintenance efficiency and improving overall fleet operational readiness.
- Nuclear fleet key levers include:
 - Reducing NSY attrition rates: Improved Federal wage system wage increases have resulted in a current corporate attrition rate of less than 5 percent
 - Implementing common operating systems across public naval shipyards
 - Improved planning, modernization, and material management
 - Balanced public and private workloads, outsourcing, and workforce development
 - Implementing common operating systems across public naval shipyards

43. Senator KING. Secretary Del Toro, what are the key levers that help improve maintenance throughput for ships, submarines, and aircraft?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy's maintenance operations for non-nuclear surface ships, submarines, aircraft carriers, and aircraft have achieved substantial efficiency gains. These approaches have minimized downtime, optimized resource utilization, and ultimately enhanced overall operational readiness. Through targeted reforms, data-driven strategies, and collaborative efforts, the Navy ensures that its fleet remains mission-capable and ready to meet the demands of national defense.

Improving maintenance throughput for non-nuclear surface ships, submarines, aircraft carriers, and aircraft hinges on several key levers. These include optimizing the use of public and private maintenance yards, implementing streamlined processes and advanced planning techniques, and ensuring the availability of necessary materials and parts. Additionally, enhancing workforce capabilities through targeted training and retention strategies, leveraging technology for predictive maintenance and efficient scheduling, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders are crucial.

Non-nuclear surface ship maintenance in the Navy is driven by Performance-to-Plan (P2P), focusing on key metrics and adherence to schedules. Key levers include:

- Reducing unplanned work through improved planning and execution practices
- Leveling port loading to improve contract changes cycle times
- Improving Weekly Integrated Production Schedule First Pass Yield

With respect to the nuclear fleet, which includes submarines and aircraft carriers, the Navy has actively pursued maintenance improvements through the following key levers:

- Reducing NSY attrition rates: Improved Federal wage system wage increases have resulted in a current corporate attrition rate of less than 5 percent
- Implementing common operating systems across public naval shipyards
- Improved planning, modernization, and material management
- Balanced public and private workloads, outsourcing, and workforce development
- Implementing common operating systems across public naval shipyards

With respect to the nuclear fleet, which includes submarines and aircraft carriers, the Navy has actively pursued maintenance improvements through the following key levers:

For aircraft, the Naval Aviation Enterprise launched the Naval Sustainment System-Aviation (NSS-A) readiness initiative to boost aircraft maintenance throughput at Fleet Readiness Centers (FRCs). A major aspect, FRC Reform, aimed to cut Turn Around Times (TAT) for repairs and maintenance to include the following key levers:

- Utilizing data-driven approaches, root cause analysis, and P2P to ensure accountability and timely actions.
- Improved forecasting, collaboration with supply agencies, and artisan utilization from below 65 percent to over 80 percent, which led to a rise in component On-Time Delivery (OTD) from ~50 percent to 100 percent, ensuring better part availability for the military.

44. Senator KING. Admiral Franchetti, I appreciate your efforts to bring “more players to the field.” Please explain how Navy has improved operational availability of ship, submarine, and aviation units since fiscal year 2018 to the current fiscal year, providing specific data.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy is concentrated on getting more operationally ready, capable players on the field—people and platforms. Since 2018, the Navy has been focused on readiness recovery and our force is in a higher State of operational readiness today than prior to 2017 with a healthier surge force, improved shipboard manning, better training for our crews, and improved parts availability. Increased funding starting in fiscal year 2018, combined with cultural reforms throughout the fleet, have arrested the decline in our operational readiness and put us on a path to recovery. For ship, submarine, and aviation units specifically, we remain committed to improving maintenance processes and reducing maintenance delays that limit operational readiness through data driven approaches and learning from industry best practices. Still, we have much work to do.

Our most significant progress in increasing operational availability is with aviation units. In 2018 and the preceding decade, the number of F/A–18 E/F mission capable aircraft was flat at 250 aircraft, below the required number of 341. In fiscal year 2019, using Perform to Plan (P2P) and the Naval Sustainment System (NSS) processes, we achieved the mission capable target of 341 Super Hornets and an 80 percent mission capable rate in our fleet squadrons. Navy has sustained this mission capable rate for Super Hornet aircraft over the last 5 fiscal years to today, and is applying these P2P and NSS principles to improve operational readiness across the aviation fleet. With this increased aircraft availability, our aircrew are more ready to fly, fight, and win than prior to 2017. These improvements enabled quick response by Carrier Strike Groups over the past year in the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

The Navy continues to apply a similar approach to improving ship maintenance. Key efforts to improve ship maintenance include modifying contract strategies, increasing dry dock capacity, improving availability planning, procuring material, adjusting maintenance durations to better align workload with shipyard capacity, prioritizing the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program, and investing to improve the overall health of the industrial base and supply chain.

The metric that most clearly demonstrates the severity of not attaining an on-time delivery of an availability is Days of Maintenance Delay (DoMD). For submarine maintenance, while DoMD for attack submarines (SSN) is projected to increase in fiscal year 2024 due to the re-baselining of several projects, there is a continuing reduction in submarine idle time. In fiscal year 2019, SSNs had 1,536 DoMD. In fiscal year 2023, this was down to 955 DoMD, a 38 percent reduction. For surface ship maintenance, DoMD in private shipyards peaked in fiscal year 2019 and has trended downward since then. From fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2023, the Navy reduced surface ship DoMD by 18 percent—from 3,456 days to 2,839 days—and saw a slight improvement in on-time availability completion (from 36 percent in fiscal year 2022 to 41 percent in fiscal year 2023). The Navy’s fiscal year 2025 President’s Budget prioritizes and increases funding for ship maintenance to further improve shipyard performance and reduce DoMD.

BUDGETARY NEEDS

45. Senator KING. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, marines and sailors are responding in an impressive way to the critical operations around the globe. The Navy and Marine Corps Team is contributing in a significant way to international peace and stability. My observation is that the Navy is increasing its presence globally, including extending deployments of sailors aboard ships, aircraft, and aviation squadrons this year as a result of wars in Gaza and Ukraine. Based on an apparent increase in operations in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024, what will the impact

be on sailors and marines in terms of budgetary needs for fiscal years 2025 and 2026 and other needs beyond budget authority?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. We know that increasing the time ships spend at sea, both due to longer deployments and increased days underway, drives additional maintenance work at the shipyards after they return. We must provide the full scope resources and afford the time to complete that work and return these ships to the Fleet, ready to respond to the next call for forces. The supplemental funding provided by Congress supported our immediate operational costs. We currently estimate an additional \$300M will be required to perform the increased maintenance work on the ships of the *Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group.

General SMITH. Our Fiscal Year 2025 budget request highlights our commitment to maintaining a balance between current and future readiness to facilitate operations around the world. We're requesting \$17.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2025 for our Operation and Maintenance accounts, 32 percent of our total budget request, to sustain our current and projected operational requirements in support of the Joint Force and national tasking. Our Fleet Marine Force, which is comprised of all three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF) and Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES), are organized, trained, equipped, and postured to conduct a variety of missions in support of Marine Corps Title 10 responsibilities. The Marine Corps maintains all organic crisis response capabilities that enable the forward posture and rapid deployment of flexible and tailorable forces to the needs of the Combatant Commanders (COCOMs). The Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) are the most common Navy-Marine Corps tactical units that are forward deployed at the operational level and can accomplish strategic level engagements—these MEUs are resident in all MEFs. At the direction and request of COCOMs, units, such as the Marine Littoral Regiment, can be organized, trained, and equipped to conduct missions not normally assigned as core task.

46. Senator KING. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, similarly, does your budget request for fiscal year 2025 and the FYDP account for the maintenance demands for naval units by the Combatant Commanders?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Our budget request does account for the baseline maintenance required to get ships through the shipyards and back to the Fleet to meet our deployment commitments to the Combatant Commanders. However, it does not encompass the increased maintenance driven by higher deployed operating tempo and extended deployment lengths to conduct ongoing combat operations in the Red Sea. We currently estimate that \$300 million will be required for increased maintenance work in fiscal year 2025 on the ships of the *Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group.

General SMITH. Bottom Line: Regarding fiscal year 2025 current operations, training and readiness funding levels are on par with required funding identified during POM-25, this equates to being sufficiently funded to execute planned Global Force Management (GFM) and Directed Readiness Table (DRT) requirements; additional funding would be required to meet the inflated costs of training and deploying the force for emergent requirements like crises and conflicts.

RECRUITING

47. Senator KING. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, during the hearing, statements were made by my colleagues regarding the status of recruiting for the Navy and Marine Corps. Please State for the record the current status of your respective Service's recruiting goals for fiscal year 2025, and how that compares to fiscal year 2021, fiscal year 2022, and fiscal year 2023.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The fiscal year 2025 goals have not been established, but the Active component (AC) Enlisted goal for fiscal year 2024 is 40,600 which is higher than previous years as we took what we missed last year and added it to what we need to do this year to account for not just end strength, but also work requirements in the Fleet that we need to maintain. The AC Officer goal for fiscal year 2024 is 4,235. The prior fiscal year AC enlisted goals were 37,700 (fiscal year 2023), 33,400 (fiscal year 2022) and 33,400 (fiscal year 2021). The prior fiscal year AC officer goals were 4,392 (fiscal year 2023), 4,529 (fiscal year 2022), and 4,570 (fiscal year 2021).

General SMITH. Your Marine Corps remains on track for mission success in fiscal year 2024. As of the close of June, Marine Corps Recruiting Command has achieved 100.95 percent of our Active Duty accession mission. This compares well with fiscal year 2021 at 100.39 percent, fiscal year 2022 at 100.11 percent, and fiscal year 2023 at 100.53 percent for the same date. The success of our hard-working marines, sailors and civilians across the U.S. however remains perilous due to the numerous headwinds faced in the current recruiting environment. Our ability to achieve the

mission and build back a sufficient pool of delayed entry program applicants for fiscal year 2025 will be an incredibly difficult task, but one your marines will work tirelessly to achieve. Timely, adequate funding for Marine Corps recruiting, to include for advertising, will be key to mission accomplishment.

48. Senator KING. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, Congress authorized and appropriated additional funding to go toward recruiting in fiscal year 2024. What has been the impact of delaying appropriations for fiscal year 2024 on your respective Service's recruiting efforts?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The delay in appropriations has directly constrained our ability to develop and acquire recruiting leads and associated new sailor contracts. Additionally, the number of career and job fairs, conventions, and other recruiting events that the Navy uses to reach discrete communities, such as Nuclear field, Medical, and Civil Engineering, were reduced during the academic year due to the inability to commit funds in a timely manner. Overall, the delayed appropriations for fiscal year 2024 negatively impacted the Navy's agility and capacity in implementing new and innovative strategies for recruiting marketing and advertising and our ability to meet mission.

General SMITH. Delays in appropriations funding causes uncertainty across the force. They can impact recruiting and retention by hindering the ability to pay bonuses and incentive pays. They also can impact recruiting marketing and advertising efforts; persistent funding delays and shortfalls lead to periods of media darkness and reduced lead generation activity. We are always appreciative of Congress' efforts to pay appropriations on time and to assist recruiting efforts with additional funding. Additional funding this year was critical to assist in covering shortfalls created by high inflation which continues to degrade program effectiveness and overall capabilities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT PROCEDURES

49. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, the Department of Defense Inspector General April 2024 report on "Review of the Navy and Marine Corps Policies Covering Sexual Harassment Complaint Processes" (DODIG 2024-071) revealed deeply alarming gaps in Navy and Marine Corps policies regarding sexual harassment. Current DOD, Navy, and Marine Corps policies do not require officials to document legal advisor and Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) opinions related to dismissing, downgrading, or withdrawing a complaint; or to investigate all severe and pervasive allegations; or to complete investigation-related training for investigating officers selected to investigate formal complaints; and they do not track the necessary data to assess all aspects of sexual harassment programs. Why has the Navy and Marine Corps failed to establish these processes?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Department of Defense (DoD), with input from the Department of the Navy (DON) and the military services is currently overhauling DOD policy and program procedures in reference to sexual harassment.

Once completed, these reforms will ensure proper alignment with statutory and Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC-SAM) requirements and provide higher-level guidance to address any remaining policy gaps, including those noted in the DODIG report. This revised DOD policy, along with the inclusion of sexual harassment as a covered offense that must be referred to the Office of Special Trial Counsel, will directly impact respective service policies. Once this policy is published, DON, Navy and Marine Corps will update policies and procedures accordingly.

In the meantime, DON has developed the Misconduct Report Incident Tracker (MRIT) case management system which will capture key data on all Military Equal Opportunity complaints and include a tracking mechanism for withdrawn or downgraded complaints, if there is still a need for that process.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps believes that no person should be subject to sexual harassment and want anyone who believes they have been harassed to report it so that it can be investigated.

The Marine Corps is in the process of updating our sexual harassment prevention and response branch to better align with current statutory and DOD policy, to include IRC recommendations. We have made significant progress in aligning current policy with current statutory and DOD requirements and will continue to do so. We reviewed the DOD IG report through the lens of making potential changes that will improve sexual harassment prevention and response. We recently published policy

guidance to implement some of the recommendations; for others, we are collaborating with DOD on guidance. We are always looking to adopt best practices.

50. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, I am extremely concerned that despite these obvious gaps, the Navy or Marine Corps disagreed or only partially agreed to several of the IG recommendations. When will the Navy and Marine Corps implement all the IG recommendations?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Department of Defense (DoD) is currently revising its sexual harassment and assault policies which will mandate formal complaints of sexual harassment be investigated by an independent investigator and adjudicated by the Office of Special Trial Council. This updated policy guidance is expected prior to January 2025 in accordance with Public Law 117–263. This updated policy will inform implementation or address all DOD IG recommendations.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps is in the process of updating our sexual harassment prevention and response branch to better align with current statutory and DOD policy, to include IRC recommendations. We have made significant progress in aligning current policy with current statutory and DOD requirements and will continue to do so. We reviewed the DOD IG report through the lens of making potential changes that will improve sexual harassment prevention and response. We recently published policy guidance to implement some of the recommendations; for others, we are collaborating with DOD on guidance. We are always looking to adopt best practices. Without exception, the Marine Corps believes that no person should be subject to sexual harassment and want anyone who believes they have been harassed to report it so that it can be investigated.

51. Senator WARREN. General Smith, the Inspector General found that the Marine Corps does not have a requirement for commanders “to consult MEO and legal advisors before declining a complainant’s initial request for formal resolution and instead processing the complaint under informal resolution process.” How many times over the past 5 years has the Marine Corps denied a complainant’s request for formal resolution and downgraded the complaint instead? Under what grounds?

General SMITH. Before May of this year, DOD policy did not require Equal Opportunity Advisors (EOAs) to record informal complaints, complaints dismissed by the commander, or complaints resolved using conflict management. Service EOAs now acknowledge the receipt of the informal complaint, create a case number in system of record, and forward the complaint to the subject’s commander. EOAs now also ensure the complainant is informed on reporting options, investigation process and progress, available support services, procedures for filing a complaint of reprisal or retaliation, and appeal rights.

52. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti, the IG found there is no process in the Navy to document an individual’s decision to withdraw a complaint to confirm that they are not withdrawing this complaint because of inappropriate pressure and influence. An Office of People Analytics report found that, “47 percent of women and 43 percent of men in the Navy who made a sexual harassment complaint were encouraged to drop the issue.” When will the Navy require this documentation?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. In July 2024, the Secretary of the Navy issued updated Sexual Harassment tracking and reporting guidance directing the use of a Misconduct Reporting Incident Tracker (MRIT) system as a centralized case management tool for all reports of harassment. The MRIT system went live in July 2024 and includes tracking of complaint withdrawals.

53. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, what policies do the Navy and Marine Corps have in place to address and prevent reporters of sexual harassment dropping complaints due to inappropriate pressure and influence?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy Harassment Prevention and Military Equal Opportunity Program Manual includes a complaint retaliation awareness appendix. This document reiterates that Service Members who make a protected communication must be free from retaliation. It directs the complainant’s or alleged offender’s chain of command to not initiate any contact with the complainant, witness, potential witness, or alleged offender; or solicit others to make contact on their behalf, outside of that required by their official duties. The policy directs that upon receipt and acceptance of a formal complaint this appendix is required to be reviewed and signed by the chain of command of the complainant, the chain of command of the alleged offender, complainant, alleged offender, witnesses, and the command climate specialist or command managed equal opportunity program manager. All Navy personnel, military and civilian, receive annual mandatory training on harassment prevention and equal opportunity, which emphasizes that anyone involved remain free

from retaliation, regardless of involvement in any particular case. In addition, Command Climate Specialists (CCS) and Command Management Equal Opportunity (CMEO) Program Managers, who are the subject matter experts at the command and are responsible for command advisory, receive additional training on retaliation prevention and response procedures outlined in Navy policy.

General SMITH. Marine Corps policy states that commanders ensure all reports are addressed in a fair, impartial, and timely manner, and are appropriately resolved without fear of reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation. Equal Opportunity Advisors provide the complainant with information on how to report retaliation in connection with sexual harassment. The Marine Corps believes there is no place for inappropriate pressure or influence in the process and is working with the Department of Navy and Department of Defense to update retaliation requirements and procedures in connection with sexual harassment to ensure the same.

54. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, Navy and Marine Corps policies “do not require designated officials to complete investigation-related training when selected for the role of investigating officer for a formal complaint.” On what basis, including on experience and training requirements, do the Navy and Marine Corps select the investigating officer?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Navy’s policy directs the commander to implement a preliminary inquiry or command investigation as appropriate, in line with the Manual of the Judge Advocate General. The Manual of the Judge Advocate General directs that personnel detailed to investigate shall be individuals who, in the opinion of the convening authority, are best qualified by reason of their age, education, training, experience, length of service, and temperament. The proposed DOD policy includes training requirements for independent investigators of formal sexual harassment complaints.

General SMITH. In accordance with JAGINST 5800.7F (JAGMAN), convening authorities detail investigating officers who, in their opinion, are best qualified by reason of their age, education, training, experience, length of service, and temperament.

55. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, how many informal, dismissed, or withdrawn sexual harassment complaints have been made to the Navy and Marine Corps over the past 10 years?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Current DOD policy does not address nor require the Services to implement processes for the dismissal or withdrawal of complaints. Navy policy does outline processes for the dismissal and withdrawal of complaints, however, the policy does not mandate the reporting and tracking of dismissed or withdrawn complaints. Navy policy began requiring the reporting and tracking of informal complaints in fiscal year 2022. The Navy Harassment Prevention and Military Equal Opportunity Office received 28 informal sexual harassment complaints in fiscal year 2022 and 13 informal sexual harassment complaints in fiscal year 2023. Navy has not received any informal sexual harassment complaints in fiscal year 2024 thus far.

General SMITH. DoD policy does not require the services to implement processes for the dismissal or withdrawal of complaints or for the reporting and tracking of such complaints. Marine Corps policy outlines processes for the dismissal (frivolous or without merit, lateness, duplicative, failure to cooperate, not under purview) and voluntary withdrawal of complaints. We began capturing informal sexual harassment complaints in July 2024. Number of dismissed/voluntary withdrawn complaints within the last 10 years:

- Frivolous/without Merit—13
- Duplicative—3
- Failure to Cooperate—4
- Lateness—4
- Voluntary Withdrawal—2
- Not Under the Purview*—35

**Complaints submitted by persons not covered by the MCO 5354.1G, or those over which neither the command nor the Marine Corps has jurisdiction to adjudicate or remedy, will be referred to the proper agency/agencies with jurisdiction.*

56. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, the Safe to Report policy allows victims of sexual assault who have made “unrestricted” reports of the sexual assault to be protected from retaliation and adverse action for collateral misconduct. How are victims who do not wish to move forward with an investigation also protected from being separated from military service for actions that are the result of the victim’s military sexual trauma?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Victims of sexual assault who have filed or converted to an Unrestricted Report are not required to participate in the official investigation of the sexual assault or may choose to opt out of participating in any part of the investigative (or adjudicative) process at any time.

Commanding Officers will forward all administrative separation actions involving Service Member victims within 1 year of final disposition of their sexual assault case to the first flag officer in the separation authority's chain of command for review and concurrence of the circumstances of and grounds for the separation prior to effecting the separation action.

Additionally, Service Members who filed or converted to an Unrestricted Report and report retaliation associated with the sexual assault because they are being processed for an administrative separation within 1 year of the final disposition of the sexual assault case, or who believe that there were adverse impacts to their military career because they reported retaliation, have the right to discuss those career impacts with a Flag Officer. In cases involving retaliation allegations against one's chain of command, the Service Member may request review outside of their chain of command.

General SMITH. The Safe-To-Report policy prohibits any member of the Marine Corps from taking disciplinary action against victims for minor collateral misconduct, including victims of sexual assault. Standardized guidance is provided to Staff Judge Advocates to ensure that commanding officers are given consistent advice on the Safe-To-Report policy. The Marine Corps remains committed to a fair separations process and to removing barriers that may prevent victims from disclosing that they have been subjected to sexual assault. Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and SAPR Victim Advocates are also required to advise victims who reported a sexual assault or sought mental health treatment for sexual assault that they have the opportunity to discuss issues related to their military career with a General Officer/Flag Officer that the victim believes are associated with the sexual assault.

57. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti and General Smith, how do the Navy and Marine Corps handle dual processing of victims of military sexual trauma? Is there any heightened level of scrutiny to ensure the Navy and Marine Corps protect against retaliation?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Dual processing typically refers to situations in which a Service Member is subject to distinct administrative separation processes simultaneously for both misconduct and medical reasons. For these Service Members, which may include victims of military sexual trauma, a review of the reasons for potential discharge is conducted by proper medical personnel to ensure that the process is fair, and the appropriate separate measures are taken for each individual Service Member. For example, if a Service Member is pending administrative separation based on alleged misconduct and has been diagnosed with either post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI), a mental health professional must determine whether the diagnosed condition was a contributing factor to the alleged misconduct. This determination is formally documented in a letter to Navy Personnel Command. If the determination is that it was a factor in the alleged misconduct, the Chief of Naval Personnel—not the Service Member's commander—will determine whether a separation based on misconduct remains appropriate. This heightened process for review and decision protects the victim from retaliation at the command level.

In addition to the protections afforded to those with pending medical separations or PTSD/TBI, the Navy further mitigates the risk of retaliation against victims through elevated review of their potential separation. Navy regulations require the first flag officer in the chain of command to review all involuntary separations recommended within 1 year of a final disposition of a Service Member's unrestricted report of sexual assault. In these cases, the Service Member will not be separated until the flag officer concurs with the circumstances and grounds for the involuntary separation.

Navy Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) are also available to assist alleged victims that desire to seek an expedited transfer as well as provide other covered support.

Additionally, on June 29, 2022, the Secretary of the Navy announced the Department's "Safe to Report" policy to ensure that alleged victims of sexual assault are not disciplined for minor collateral misconduct. This process requires close coordination and advice from a staff judge advocate, with the goal of ensuring we protect the process to hold alleged offenders accountable while taking care of our shipmates that have been harmed.

Recent military justice reforms have also increased the level of scrutiny on retaliation offenses. Through the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA, retaliation is included as a cov-

ered offense under the exclusive prosecutorial authority of the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC). As a covered offense, expert prosecutors within OSTC, and not the victim or accused's command, will independently assess the evidence and pursue criminal charges, as appropriate.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps has implemented many positive changes to its processes and procedures for dual processing victims of military sexual trauma in order to protect against retaliation in separations. In accordance with the Department of Navy Safe-to-Report policy, minor collateral misconduct by a marine victim of an alleged sexual assault must be reviewed and disposed of by the Sexual Assault Initial Disposition Authority (SA-IDA). The SA-IDA is a Colonel, O-6, Special Court-Martial Convening authority who has the non-delegable responsibility for initial disposition. This individual, or someone higher, has the responsibility for determining whether processing for separation is appropriate. A marine who makes an unrestricted report of sexual assault and who is recommended for involuntary separation from the Marine Corps within 1 year of the final disposition of their sexual assault case may also request a General or Flag Officer review the circumstances and grounds for the involuntary separation. In addition, any marine being processed for involuntary separation who has a ratable disability can consult a health care provider for a medical opinion as to whether the medical condition contributed to a basis for which the marine is being separated. The Marine Corps also provides SAPR advocacy, referrals, and support to victims throughout the separation process to include referrals to Victims Legal Counsel.

58. Senator WARREN. Admiral Franchetti, what steps is the Navy taking to make sure that servicemembers are aware of the confidential reporting option for sexual harassment announced in February 2024?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Commensurate with the release of the Naval Administrative Message and Navy Fact Sheet announcing the confidential reporting option, Navy hosted a series of town halls with military equal opportunity professionals to outline this new process. The Navy has revised the Harassment Prevention and Military Equal Opportunity common military training to include the confidential reporting option. All Navy military personnel will receive annual mandatory training on harassment prevention and equal opportunity, which emphasizes the multiple options available to make a complaint of sexual harassment, now to include a confidential reporting option. In addition, Command Climate Specialists (CCS) and Command Management Equal Opportunity (CMEO) Program Managers, who are the subject matter experts at the command and are responsible for command advisory, receive additional training on complaint reporting options to include confidential reporting.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE INVOLVING CAPTAIN KAREN HOLLIDAY

59. Senator WARREN. General Smith, my office has reached out to the Marine Corps previously regarding the case of Captain Karen Holliday. Was this case ever referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), and if not, why not?
General SMITH. [Deleted.]

60. Senator WARREN. General Smith, my office has received reports that Captain Holliday's doctor told the command about her alleged sexual assault. Under what conditions does a physician provide this information to the commander? Can this information be provided to the commander without the victim's consent?
General SMITH. [Deleted.]

61. Senator WARREN. General Smith, reports indicate that Captain Holliday's doctor prescribed her with high levels of benzodiazepines. Are these reports accurate? If so, what was the rationale for the doctor's decision?
General SMITH. [Deleted.]

62. Senator WARREN. General Smith, during Captain Holliday's Board of Inquiry, her defense counsel submitted proffered testimony from several witnesses that Captain Holliday was intoxicated and under the influence of strong medication during the time of the misconduct for which she was recommended for separation. If this was the case, then this may have been an incident of sexual assault rather than misconduct. Did the Marine Corps investigate whether this may have been an incident of sexual assault rather than misconduct?
General SMITH. [Deleted.]

ONGOING NAVAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE (NCIS) INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DEATH OF LANCE CORPORAL RONALD VALENTIN

63. Senator WARREN. Secretary Del Toro, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service continues to investigate the death of Lance Corporal Ronald Valentin, USMC, who died in 2018. Please provide a status update on this investigation.

Secretary DEL TORO. The investigation into the death of Lance Corporal Ronald Valentin, United States Marine Corps, currently remains active. In the last year, NCIS completed numerous additional investigative actions that were identified through multiple reviews of the investigation. These actions include interviews/re-interviews of personnel possibly having information related to the case, completion of additional forensic testing, continued efforts to gain access to digital media recovered during the investigation, and completion of a biomechanical analysis that was performed by a contracted biomechanical expert/engineer. The results of the biomechanical analysis are currently being shared with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System for review and consideration. The analysis of the cellular phone remains pending; however, all other identified investigative actions have been accomplished. An additional comprehensive review process will be performed upon completion of the consultation with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System in order to ensure all viable leads have been pursued. The cellular phone analysis will continue until such time as access is gained or until it's otherwise determined that the phone is not accessible.

The NCIS family liaison officer has maintained regular contact with Lance Corporal Valentin's mother, Mrs. Gloria Ortiz, and continues to provide updates regarding the investigation on a regular basis.

64. Senator WARREN. Secretary Del Toro, when do you anticipate the investigation into the death of Lance Corporal Valentin will be completed?

Secretary DEL TORO. The timeline for completion of this investigation is not easily definable as the only identified investigative action that remains pending is the analysis of Lance Corporal Valentin's cellular telephone. NCIS Cyber digital forensic experts continue to pursue all available methods to expedite accessing the phone; however, at this time, there is no access solution that provides a predictable timeline for when access to the phone will be achieved. The method being employed currently is automated, so there is no way to speed this to conclusion. Access could result at any time; however, it may take years to gain access.

NCIS remains committed to pursuing all viable investigative leads with potential to provide clarity to the circumstances involved in Lance Corporal Valentin's death.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN

SMALL MODULAR MICROREACTORS

65. Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Del Toro, Admiral Franchetti, General Smith, as all of you know, we expect our servicemembers to perform in austere challenging environments and completely disconnected if need be, but modern warfare relies more than ever on resilient energy production. China knows this and already has countermeasures for targeting both commercial and military fuel shipping vessels. To help alleviate this threat I believe small mobile microreactors are a strategic energy source necessary in this contested logistics environment. Project Pele is the only microreactor being built by DOD that can fill this gap. The entire system is housed in four 20-foot shipping containers, and providing 5 megawatts of power continuously for 3 years, that replaces the equivalent of six diesel generators that require over 3 million gallons of fuel annually. How is the Navy and Marine Corps looking at combating contested logistics in the Pacific ensuring that technology like Project Pele is being incorporated into U.S. operational planning?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Department of the Navy (DON) is approaching the challenges of contested logistics using short-and long-term solutions that include improved fuel logistics technology development and deployment, as well as energy demand reduction measures. In the short-term, the DON is implementing energy demand-reduction measures without reducing DON warfighting capability by developing and fielding improved power generation and energy management, storage, delivery and distribution technology solutions across a spectrum of support activities essential to DON's multi-domain capabilities. Longer-term, the DON is focused on Next Generation Logistics Ships and other capabilities that can operate more effectively in a threatened environment. While not particularly applicable to a full contested environment, DON is also considering the potential for technology under development such as the Department of Defense's

Strategic Capabilities Office's mobile microreactor demonstration program, known as Project Pele. The DON continues to work closely with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in their efforts to de-risk energy-related technologies and work through the regulatory processes that would govern shore-based small or microreactors at enduring installations. In addition, working with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the DON is engaging with allies and partners, to include those in the Pacific, to understand the challenges and impacts of utilizing next-generation energy technologies, and ensuring their interoperability, as they become available. Ultimately, the DON is working to ensure energy resilience for mission assurance at our bases and for our forces to enable them to be ready using a variety of solutions to address contested logistics.

General SMITH. The Marine Corps recognizes the utility of small mobile nuclear reactors that provide power to the more remote regions in the Pacific. The Marine Corps was introduced to Project Pele in 2022 and has continued to follow the progress of Project Pele and other micro-reactor projects. As currently configured, Pele is not considered expeditionary, due to the size, weight, and time to set up and tear down. The 5 mega-watt (MW) power output exceeds what is required to support distributed operations. Although MW scale reactors may provide critical energy capability outside the first and second island chains, the Marine Corps requires a system that is more expeditionary (mobile), easily transportable, and provides power in the 40 to 100 kilo-watt range. The Marine Corps in partnership with NASA, the Department of Energy and the DOD, Operational Energy Capability Improvement Fund (OECIF) has invested in micro reactor technology research through project VALKRE, or Versatile, Autonomous Lightweight Kilowatt-Class Reactor Experiment. Marine Corps funding is focused on developing use cases and reactor design as it relates to rapid mobilization and demobilization. VALKRE focuses to provide operational flexibility for the warfighter and enhanced energy production at remote sites while maintaining minimal logistical footprint. The Marine Corps is also closely following the progress of the Phoenix Fission Generator, a product of Black Mesa Advanced Fission, LLC. The Phoenix is a mobile, rugged, self-contained, and cost-effective, diesel-generator replacement that is cost effective particularly when compared to the "full burden cost of energy" of fossil fuel distribution and use. The Phoenix Fission Generator Project seeks to provide local electrical power generation in environments not suited for diesel generators. The Marine Corps will continue to research micro-reactor technology solutions to provide power for distributed forces in contested logistics environments.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

EXERCISES

66. Senator ROSEN. Admiral Franchetti, training exercises at Naval Air Station Fallon are critical to preparing not only our naval aviators, SEALs, and marines, but also our joint services and partner nations, enabling our forces to operate together. Exercises like Resolute Hunter display the importance of Fallon as it hosts DOD's only dedicated battle management, command and control, and ISR exercise. You have emphasized the escalating threat from China to the United States military, especially as you continue to modernize the Navy and the Marine Corps. Describe the importance of modernizing the Fallon Range Training Complex for preparing our Joint Force and Coalition Partners to meet the threats identified by the National Defense Strategy?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC), associated with Naval Air Station Fallon, Nevada, is the Navy's most realistic live threat training, a critical part of both national and international training exercises. Our focus is on cultivating skilled warfighters through advanced integrated training, supported by Live, Virtual, and Constructive tools which allows the Navy to prepare to secure decisive victories against near-peer adversaries. Fallon supports all Navy aviation "graduate-level" training, Navy Special Warfare (NSW) ground mobility training, and Maritime Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (MISR) training.

Navy has invested in virtual and constructive training technologies such as Link Inject to Live (LITL) and Tactical Combat Training System (TCTS) II at Fallon. Modernizing the range complex ensures continued relevance in support of naval aviation aerial combat maneuvering training, MISR, and weapons deployment for training used by naval and Joint warfighters to meet basic, intermediate, and advanced tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP).

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER WICKER

DEFICIENCY OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET FOR THE U.S. NAVY

67. Senator WICKER. Secretary Del Toro, in 2023, Congress added peacetime functions to the responsibilities of the Navy. Our intention with this language was that the Navy would be able to better compete for budget growth. Mr. Secretary, why hasn't the Navy's budget reflected these added responsibilities? I would appreciate if you do not refer to the Fiscal Responsibility Act, since it did not prevent President Biden from submitting non-defense agency budgets above the caps.

Secretary DEL TORO. The Department of the Navy appreciates the support of this committee and particularly the committee's intentions with language to better compete for budget growth by specifying peacetime responsibilities of the Navy. I seek to build on the legacy of the Navy's peacetime contribution to national security interests and prosperity of the United States through the advancement of a new maritime statecraft. As I have stated, maritime statecraft, in a broad sense, encompasses not only naval diplomacy but a national, whole-of-government represents a balance between the readiness of our Fleet and Force today, taking care of our people, and investments in the future force. The investments in readiness and our people absolutely represent investments in the peacetime promotion of our national security interests and prosperity of the United States.

MULTI-SHIP PROCUREMENT OF AMPHIBS

68. Senator WICKER. Secretary Del Toro, the law requires 31 large amphibious ships, when will you commit to a multi-ship buy of amphibious warships? You have previously called on industry to invest more in shipbuilding, and it is commitments like these that allow industry to do so.

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy is committed to maintaining 31 amphibious warfare ships. On 24 September 2024, the Department of the Navy awarded HII, Ingalls Shipbuilding Division (HII Ingalls) a fixed-price incentive fee agreement to procure three San Antonio Class Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD) and one America Class Amphibious Assault Ship (LHA) as authorized by Section 129 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (fiscal year 2023 NDAA) (P.L. 117-263). The Navy appreciates congressional support to use innovative contracting approaches to fund, build and deliver the most capable ships to support our fleet. This award allows for critical investment and sustainment of our industrial base, helping to ensure stability and more affordable acquisitions.

LANDING SHIP MEDIUM

69. Senator WICKER. General Smith, do you have a requirement for 35 medium-sized landing ships based on your need to maneuver three Marine Littoral Regiments?

General SMITH. Yes, the Marine Corps has a requirement for 35 Medium Landing Ships (LSM). These vessels are designed to support Marine Littoral Regiments and stand-in forces operating in the Pacific. Specifically, we need nine LSMs for three regiments, ensuring that 27 ships are available at any given time while accounting for eight ships undergoing routine maintenance cycles.

70. Senator WICKER. General Smith, the 30-year shipbuilding plan shows a requirement of 18 ships. Will you exercise your authority granted in the last NDAA to set the requirement for vessels with the primary mission of transporting marines?

General SMITH. Yes, Initial inventory requirement is planned for 18 Medium Landing Ships (LSMs), with the understanding that through experimentation and operational maturation, the final objective force requirement will be determined (currently 35) based on the concept of operations to provide littoral maneuver for three Marine Regiments. The Marine Corps supports PB25 that initiates procurement of the first LSM in fiscal year 2025 and eight total over the FYDP, maintaining a procurement schedule of 1/1/2/2/2. Maintaining the current procurement profile is critical for delivering the late to need platform necessary to fill the void in current littoral mobility.

71. Senator WICKER. General Smith, if these medium-sized landing ships are already late to need, what sort of risk are we incurring today in the Western Pacific?

General SMITH. Surface mobility is a critical gap in the Marine Littoral Regiment scheme of maneuver supporting distributed maritime operations. Several platforms comprise the Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS), which is intended to close this gap in the near-term until the Landing Ship Medium (LSM) is sufficiently

fielded. Outside of our single contracted Stern Landing Vessel (SLV) and several yet-to-be fielded prototype platforms, our MLRs are heavily reliant on existing platforms such as the T-EPPs and LCU 1610's. Until LSM, the spectrum of platforms that comprise LMBS complement each other to cover various operational requirements. While T-EPPs can be used for intra-theater mobility, LCUs provide tactical maneuver. Current resource and manning decisions require the very limited number of aging LCU-1610's to be prioritized to our deploying Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), and challenges with civilian mariners has delayed support from even a single T-EPP. In short, the MLR is dependent on a confederation of less than ideal platforms to support surface mobility in any sufficient capacity until the 2030's.

72. Senator WICKER. General Smith, do you support accelerated bridging solutions to Landing Ship Medium that allow you to move marines and equipment directly to a beach?

General SMITH. Due to the urgency of this void, the Navy and Marine Corps have developed a Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) as a phased approach to add operational mobility and tactical maneuver capacity for elements of the SIF until LSM are available to support one Marine Littoral Regiment in the early 2030's. The purpose of LMBS is to provide forward capacity now in direct support to MLR task organized units of action with limited intra-theater mobility, tactical maneuver, and sustainment. This effort is not to negate the late-to-need of the LSM; this effort is to leverage what exists already, even if limited, and experiment with chartered vessels to develop procedures for MLR formations and future LSM employment.

The approved LMBS is four expeditionary fast transports (T-EPP) and two landing craft utility (LCU) and experimentation craft such as the four Marine Corps-funded charters and the two planned Ancillary Surface Craft (ASC).

T-EPP will be used in support of intra-theater operational mobility, and pier-to-pier support of units conducting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) in an archipelagic environment. It is important to note, here, that Military Sealift Command is experiencing a shortage in civilian mariners, delaying even the first two of the approved EPP sourcing for LMBS. It is possible all four may not be provided due to this issue. LCU will be used in exercises for tactical maneuver of smaller units and sustainment.

Experimental chartered vessels will be used to support 21st century beaching operations in support of exercises and experimentation, adding needed littoral mobility capacity in the Indo-Pacific region. These chartered vessels will also assist in the refinement of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in support of EABO. The TTP development with these chartered vessels serving as surrogates for the LSM is needed now as the program continues along the procurement path and remains late-to-need.

ASC will be used for experimentation to provide enhanced maneuver, littoral mobility, and sustainment to/from expeditionary advance bases (EABs) and potentially Advanced Naval Bases (ANBs) within the archipelagos.

In addition to the LMBS, six Army LCU-2000's were made available for purchase in March 2024 following Army divestment interest, priced at \$2.5 million per vessel with an offer to hold them until the end of June. This opportunity aims to enhance littoral maneuver and sustainment for the SIF until the arrival of LSMs.

The capacity and capability of LMBS does not match or fulfill the requirements and capability of the LSM program once all vessels are delivered.

Although the LMBS addresses some current operational gaps, existing platforms such as EPPs require both port services and exceptional sea states.

Current and future manpower shortfalls within Naval Beach Groups and Military Sealift Command, limit number of available LCUs and T-EPPs available to support operational requirements.

Along with the operational demand comes a training requirement to properly employ the LMBS in conflict.

73. Senator WICKER. General Smith, what percentage of islands in the Western Pacific would the Israeli Logistics Support Vessel (LSV) be capable of landing on?

General SMITH. The Israeli Logistics Support Vessel (LSV) is capable of landing on beaches with gradients of approximately 1:30. Recently, the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity completed a 1:30 vs 1:40 analysis and generally found that 1:40 gradient resulted in increased access in key strategic locations. Furthermore, 1:40 offers higher reliability in achieving a fording depth of 42" at the toe of the ramp. This factor is critical for vehicle off-loading considerations.

74. Senator WICKER. General Smith, other than the 1 to 40 beach gradient capability mentioned in your testimony, what other capability shortfalls does the Israeli LSV have? What would be the total increase in cost to the Israeli LSV to make modifications to attain those capabilities?

General SMITH. The viable options of LMBS, and others currently being suggested, are stopgap measures with their own limitations that would neither be cost-effective nor viable in the long term due to service life. None have the capacity for expansion that could meet the embarked force berthing, cargo square footage, and fuel capacity requirements, while maintaining viable trim, stress, and stability of the vessels, regardless of cost.

RED SEA ENGAGEMENTS

75. Senator WICKER. Admiral Franchetti, based on data from the Red Sea engagements, how are we rapidly updating software on our platforms as well as our Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. We are using lessons learned from our many Red Sea Engagements to rapidly update our combat systems and the Navy's tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). After every engagement, we electronically return the combat system's data and crew's assessment stateside as quickly as possible, where we have a dedicated team of tactical and technical experts to extract all possible lessons learned. Those lessons are then turned into software updates for installation on ships or updated TTPs procedures for distribution to our crews. For example, during the *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group Composite Unit Training Exercise (COMPTUEX), vignettes replicating recent Red Sea operations were integrated into Live, Virtual, and Constructive (LVC) training scenarios prior to deployment. The Navy has fundamentally changed our processes, where previously updates took months or longer, we are fielding new patches and capabilities within hours or days, depending on the situation.

76. Senator WICKER. Admiral Franchetti, what digital infrastructure do we need to build to compete in a high-end conflict in the Pacific?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. We need a distributed digital infrastructure which is interoperable with joint, Allied, and coalition forces; exists across all echelons of command from the operational to the tactical level; and enables end-to-end kill chains supported by the body of actionable intelligence. It must have the means to process, store, and transmit data at all security levels at the speed of warfighting and to leverage the advantages that come from incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other advanced analytics capabilities. It must reliably provide the network connectivity, storage, compute, and bandwidth necessary to support these functions, and it must be designed and built so that these software-intensive systems can be updated over the air while deployed.

Success hinges on: (a) an affordably sustainable infrastructure that paces modernization and cybersecurity demands, and (b) the ability to leverage newer technologies, including commercially available technologies, e.g., proliferated low earth orbit satellites and the corresponding terrestrial architecture, and ongoing enterprise initiatives.

Such an infrastructure will allow Navy all domain forces (surface, air, subsurface, and ashore) to find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess threats in coordination with the Joint and Coalition Force in a denied environment, and requires robust and resilient command and control throughout the timeline of the conflict.

77. Senator WICKER. Admiral Franchetti, we have been talking about cultivating digital talent in the services for years. I would appreciate if you got back to me on how these efforts will leverage uniformed personnel.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. I am committed to recruiting, training, and retaining personnel, officer and enlisted, with a wide variety of the digital talent we need to transform our Navy—both today and in the future.

Navy cultivates the digital talent of our sailors through focused career fields and diverse development opportunities in undergraduate and graduate level education, industry and military training, practical experience, and military operations.

To develop deep digital expertise, the Navy also created the Maritime Cyber Warfare Officer (MCWO) designator, the Cyber Warfare Technician (CWT) rating, and the Robotics Warfare Specialist (RW) rating. The Navy met its CWT recruiting goal in fiscal year 2023 and is on pace to meet fiscal year 2024 recruiting goals. Navy Cyber Mission Force readiness increased 20 percent over the past year. Additionally, our Cyber Warfare Engineers (CWE) are key assets for the Navy in the cyberspace

domain and are well versed in the development of software focused to the unique needs of a sea going service.

The United States Naval Academy (USNA) offers undergraduate degrees in Cyber Operations, Computer Science, Data Science (DS), and Computer Engineering, with the first DS graduates commissioning in 2025. Many of the DS majors are participating in summer internships in DS and artificial intelligence (AI) to broaden their experience.

Additionally, USNA maintains the Center for Cyber Security Studies which advances the quality of education of Naval Academy graduates in all areas of cyber warfare.

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) offers graduate degrees in Computer Science, Applied Computing, Modeling Virtual Environments and Simulation, Cyber Systems and Operations, Applied Cyber Operations, Cyber Defense, Computer Engineering, Information Systems and Technology, Information Sciences, Information Warfare, and Operations Research. These degrees offer concentrations to include DS, AI, autonomous systems, and robotics. NPS maintains the Center for Network Innovation and Experimentation (CENETIX) and the Center for Cyber Security and Cyber Operations, which are America's foremost centers for defense-related research and education in the areas of network and cyber capabilities. NPS is also expanding its work in AI with the establishment of the Consortium for AI in Military Applications and National Security (CAIMANS) that aims to connect AI efforts and better leverage the work being done in various fields.

NPS partners with industry, academia, Army, Air Force, and other Department of the Navy entities to advance digital education and development of uniformed personnel. These efforts are creating the institutional capability to provide a world-class education and populate the Fleet with graduates with deep technical expertise able to understand how evolving technology can be leveraged to create a more lethal Navy able to fight and win the battles of tomorrow. This is part of a broader NPS effort to drive Innovation in the Naval Services and aligns with Secretary Del Toro's efforts to establish a Naval Innovation Center at NPS.

The Navy is growing its digital industrial base by incorporating non-traditional companies. Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems (PEO IWS) increased the number of combat systems contributors to over 35, including non-traditional defense companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Red River, High Vision, etc. These companies work side-by-side with Navy personnel to train the workforce on industry best practices. Those same Navy personnel can do rotations with innovative companies such as Amazon, Microsoft, and VMware. The Navy has placed warfighters alongside industry AI/machine learning (AI/ML) subject matter experts to code AI algorithms into surface combat systems.

The Navy is also sending select sailors to a 3-month detailed software developer course—an industry prerequisite for software developers prior to starting at modern technical companies. In the network and cyber domain, we are training enlisted sailors to manage, operate, and defend large scale afloat and ashore data centers and to conduct network operations.

A significant outcome of Project Overmatch is our Data Science at Sea (DS@Sea) program that provides sailors with data science tools to develop their own software tools and analytics to better accomplish their missions while deployed. This program has been extremely successful, and sailors have created multiple tools that can be shared across the Fleet to improve mission effectiveness.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

SHIPBUILDING & FLEET SIZE

78. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, have any uniformed or civilian Navy personnel been relieved, reassigned, or fired as a result of the extensive delays with the *Columbia*-class, *Virginia* Block IV, *Virginia* Block V, CVN-80, or *Constellation*-class ships?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

79. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, why did it take you 2.5 years to identify the extensive delays with the *Columbia*-class, *Virginia* Block IV, *Virginia* Block V, CVN-80, or *Constellation*-class ships?

Secretary DEL TORO. The delays to each of these programs were individually disclosed as they were realized by our industry partners and the Navy. Concern over deliveries in these programs is what prompted me to direct the 45-Day Shipbuilding Review and provide a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing these Navy shipbuilding programs.

80. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, who in the Department of the Navy is responsible for identifying delays in shipbuilding programs and communicating those to Congress?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, is responsible for the Navy's shipbuilding programs. Honorable Guertin was sworn in on December 20, 2023 and, following an initial assessment of the Navy's shipbuilding programs, promptly communicated the delays and challenges facing the shipbuilding industry to Congress.

81. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, who in the Department of the Navy is responsible for allowing five classes of ship to become years delayed?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, is the person I have made responsible for the Navy's shipbuilding programs. The delays to each of these programs were individually disclosed as they were realized by our industry partners and the Navy. Honorable Guertin was sworn in on December 20, 2023 and, following an initial assessment of the Navy's shipbuilding programs, promptly communicated the delays and challenges facing the shipbuilding industry to Congress. Concern over deliveries in these programs is what prompted me to direct the 45-Day Shipbuilding Review and provide a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing these Navy shipbuilding programs.

82. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, have any shipbuilders been assessed financial penalties or had contracts canceled as a result of the extensive delays with the *Columbia*-class, *Virginia* Block IV, *Virginia* Block V, CVN-80, or *Constellation*-class ships?

Secretary DEL TORO. The construction of each of these ship classes includes the use of contract terms that share the burden of cost overruns between the Navy and prime contractor, increasing the contractor's cost burden if shipbuilding delays increases the overall contract costs. Conversely, the benefits of cost underruns are jointly shared. The Navy has not canceled contracts as a result of the delays with these programs, however the Navy is assessing its contracting strategies to ensure an optimal risk balance between Navy and industry and that requirements meet the Navy's needs at time of contract award.

83. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the 12–16 month delay for the lead *Columbia*-class SSBN?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address *Columbia*-class SSBN challenges. Key construction issues have been consistent across both shipbuilders and the program has driven major actions to address those issues. Additionally, the program and key Navy stakeholders have provided additional oversight at both shipbuilders as well as key suppliers. The Navy is making significant investments in key areas including supplier development, infrastructure, strategic sourcing, workforce development, technology opportunities and government oversight. These investments are aimed at improving production throughput and readiness to support future production.

84. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the 36 month delay for the *Virginia* Block IV SSN program?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address *Virginia* Block IV challenges.

85. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the 24 month delay for the *Virginia* Block V SSN program?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address *Virginia* Block V challenges.

86. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the 18–26 month delay for CVN 80?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address CVN 80 challenges.

87. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the 36 month delay for the FFG–62 class?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address FFG–62 Class challenges.

88. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the length of delay in the DDG 51 program?

Secretary DEL TORO. Ship deliveries are expected to be up to 2 years late to contract delivery dates due to attrition related to COVID–19 and associated increases in green labor at both Bath Iron Works and Huntington Ingalls Industries; however, the delivery dates are stable and tracking to the Program Manager's estimates.

89. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the delay for the DDG 51 class?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address DDG 51 Class challenges.

90. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to eliminate the delay for the LPD 17 Flight II program?

Secretary DEL TORO. Together with industry, the Navy is working initiatives to drive improvement across the Navy shipbuilding industry, including those that will address LPD 17 Flight II challenges.

91. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the detailed plan to address the cost overruns in each class of ship that is experiencing delays?

Secretary DEL TORO. Each Navy shipbuilding contract includes terms that limit the government's exposure to cost overruns. However, some cost overruns are expected because of projected ship construction delays largely due to COVID 19 related impacts associated with attrition and green labor, and supply chain disruptions. The Navy is addressing cost overruns through more active Navy waterfront management, evaluation of contract terms and incentives, and partnering with industry to promote human and material resource availability. In some cases, these cost overruns will result in required Cost To Complete funding to finish construction and deliver a fully capable ship to the Navy Fleet.

92. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, as a consequence of Hurricane Katrina causing delays with the production of the LPD 17 class ships, production was shifted inland where major sections of the ship were built inland and then assembled on the coast. A similar practice has been adopted for sections of the *Columbia*-class. Has the Navy explored manufacturing large sections of surface ships inland and assembling on the coast as a way to speed up ship production?

Secretary DEL TORO. Navy shipbuilders currently conduct targeted outsourcing outside of the shipyard's immediate geographic area across a number of programs. In order to meet schedule, cost, and performance objectives of shipbuilding programs, the Navy remains focused on identifying opportunities to generate resiliency and productivity in the shipbuilding industrial base, workforce and associated supply chain.

93. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, industry takes its cue from the Navy's shipbuilding plans to determine capital investment and workforce development strategies. When procurement profiles change yearly, industry is hesitant to invest. If requirements haven't changed, why are procurement profiles changing?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy works resolutely to maintain a steady, consistent demand signal to the shipbuilding industrial base. Key drivers of variability include shipbuilder performance and capacity, construction schedules, inflationary cost increases, appropriated funding, and available resources within Navy topline. The Navy has worked to mitigate the impact on primary and secondary vendors in the industrial base by requesting resources to keep procurement of key components on-track.

94. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, the most recent Battle Force Ship Assessment and Requirement (BFSAR) indicates that the Navy will need over 380 ships to meet fleet demand across the globe. How are uncrewed surface and sub-surface platforms included in that assessment and requirement?

Secretary DEL TORO. Requirements for uncrewed surface and subsurface platforms are tracked separately and are additional to the 381 battle force ships in the BFSAR report. The June 2023 BFSAR report required a total of 134 uncrewed vehicles (78 uncrewed surface vehicles and 56 uncrewed underwater vehicles).

While uncrewed platforms are not counted in the battle force, they are additive to Battle Force ships and will continue to be an important part of the Navy's Hybrid Fleet. The Navy continues to focus on uncrewed capabilities on, above, and below the sea with key investments to field uncrewed technologies to increase the fleet's capability, capacity, and lethality. As testing of these platforms and their concepts of employment continue to evolve, when they are deemed capable of contributing to combat operations, the CNO will recommend their reclassification and inclusion in the battle force count for SECNAV approval.

95. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how will uncrewed large and extra-large vessels be counted toward the fleet size?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. While unmanned platforms are currently not counted in the battle force, they are additive to Battle Force ships and will continue to be an important part of the Navy's Hybrid Fleet. The Navy continues to focus on unmanned capabilities on, above, and below the sea with key investments to field unmanned technologies to increase the fleet's capability, capacity, and lethality. As testing of these platforms and their concepts of employment continue to evolve, and deemed capable of contributing to combat operations, the CNO will recommend their reclassification and inclusion in the battle force count for SECNAV approval.

96. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, if you had a magic wand, how would you increase U.S. shipbuilding capacity?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Health and competition in the shipbuilding industrial base and supply chain is vital to meeting our National Defense Strategy. Strengthening the shipbuilding and repair industrial base requires a whole of government approach to rebuild the comprehensive maritime power of the Nation, both commercial and naval.

The foundation of a healthy shipbuilding industrial base remains stable, executable acquisition profiles that promote development and retention of highly skilled workforces and investments in world-class manufacturing and shipbuilding facilities, while maintaining proper return on investment. The Navy would take measures on all fronts through thoughtful acquisition strategies, targeted industrial base investments, and increased collaboration with both Government and the shipbuilding industrial base.

With the help of Congress, in coordination with local and State governments as well as national organizations, the Navy and its shipbuilders would continue identifying opportunities to generate resiliency and productivity in the shipbuilding industrial base, workforce and associated supply chain.

97. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, is the fiscal year 2025 budget sufficient to meet the Navy's commitments globally?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. This budget is focused on delivering resources to ensure America's maritime forces—our Navy and Marine Corps team—are ready, resilient, flexible, and forward-deployed to do our Nation's tasking—whether that's supporting Naval diplomacy, crisis-response, building partnerships, or protecting the world's global economy (which floats on saltwater). We need to compete and be able to win during this time of great power competition.

The PB25 request is a strategy-driven budget and is nested under the National Security Strategy/National Defense Strategy. This budget builds upon the tenets of our national defense, which are integrated deterrence, campaigning and building enduring advantages. Aligned with Secretary Austin's priorities, our request demonstrates the Department's commitment to providing a ready, modernized and capable naval force, a force that continues to be the Nation's primary instrument of seapower and maritime statecraft now and into the future.

The PB25 request is reflective of what allows us to build, modernize and maintain the right mix of capabilities to defend against great-power competition, among other threats while also investing in our future.

PB25 prioritizes our people and readiness, and invests in our industrial base to build and maintain our fleet. The department continues to make significant strides across these areas, ensuring our priorities are met.

98. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, imagine you weren't in a resource-constrained environment or operating under FRA caps, what are the top five changes that the Navy needs to build the fleet needed to effectively meet our worldwide commitments? Please answer this question independently.

Secretary DEL TORO. A healthy shipbuilding industrial base and supply chain is vital to meeting our National Defense Strategy and building those ships necessary to meet our worldwide commitments. To accomplish this, Navy and industry must minimally have the below 5 items, each of which will require further investment, partnering, and policy change to reach full potential.

1. World-class manufacturing and shipbuilding facilities,
2. a resilient and responsive supply chain,
3. availability of a highly skilled workforce,
4. a stable demand signal, and
5. contracts that reflect an optimized risk-share between Navy and industry.

Admiral FRANCHETTI. In a resource unconstrained environment with the objective of supporting the overall Navy priorities of Warfighting, Warfighters, and the Foundation that supports them, I would request the following:

Sustained Budget Growth and agile authorities: To simultaneously sustain and modernize the current fleet and sustainably accelerate capacity growth of our fleet, the Navy will require 3–5 percent sustained budget growth above actual inflation as demonstrated in the 30-year Shipbuilding Plan. Additional to any budget increase, the Navy needs flexible authorities to develop, contract, procure, test and employ minimally crewed/uncrewed/autonomous systems in all three maritime domains: undersea, surface, and aviation. Changes to policy with regards to Navy ownership of intellectual property of the systems we procure will support better training and maintenance across the Fleet.

Shore Infrastructure: An overhaul of our current facilities, at home and aboard, to support warfighting, force generation and, Quality of Service (QOS) improvements that support our warfighters and their families in a competitive maritime great power conflict era.

Strategic Priorities: The Chief of Naval Operations' recommendations for key investments to reduce risk in executing the National Defense Strategy and the National Military Strategy should more funding become available. These include Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) workforce, infrastructure, and supplier development, Military Construction, and acceleration and expansion of Surface Warfare Priority Systems and Aviation Critical Planeside systems to support increased operational demand. Expanded authorities to field innovative unmanned systems with quicker turnaround in development, procurement, testing, and deployment.

Support Forces: Increase operational support capacity by expanding Military Sealift Command's (MSC) auxiliary fleet with Buy-Used authorities and New Construction funding. This allows us to repair, replenish, and rearm air, sea, and undersea resources, prolonging battle survivability and sustainability of systems deployed overseas. Additional support for Civilian Mariners is key to realizing and utilizing a re-invigorated MSC.

Manning and Training: Authority and funding to expand the force to man and execute missions with allies and partners across the globe. Those additional forces will require additional world-class training and facilities.

The objective is to maintain the U.S. Navy into the future as the world's most powerful Navy to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in war.

99. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, are all combatant commander requests for naval ships filled to 100 percent?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. No. Combatant Commanders' demands for naval ships far exceeds the capacity of our naval force. Even with a larger fleet, Navy force generation model design provides only a portion of the fleet for routine operations and is a limiting factor to meet the demand.

100. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what initiatives are being worked with private build yards to decrease shipyard worker turnover rate, which in the last 4 years has jumped to an average of 13 percent from a pre-pandemic 8 percent?

Secretary DEL TORO. Navy and shipbuilders are committed to improving the turnover rate in shipyards. Below are some example initiatives:

- Partnering with K12 programs, community colleges, and trade centers
- Using technology and work practices that are more familiar or preferred by workforce
- Mentorships and on-the-job training programs to rapidly upskill the workforce and encourage retention through job satisfaction.
- Addressing wage disparity within the local and national economy

101. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, does an increase in commercial shipbuilding capacity translate into an increased capacity for naval shipbuilding?

Secretary DEL TORO. Yes, it can. Increases in commercial shipbuilding can improve career stability for the workforce, increase workforce efficiency, allow for growth of smaller yards, and distribute overhead costs of the capital intensive industry through a larger workload base.

102. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, given the 170,000 plus shortage in skilled labor for naval shipbuilding, it is reasonable to assume that a national effort to increase commercial shipbuilding could have a deleterious effect on finding skilled labor for naval shipbuilding. What is your assessment of that?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. Increases in commercial shipbuilding do not translate directly into a deleterious effect on naval shipbuilding. Instead, due to geographically dispersed labor pools, multiple segments of naval maritime industrial base (public, private, new construction, repair, etc.), and the possibility of gaining access to previously untapped capacity, an increase in commercial shipbuilding can create a larger skilled workforce.

103. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, given that labor markets near existing shipyards are close to, if not completely tapped, does it make sense to invest in ship production capacity in locations in the U.S. that have a larger labor pool?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy and its shipbuilders currently conduct targeted outsourcing outside of the shipyard's immediate geographic area across a number of programs. In order to meet schedule, cost, and performance objectives of shipbuilding programs, the Navy remains focused on identifying opportunities to generate resiliency and productivity in the shipbuilding industrial base, workforce and associated supply chain.

104. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, I understand that the LCU-1700 contract was signed in 2018 but not a single ship has been delivered. The shipyard that won the original contract was awarded options in 2019, 2020, and 2021 and the Navy issued it a stop work order in 2024. Another shipyard was awarded a contract to produce three LCU-1700's in 2023. Open source reporting indicates that the navy was still changing the LCU-1700 design 2 years into production, reflecting a troubling trend in awarding contracts before requirements and designs were mature. What is the length of delay in the LCU-1700 program?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy awarded the Detail Design and Construction contract to Swiftships, LLC, Morgan City, LA (Small Business Set Aside) in March 2018. Swiftships was under contract for 12 craft, with options for up to 32 craft. Swiftships faced challenges in completing the design, procuring material, completing test procedures, developing sustainment products, and maintaining the requisite labor resources to complete craft construction by the original contract delivery dates. To simplify the contract and settle claims submitted by Swiftships, a consolidated settlement was reached in September 2022 to descope the contract, increase unit cost, re-baseline delivery dates, and remove all remaining options. Despite a re-baselined contract, Swiftships failed to make meaningful progress post settlement as it continued to struggle with the same issues experienced prior to the settlement. Estimates at completion continued to grow throughout Fiscal Year 2023 in excess of new contract targets and projected delivery dates continued to extend well beyond the contractually required delivery dates. The contractor failed to meet the contractual delivery dates and, in response to a Contracting Officer's Show Cause Notice, did not present any excusable basis for its failure to perform. The Navy terminated the contract with Swiftships in February 2024.

To mitigate schedule delays, the Navy awarded a Detail Design and Construction contract to Austal USA, Mobile, AL, for three craft and options for nine additional craft in September 2023. The lead craft is scheduled for delivery in June 2025, the second craft in March 2026, and the third craft in July 2026.

General SMITH. In September 2023 the Navy awarded a \$91.5M Detail Design & Construction (DD&C) contract to Austal USA, Mobile, AL for three craft and future option for nine additional craft through fiscal year 2027. Austal completed Production Readiness Review (Feb 2024) and started construction on the lead craft in April 24. The lead craft delivers in June 2025. The Marine Corps cannot emphasize enough that the need for traditional displacement landing craft is imperative for ship-to-shore, and shore-to-shore movement in support of amphibious operations.

105. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and Admiral Franchetti, what is the current delivery timeline for each of the 32 LCU-1700's the Navy has ordered?

Secretary DEL TORO and Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy awarded the Detail Design and Construction contract to Swiftships, LLC, Morgan City, LA (Small Business Set Aside) in March 2018. Swiftships was under contract for 12 craft, with options for up to 32 craft. Swiftships faced challenges in completing the design, procuring material, completing test procedures, developing sustainment products, and maintaining the requisite labor resources to complete craft construction by the original contract delivery dates. To simplify the contract and settle claims submitted by Swiftships, a consolidated settlement was reached in September 2022 to descope the contract, increase unit cost, re-baseline delivery dates, and remove all remaining options. Despite a re-baselined contract, Swiftships failed to make meaningful progress post settlement as it continued to struggle with the same issues experienced prior to the settlement. Estimates at completion continued to grow throughout Fiscal Year 2023 in excess of new contract targets and projected delivery dates continued to extend well beyond the contractually required delivery dates. The contractor failed to meet the contractual delivery dates and, in response to a Contracting Officer's Show Cause Notice, did not present any excusable basis for its failure to perform. The Navy terminated the contract with Swiftships in February 2024.

To mitigate schedule delays, the Navy awarded a Detail Design and Construction contract to Austal USA, Mobile, AL, for three craft and options for nine additional craft in September 2023. The lead craft is scheduled for delivery in June 2025, the second craft in March 2026, and the third craft in July 2026.

SHIP MAINTENANCE & READINESS

106. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, There have been reports that sailors on *Freedom*-class LCS don't have the technical manuals, training, or tools to repair their own equipment, necessitating contractors from foreign-owned companies to conduct repairs that would normally be within the capability of those sailors but are otherwise prohibited because of proprietary issues. Is this true?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. In 2024 the Navy changed the LCS maintenance strategy to conduct the majority of maintenance organically with ships crews and has subsequently invested in the procurement of proprietary technical documentation and required tools. However, despite the strategy shift to organic maintenance, we expect some foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) will still be required for some procurement and repairs through end of service life.

As part of the original LCS sustainment plan, contractors would conduct a significant portion of maintenance and repairs therefore technical manuals, tools, and proprietary property were not purchased by the Navy for contractor maintenance. Since then, the Navy implemented commercial sustainment options to provide improved access to both foreign and domestic OEMs via contractual agreements. These contracts also provide expanded training opportunities for Navy sailors by including the option for OEM maintenance training.

107. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what is the operational availability of *Freedom*-class LCS?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. As of 1 July 2024, the Navy has 8 *Freedom*-class LCS in the active battle force inventory (LCS 3, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25). Of these 8 ships, 4 ships are in maintenance availabilities or post-shakedown availabilities, resulting in a 50 percent material availability.

108. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many *Freedom*-class LCS have deployed on time in the last 3 years?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. In the past 3 years, there have been ten scheduled *Freedom*-class Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) deployments and none have deployed on time.

109. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many amphibious warships, by class, have deployed on time in the last 3 years?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Of the 28 total amphibious warships that deployed in the last 3 years, 19 (68 percent) have deployed on time. Amphibious warships include the LHA, LHD, LPD, and LSD classes.

The primary reason for amphibious ship deployment delays has been emergent maintenance. These issues have occurred outside of normal maintenance periods and are exacerbated by the ships' age and previous deployment extensions. They have negatively impacted the Navy's force generation capability, reduced maritime global operational presence, and increased both operational and maintenance costs.

The below lists the numbers of amphibious warships deployed on time over the last three fiscal years, with comments explaining reason for delayed deployment.

- LHA/LHD
 - o Fiscal year 2024—0 of 2; both late deployments caused by emergent maintenance.
 - o Fiscal year 2023—1 of 2; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
 - o Fiscal year 2022—1 of 1
 - o Fiscal year 2021—2 of 3; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
- LPD
 - o Fiscal year 2024—2 of 2
 - o Fiscal year 2023—3 of 4; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
 - o Fiscal year 2022—2 of 2
 - o Fiscal year 2021—4 of 5; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
- LSD
 - o Fiscal year 2024—2 of 3; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
 - o Fiscal year 2023—0 of 1; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.
 - o Fiscal year 2022—1 of 1
 - o Fiscal year 2021—1 of 2; late deployment caused by emergent maintenance.

110. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, when will Congress receive a report or be briefed on the readiness of the amphibious warship fleet as directed in the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The review of amphibious fleet readiness is still in progress and is currently under review at the SecNav level. An interim letter is being staffed to notify Congress of an adjusted completion date.

Navy intends to provide a brief to Congress upon completion of the review and subsequent analysis and review internal to DON.

111. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 budget shows that amphibious ships make up 76 percent of deferred maintenance despite constituting 14 percent of the fleet. There are 31 amphibious ships with \$352 million in deferred maintenance, 118 surface combatants with \$109M in deferred maintenance, 11 carriers with \$4.6 million in deferred maintenance and 67 submarines with \$0 million in deferred maintenance. What explains this disparity?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Surface ships (surface combatants and amphibious ships) are generally considered safer to deploy even if some maintenance is deferred, leading to the higher level of deferred maintenance in the surface fleet. Nuclear maintenance (aircraft carriers and submarines) is typically required work before the assets can deploy, especially for submarines that need to be certified to dive. Thus, most nuclear maintenance cannot be deferred and if necessary, the availability is extended to complete growth work.

Most of the amphibious ship deferred maintenance included in the \$352 million has either commenced their availabilities in fiscal year 2024 or is programmed to start their availabilities in fiscal year 2025. Age (30+ year old ships), high operational tempo, and obsolescence of parts, systems, and specialized labor are contributing factors to the higher deferred maintenance costs for amphibious ships. Over \$100 million of the \$352 million is specific to two LHDs whose ballast tank maintenance was previously deferred, but this work will be done in their upcoming availabilities that begin in fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025. In addition, Navy's previous proposals to divest LSDs over the Future Years Defense Program resulted in some LSD maintenance being deferred at the time. In compliance with the fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, the Navy subsequently revised our amphibious ship force structure plan to sustain 31 amphibious ships, and program for this deferred maintenance in the fiscal year 2024 and fiscal year 2025 availabilities. The Navy prioritized investments for ship maintenance and reducing deferred maintenance and readiness in the fiscal year 2025 President's Budget.

112. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, it is now clear that the Navy's decision to not address the rudder issue on the USS *Boxer* when it was discovered during a maintenance period and instead granting a waiver to depart from its design specifications (DFS) was a mistake. In hindsight, this was a miscalculated risk-decision that is keeping the lead ship in port while the other two ships in the ARG deploy. Who is being held accountable for authorizing that DFS to not proceed with repairs?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy uses a process that takes technical, programmatic and operational readiness priorities into consideration to develop a risk position about operating a ship system with a material non-conformance. The Departure

from Specification (DFS) process is outlined in the Joint Fleet Maintenance Manual and is focused on ensuring surface ships are ready for tasking.

In the case of USS *Boxer*, none of the adjudicated DFSs on the rudder system during her last CNO maintenance availability contributed to the failure of the starboard rudder's upper bearing. The upper bearing, intended to be a life of ship component, materially failed in the ship's 29th year of service. The Wasp-class was originally designed with an intended 40 years of service life.

113. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, by class of ship, what percentage are in each phase of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) at a given time?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. For each class of ship, the rule-of-thumb is that a third are in maintenance and modernization, a third are in training, and a third are in sustainment. Historically, for a class of ship, the number of ships within each OFRP phase varies over time. There is no guidance for each class of ship mandating that a certain percentage be in a particular phase. The Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) is the force readiness generation construct used to maximize employability through a disciplined, repeatable, and predictable process that balances mid-and long-term readiness production stability for the fleet while supporting dynamic employment. The OFRP is comprised of three phases: maintenance and modernization, training, and sustainment, with deployment occurring in the sustainment phase.

114. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what is the Navy's goal for how many ships are supposed to be in each phase of the OFRP?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. For each class of ship, the rule-of-thumb is that a third are in maintenance and modernization, a third are in training, and a third are in sustainment. Historically, for a class of ship, the number of ships within each OFRP phase varies over time. There is no guidance for each class of ship mandating that a certain percentage be in a particular phase. The Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) is the force readiness generation construct used to maximize employability through a disciplined, repeatable, and predictable process that balances mid-and long-term readiness production stability for the fleet while supporting dynamic employment. The OFRP is comprised of three phases: maintenance and modernization, training, and sustainment, with deployment occurring in the sustainment phase.

115. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, are there sufficient dry docks for the Navy's maintenance plans?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Surface Ships: In aggregate, the private sector has sufficient dry dock capacity and capability to perform planned maintenance and modernization work on non-nuclear surface ships. In recent years, San Diego dry dock capacity was challenged to support maintenance demands. The Navy has since invested in the upgrade/procurement of two public dry docks and the private sector is currently working to bring a third new dry dock to the region. Once complete, these efforts will provide all San Diego based surface ships the opportunity to execute dry dock maintenance within their homeport.

Nuclear Ships: In August 2023, the Navy established a Capability Development Document (CDD) for the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP), establishing the baseline requirement for dry docks across the four Naval Shipyards. The Navy's 15-year maintenance plan schedules submarine and aircraft carrier availabilities within the current dry dock capacity and capability established in the SIOP CDD. In addition, the CDD establishes a process by which the Navy will evaluate long-term dry docking needs for the nuclear fleet.

116. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many Navy ships and submarines are waiting to enter dry dock?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Submarines: There are a total of four submarines that are idle awaiting drydock availability, including three that are waiting inactivation. USS *Montpelier's* (SSN 765) delay was driven by delays to USS *Toledo* (SSN 769) undocking. The *Toledo* undocked in May 2024 and the drydock required maintenance prior to *Montpelier's* Engineered Overhaul (EOH). The three inactivation submarines, *Key West*, *Helena*, and *San Juan* are idle with expired service lives (not able to operate) waiting for dock availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) pending resolution of seismic concerns.

Ships: There are currently no ships waiting to enter dry dock.

117. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what is the Navy's goal for submarine readiness (i.e., what percentage of submarines should be available for tasking at any time)?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy's standing goal for attack submarine (SSN) readiness is 80 percent material availability, defined as the percentage of total battle force SSNs not undergoing maintenance, testing, or pre-decommissioning activities and are available for operations. Navy has achieved some improvement toward this goal and continues significant efforts to reduce maintenance delays and improve shipyard performance.

118. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many additional dry docks are needed to get submarine maintenance out of the backlog to meet the Navy's stated submarine readiness goal?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy currently has all of the required 18 total dry docks to meet the current and future nuclear fleet for the next 15 years as defined by the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP). While the number of dry docks required to satisfy nuclear-powered ship maintenance is re-evaluated annually, there is no current need for additional drydocks.

119. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, are there any plans to open a dry dock capable of repairing a CVN on the West Coast?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, WA has a dry dock with the capability to repair NIMITZ-class CVNs on the west coast.

120. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what level of repairs for conventional ships are allowed to be conducted at overseas shipyards?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. 10 USC § 8680 limits what overseas maintenance, repair, or overhaul can be performed on naval vessels outside the United States or Guam. 10 USC § 8680 allows for overseas: (1) maintenance and repair of ships homeported outside of the United States or Guam (also known as forward deployed naval forces (FDNF)) unless they are within a certain window of homeport change; (2) corrective and preventive maintenance or repair and facilities maintenance for Littoral Combat Ships while on deployment; and (3) voyage repairs or those necessary to correct damage sustained due to hostile actions or interventions on a vessel with a homeport in the United States or Guam. A voyage repair is solely for the accomplishment of corrective maintenance of mission or safety essential items necessary for a ship to deploy or continue on its deployment.

121. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what, if any, additional statutory authorities are needed to conduct more extensive repairs at overseas shipyards?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy seeks authority for the execution of limited maintenance overseas, for ships homeported in the United States or Guam. The Navy submitted a legislative proposal accompanying PB25 to this effect. These authorities provide the mechanisms required for the Navy to exercise and improve the ability to conduct preventative maintenance meant to extend military operations within highly contested environments.

Current statute (10 USC § 8680) allows for the execution of overseas maintenance, repair, or overhaul on ships in the following cases: (1) maintenance and repair of ships homeported outside of the United States or Guam (also known as forward deployed naval forces (FDNF)), unless they are within a certain window of homeport change; (2) corrective and preventative maintenance or repair and facilities maintenance for Littoral Combat Ships while on deployment; and (3) voyage repairs or interventions with a homeport in United States or Guam. The exclusive use of FDNF ships for the purpose of conducting such maintenance would increase the time FDNF sailors are out of homeport (also known as personnel tempo); negatively impact high-tempo FDNF operations; and fail to realistically exercise the required capability.

This proposal would also support improved coordination with our international partners in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. European Command areas, such as: Australia, Japan, South Korea, Republic of the Philippines, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Greece, Croatia, Norway, United Kingdom, and others.

122. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, has the Navy studied if there is any benefit (i.e., less time spent in an availability) in public yards specializing in a particular class of ship instead of nuclear powered vessels more generally?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy does not officially classify specific shipyards to individual ship classes but does recognize the value of the efficiencies generated by the shipyard industrial workforce when consistently assigned to repair the same ship classes. Therefore, we do routinely schedule specific ship classes to the same

shipyards in support of maintenance efficiencies, availability and operational requirements.

- SSN (688/VACL) Submarines are assigned to Portsmouth and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyards
- SSN 21 Class and SSGN/BN Submarines and Aircraft Carriers are assigned to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard
- SSN (688/VACL) and SSGN/BN Submarines and Aircraft Carriers are assigned to Norfolk Naval Shipyard

123. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, what are the current readiness rates for EPFs and LCUs?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. For Expeditionary Fast Transports (EPF), Military Sealift Command (MSC) does not follow the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) model. The MSC force generation model maintains the ships in theater, conducting maintenance and repair along with operational tasking. As of July 2024, the Navy has 14 EPFs in the active battle force inventory. Of these 14 ships, six ships are in full operating status, six ships are in reduced operating status-45 (ROS-45) and the two newest ships (EPF 13-14) are completing post-delivery testing and trials. ROS-45 ships are intended to be made ready for tasking within 45 days of notification.

Landing Craft Utility (LCU) are not battle force ships and also do not follow the OFRP model. The Navy has 10 of 25 Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1610 class craft available for tasking. Industry-related construction delays with the LCU 1700 class have delayed the planned recapitalization and have forced the Navy to retain legacy LCU 1610 craft beyond their expected service lives. Four LCU 1610 craft are awaiting service life extensions to bridge the delay until the LCU 1700 class are delivered. LCU 1700 class construction is now underway and will functionally replace the LCU 1610 class upon delivery.

General SMITH. For Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF), the Military Sealift Command (MSC) does not follow the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) model; instead, the MSC Force Generation Model has the ships remaining in theater and conducting maintenance and repair efforts in coordination with operational tasking and crews rotating onto leave. In addition, some EPFs are retained in reduced operating status-45 days (ROS-45), which are intended to be made ready for tasking within 45 days of notification. This timeline may occasionally exceed 45 days if ship material issues require additional time to repair before the ship can be made ready. As of 1 July 2024, the Navy has 14 EPF in the active battle force inventory (EPF 1-14), with EPF 1-4 proposed for decommissioning in fiscal year 2025. Of these 14 ships, 6 ships are in ROS-45 status and the 2 newest ships (EPF 13 & 14) are completing post-delivery testing and trials. The remaining 6 ships are in full operating status. Four EPFs are aligned to provide a considerable portion of the Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) to the Marine Corps, which was developed to support the newly formed Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) with organic surface maneuver capability until Medium Landing Ships are sufficiently fielded. The Marine Corps is a primary consumer of EPF for intra-theater surface mobility, particularly in USINDOPACOM. EPF availability impacts planning and execution of naval campaigning activities and distribution and sustainment of the stand-in force in crisis. A cost and time burden is imposed on Marine Forces unable to utilize EPF.

124. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, I understand that the Navy and Marine Corps recently signed a classified memorandum agreeing to common terminology when referring to amphibious ship readiness. Does that document include EPFs, LCUs, leased commercial stern-landing vessels, and future LSMs?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The unclassified Joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Navy and Marine Corps, titled Amphibious Warfare Ship Terms of Reference does not contain language that refers to specific classes of ships such as EPFs, LCUs, leased commercial stern-landing vessels, and future LSMs. Rather, the MOU defines broader terms that explain whether or not a ship can support Navy and Marine Corps training and operations. These terms have been developed to prevent conflicts in data reporting to senior Department of the Navy leaders, external commands and leadership, and Congress.

General SMITH. The unclassified memorandum signed on 12 June codifies new terms of reference for the readiness and availability specific to Amphibious Warfare Ships (AWS). This includes Amphibious Assault Ship (LHA / LHD), Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD), and Amphibious Dock Landing Ship (LSD). Our current working group focused on ARG / MEUs has discussed future iterations of the memorandum potentially expanding on the definitions to include landing craft, future Me-

dium Landing Ship (LSM), as well as other naval platforms that routinely support the Marine Corps.

NAVY DESIGN & PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

125. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what is the status of NAVSEA implementing the eight recommendations made in GAO report 24–105503 on the use of leading design practices to improve timeliness of deliveries?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy is currently developing Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) for each of the eight recommendations from GAO report 24–105503 on the use of leading design practices to improve timeliness of deliveries. These CAPs and associated estimated completion dates are due to GAO in summer 2025.

126. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many uniformed naval architects work at NAVSEA?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. As of July 2024, Naval Sea Systems Command has 79 uniformed naval architects across its enterprise as follows:

- Headquarters (Directorates/PEO): 26
- Supervisor of Shipbuilding: 26
- Naval Shipyards: 19
- Regional Maintenance Centers/Ship Repair Facilities: 8

127. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many civilian naval architects work at NAVSEA?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Total NAVSEA civilians in the 0871 series is 472.

- 152 civilian naval architects at NAVSEA Headquarters.
- 1 civilian naval architect in NAVSEA affiliated Program Executive Offices (PEOs).
- 44 civilian naval architects in NAVSEA Supervisors of Shipbuilding (SUPSHIP).
- 274 civilian naval architects in NAVSEA Warfare Center Divisions.
- 1 civilian naval architect at NAVSEA Carrier Planning Activity.

128. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how does NAVSEA determine if it has a sufficient number of in-house engineers?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. NAVSEA performs annual Capabilities Health Assessments and Technical Capabilities Health Assessments to determine the sufficient number of in-house engineers, identify shortfalls and prioritize how to address them.

129. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, why did the Navy send naval architects to work side-by-side with the FFG–62 build yard architects?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy has established a collaborationsite in Marinette, WI and surged both the Navy and contracted engineering design personnel to bolster and accelerate design stability completion and support ramp up of production. The Navy has invested \$15 million in fiscal year 2023 Surface Combatant Industrial Base (SCIB) funding to build engineering capacity in the fragile surface ship design and engineering industrial base, and accelerate FFG design efforts.

Additional design engineers began reporting onsite at Fincantieri Marinette Marine (FMM) on 15 January 2024 with 29 engineering designers in targeted critical-need disciplines onsite through 15 August 2024. These 29 designers are a supplement to FMM's full-time equivalent engineers currently employed through direct or subcontracted resources currently dedicated to the Frigate program.

130. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how many naval architects does the Naval Academy and ROTC graduate on average each year?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Over the last 10 years, the Naval Academy had an average of 29 Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering graduates each year. (Note: The Naval Architecture major changed to Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering starting with the class of 2017.)

Over the last 4 years, the Reserve Officer Training Corps students have averaged 2.5 Naval Architecture degrees per year.

131. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, of the last 5 commanders of Naval Sea Systems Command, what was the average length of time they held command?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Aside from Rear Admiral Thomas J. Anderson who served from September 2023 to January 2024 in an acting capacity, the average duration of the last 5 commanders was 3 years and 7 months.

132. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, of the last 5 commanders of Naval Sea Systems Command, how many proceeded to a subsequent tour?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. All of the past five Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) commanders retired from the U.S. Navy following their command tour. Across the Navy there are six Systems Commands (SYSCOMs), with NAVSEA and Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) led by three-star flag officers. NAVSEA and NAVAIR are considered pinnacle career tours for Engineering Duty Officers and Acquisition professionals; Flag Officers in charge of these commands retire upon completion of their tour.

133. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, the Congressional Budget Office and the Navy often have wildly different estimated costs for ships. In fact, the Navy's estimate is historically 25–40 percent less than the actual cost. CBO's estimate is historically 90 percent accurate. What are the consequences to ship procurement timelines for inaccurate cost estimates?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Inaccurate cost estimates, particularly where growth is identified after contract award or budget submission, can impact ship procurement timelines if funded late or left unfunded. The Navy's cost estimating process is continually being refined, including adjusting to the post-COVID cost environment, to ensure the most accurate estimate for ships.

134. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how does the Navy determine ship cost estimates for the first-in-class (lead ship)?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy uses a suite of cost estimating techniques to determine lead ship cost estimates, including costs from historical, analogous ships; factors for ship complexity and capabilities; and projections of labor and material. Additionally, the Navy involves industry through design efforts and information exchanges to further inform the lead ship's cost estimate.

135. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how does the Navy determine ship cost estimates for subsequent ships in a new class?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy's approach to estimating subsequent ships in a ship class uses the lead ship cost estimate as a basis and applies historical and industry informed factors to account for efficiencies anticipated through learning and optimization efforts. Additionally, projections for labor costs, material costs, and capability differences are also applied.

136. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, why did the design requirements for the FFG-62 change from its original concept that more closely resembled the FREMM?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The design requirements for the FFG 62 have not changed since prior to proposal solicitation. These foundational U.S. Navy requirements for survivability, lethality, maintainability, redundancy and habitability have existed on this program since its inception.

To maximize schedule and cost-saving efforts, the Navy chose an acquisition strategy that required interested shipbuilders to leverage an existing parent vessel as the foundation from which to incorporate these U.S. Navy requirements. Further, the Navy explicitly required the use of current Programs of Record (PoR) to supply the Government Furnished Equipment (GFE), such as the AEGIS weapons system, SPY-6 Radar, and Vertical Launch Systems (VLS), essentially pulling off-the-shelf systems into the FFG 62 program to reduce overall risk. Fincantieri Marinette Marine (FMM) was part of the original design specification group that helped the Navy create the ship specifications, which were then used to create the request for proposal (RFP). FMM chose the FREMM platform as the parent vessel of their proposed FFG(X) design, which was ultimately selected by the Navy.

Since award, the design details have been closely scrutinized to drive design maturity and ensure these requirements are met, sometimes requiring modification to gain compliance to the contract. Government-driven requirement changes have occurred since award, such as incorporation of Buy America Act provisions, but these are limited impacts and negotiated and agreed with the shipbuilder.

137. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro and General Smith, why did the design for the Landing Ship Medium change from the Marine Corps' stated requirements?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy and Marine Corps have worked collaboratively through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System process to define the required capabilities for LSM. The detailed design proposals are currently being evaluated with the intent to award a contract for design in early 2025. The design will be based on JROC validated Navy and Marine Corps requirements.

General SMITH. The Navy and Marine Corps have worked collaboratively through the joint capabilities integration and development system process to define the required capabilities for LSM. The detailed design proposals are currently being evaluated with the intent to award a contract for design in early 2025. The design will be based on approved Navy and Marine Corps requirements.

OFFICER TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS

138. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, ROTC midshipmen graduate with a minor in naval science, yet midshipmen from the Naval Academy do not. Why not? Admiral FRANCHETTI. There is no pre-commissioning requirement in the United States Navy for a Midshipman to complete a Minor in Naval Science. Not all NROTC Midshipmen complete a minor in Naval Science.

The pre-commissioning training requirement for officer accessions programs are based on the Professional Core Competencies Manual which is used to develop appropriate curricula for future Navy and Marine Corps Officers at the United States Naval Academy (USNA), Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) and all programs at Officer Training Command, Newport (OTCN). Based on those requirements each institution develops their curriculum in accordance with regional accreditation requirements.

Some academic host institutions have chosen to develop a Minor degree in Naval Science, in addition to the requirements of the Professional Core Competencies Manual.

USNA meets the requirements of the Professional Core Competencies Manual by having all Midshipmen complete the USNA core curriculum as part of their Bachelor of Science degree. The core curriculum ensures graduates are dedicated to a career of naval service and have potential for future development in mind and character to assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship, and government.

139. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, does every midshipman from USNA or ROTC get underway on a ship or submarine for a training cruise at least once prior to commissioning?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. No. While every midshipman will complete a cruise prior to commissioning as outlined below, some midshipmen will participate in a cruise that does not include physically embarking on a ship or submarine. OPNAVINST 1530.8B requires that USNA and Naval Service Training Command (NSTC), which oversees all 64 ROTC units, will ensure midshipmen participate in at least one cruise prior to commissioning. A cruise is defined as any surface, submarine, aviation, hospital cruise, Leatherneck and marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) training or 6-week United States Marine Corps (USMC) Officer Candidates School (OCS) course, special warfare (SPECWAR), explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), Information Warfare community (IWC) or foreign exchange cruise. USMC OCS is the required cruise for all NROTC marine option midshipmen. In line with OPNAVNOTE 1530, attendance at Leatherneck is mandated for USNA midshipmen seeking a commission in the USMC. In the event prospective USMC selects are unable to attend Leatherneck, a waiver will be routed and the midshipman will be scheduled for a MAGTF cruise.

140. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, Coast Guard officers who operate ships are required to have a merchant mariner's credential (USCG license). There is a shortage of merchant mariners in this country. Navy Surface Warfare Officers (SWOs) receive a tremendous amount of training and experience in ship driving and operations, yet do not earn or test for a merchant mariner's credential. It seems that one way to address the shortage of merchant mariners in the U.S. would be to provide a transition program for SWOs to earn a USCG license so they can easily transition to be a merchant mariner. Has the navy considered implementing such a program?

Secretary DEL TORO. The U.S. Navy has established the Military to Mariner Program to provide a pathway for officers and enlisted personnel to obtain USCG merchant mariner's licenses. We provide awareness briefs and counseling sessions to the Fleet to assist in the licensing process. The program is executed by the Surface Warfare Schools Command. The USCG licenses require a certain number of days

of sea time, medical screening, drug testing, a Transportation Worker ID Card (TWIC), and passing a licensing test. In the past 2 years, 844 Navy personnel have submitted applications to the National Maritime Center, resulting in 714 individuals successfully obtaining a license.

The Military to Mariner Program has removed barriers to licensing through registration fee waivers, drug testing waivers, medical evaluation by military medicine, and the TWIC card costs for enlisted personnel. We have worked with the USCG to credit Navy personnel for time assigned to a sea duty command at 60 percent. The remaining requirement for licensing is passing the exam. While many existing Navy courses provide training on topics covered by the exam, a significant portion of the exam material is specific to merchant mariner skills or tasks.

Navy training covers 43 percent of the USCG 3d Mate's License Exam; the remaining 57 percent is specific to merchant mariners. Additionally, the U.S. Navy is working with the USCG to certify courses to the Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) standards, which are endorsements to a mariner's license. This provides rigorous training standards and prevents candidates from paying out of pocket for a civilian course. Currently, 9 Navy courses are fully approved to STCW endorsement standards with additional in the approval process. We continue to review existing policies and course material with the goal of further assisting military members interested in obtaining mariner credentials.

RECRUITING

141. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, have Navy recruiters been denied access to a public high school in the past year?

Secretary DEL TORO. No, Navy recruiters have not been denied access to public high schools in the past year.

142. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, at the posture hearing, you spoke about increasing the number of recruiter visits to four per year, but did not address the quality of the visit. What are your recommendations on improving the quality of a recruiting visit?

Secretary DEL TORO. Optimal access to high schools would involve multiple visits monthly to reasonably unlimited locations within the school/school grounds, and reasonably unlimited access to students. It would revolve around the opportunity to conduct classroom presentations for juniors and seniors, offering the ability to speak directly with our target audience and discuss Navy opportunities. Additionally, the ability to attend all high school career fairs and sporting events would provide our recruiting force the opportunity to attend more events in uniform and talk with both the high school students and their families about the Navy experience and potential career decisions.

143. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, have Navy Weeks that take place in communities that typically have low Navy presence shown a statistically meaningful uptick in new accessions from those markets?

Secretary DEL TORO. Statistically meaningful upticks in new accessions occurred in 67 percent of the Navy Week events measured over the last year.

144. Senator SULLIVAN. Secretary Del Toro, what are the results of the "every sailor is a recruiter" initiative?

Secretary DEL TORO. The "Every Sailor a Recruiter" (ESAR) initiative has yielded promising results thus far. As of 1 July, 472 commands across the Navy have submitted names of individuals they felt would be a good fit for the Navy. This has led to 1,462 leads, yielding 322 contracts thus far. Data shows that a lead submitted through this program is 2.7 times more likely to contract than a non-ESAR lead.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING PRACTICES

145. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, what advanced manufacturing practices have Regional Maintenance Centers (RMCs) adopted to decrease the time it takes to procure or replace parts?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. Commander, Navy Regional Maintenance Center (CNRMC) utilizes advanced manufacturing technologies and processes to support parts manufacturing and repair across the Enterprise. Examples of the technologies and/or processes currently in use at the RMCs include:

- Additive Manufacturing (AM):
 - o DMG Mori Industrial Metal Hybrid Manufacturing Center
 - o Phillips Hybrid Industrial Metal Manufacturing Center

- o Robust Polymer Capability—Various Polymer Machines
- o Engineering interface with Metal and Polymer Parts Catalog—Part development, certification, and promulgation
- Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Machines:
 - o OMAX Waterjet Cutting Machine
 - o 5-Axis Machining Centers
 - o Coordinate Measuring Machine
 - o Robust Machining Capability,—manual and CNC Lathes, Milling Machines, Grinders

These capabilities enable CNRMC to address issues like long-lead times, obsolescence, and the need for custom parts production or repair, thereby facilitating improved equipment maintenance and service readiness.

146. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, do large deck ships (aircraft carriers and LHA/LHD) deploy with 3-D printers to make repair parts?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Navy currently has two large-deck amphibious ships (LHD-1 and LHD-5) equipped with both metal and polymer 3-D printers and two aircraft carriers (CVN-72 and CVN-75) equipped with desktop polymer units.

In fiscal year 2025, the Navy will continue expanding 3-D printing capabilities across ships to include aircraft carriers and large-deck amphibious ships to enhance self-sufficiency when operating in a contested logistics environment.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

147. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, when afloat units are deployed, Navy chaplains who are often assigned to the aircraft carrier or lead ship in the ARG rotate between ships to meet with sailors. Do mental health counselors do the same?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The embedded mental health team (EMH) assigned to an aircraft carrier consists of a clinical psychologist, licensed clinical social worker, behavioral health technician, and two substance abuse rehabilitation program counselors. These personnel can travel to and board another ship in the carrier strike group (CSG) as requested/needed; there is no formal rotation. However, other ships can request that their sailors be transferred to the carrier for evaluation and/or treatment with the EMH team. Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG) include one psychiatrist and one behavioral health technician on the large deck amphibious assault ship. Providers from carriers or large deck amphibious assault ships can call other ships within the CSG or ARG to conduct evaluations or treatment when network bandwidth and connectivity allow.

An additional avenue of support on carriers and large deck amphibious assault ships are civilian Deployed Resiliency Counselors (DRCs) who are licensed clinical professionals providing non-medical clinical counseling while afloat and ashore. DRCs do not travel between ships while underway. Furthermore, the Navy is assigning chaplains to guided missile destroyers to provide confidential counseling while ensuring spiritual readiness and resiliency of the Naval Force.

During the IKECSG's recent combat deployment, the EMH and chaplains established a Planning Board for Resiliency (PB4R) which met weekly in a coordinated effort across the strike group to identify trends and collaborate on care. IKECSG had enough resources to provide tailored Tiger Teams from the carrier to CRUDES. These tiger teams conducted 24 religious provision visits, 10 facility dog visits, and six mental health support visits consisting of a psychologist, licensed clinical social worker, and an Embedded Integrated Prevention Coordinator (EIPC).

148. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, how do sailors assigned to smaller surface combatants (LCS, DDG, CG, LPD, LSD) get access to mental health professionals other than Navy chaplains while at-sea?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. All smaller surface combatant ships have at least one trained Independent Duty Corpsman (IDC), who is a highly specialized Hospital Corpsman qualified to function as sole clinician in locations that do not fully require a customary physician. All Surface Forces (SURFOR) IDCs are trained in providing basic mental health support, including assessment of common mental health disorders and assessment of suicidality using the latest evidence-based tools. For more complex mental health issues, IDCs consult shore based SURFOR embedded mental health providers.

When smaller surface ships are operating within the range of a carrier strike group or amphibious ready group, their IDCs can consult mental health providers on these larger assets, which include medical and mental health officers as crew.

Telephonic evaluations and treatment are also possible when network bandwidth and connectivity allow.

Additionally, carriers and large deck amphibious assault ships have civilian Deployed Resiliency Counselors (DRCs) while afloat and ashore. DRCs are licensed clinical professionals who provide non-medical clinical counseling and enable an additional avenue of support to servicemembers.

The Department of Defense's Military and Family Life Counseling Program augments the work of DRCs with licensed clinicians who also provide non-medical counseling. Currently, Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLCs) support 16 Navy ships while ashore in Hawaii, Japan, and California. MFLCs have a highly flexible schedule to increase servicemember access to care.

MARINE LITTORAL REGIMENT ORGANIC MOBILITY

149. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, the Navy's fiscal year 2025 LSM procurement plan only orders (but does not deliver) eight vessels by fiscal year 2029. Since each MLR requires nine LSMs to operate, it is clear the Navy will not be able to provide enough LSMs to satisfy the organic lift requirements of the two MLRS that will otherwise be fully operational by fiscal year 2029. To provide an initial mobility solution, the Marine Corps will rely on a small number of leased commercial vessels and an unknown number of EPFs and LCUs. None of these three vessels meet the Marine Corps original requirements for the LSM, which the Navy found objectionable because of survivability concerns. The great irony is that the Navy's focus on survivability created the time delay that will result in the LSM being late to need by at least half a decade, forcing the Marine Corps to rely on three platforms that are significantly less survivable than the original LSM design. How many ships, exactly, of each type will be available to support the 3d MLR and 12th MLR once each formation achieves IOC and FOC?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) is a phased approach to utilize existing Navy assets and Marine Corps contracted vessels and craft to support the 3d MLR and 12th MLR. This planned solution will provide 4 Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPFs), 2 Offshore Support Vessels (OSVs), 2 Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1610's, 2 Stern Landing Vessels (SLVs), and 3 Ancillary Surface Connectors (ASCs). Additionally, the LSM requirements were jointly developed and agreed to by the USMC and the Navy then validated through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System.

General SMITH. The Littoral Maneuver Bridging Solution (LMBS) is a phased approach to utilize existing Navy assets and Marine Corps contracted vessels and craft to support the 3d MLR and 12th MLR. This approved solution is intended to provide 4 Expeditionary Fast Transports (T-EPFs), 2 Offshore Support Vessels (OSVs), 2 Landing Craft Utilities (LCU) 1610's, 2 Stern Landing Vessels (SLVs), and 3 Ancillary Surface Connectors (ASCs). The only vessels currently available are EPF, LCU and 1 SLV which is a modified chartered Offshore Support Vessel. A foreign comparative test SLV will make up for the second while the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab is considering options for the ASC and other charter vessels. Negotiations for charters take time and funding; therefore, the Navy and Marine Corps will continue to investigate further options for organic mobility and will rely on commercial USTRANSCOM conveyances to ensure forces are forward conducting campaigning activities. The LMBS square foot requirement was based upon approximately 1 MLR operating forward. It is important to note, here, that Military Sealift Command is experiencing a shortage in civilian mariners, delaying even the first two of the approved EPF sourcing for LMBS. It is possible all four may not be provided due to this issue.

150. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, the original vision for Landing Ship Medium was a risk-worthy ship that could be produced in quantity at no more than \$130 million. The current CBO estimate is that the average LSM cost will be between \$340 and \$430 million. Given the Navy's recent history with delivery delays and cost overruns, there is a real possibility the LSM procurement is curtailed due to cost and delays. There is consequently short and long-term risk with MLR mobility. Are there any ships currently in production in the U.S. or an Allied nation that would fulfill more of the Marine Corps' requirements than the interim mobility solution of leased commercial vessels, EPFs, and LCUs?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. There are no ships currently in production that would fulfill more of the Marine Corps' requirements than the LMBS combination of vessels. LMBS aims to provide a near term interim littoral mobility capability but LMBS does not meet LSM requirements.

General SMITH. There are no ships currently in production that would fulfill more of the Marine Corps' requirements than the LMBS combination of vessels. LMBS aims to provide a near term littoral mobility capability, but LMBS fails to meet the capability criteria established in the LSM analysis of alternatives.

151. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, do you assume more operational risk using an existing LSM-type vessel already in production that does not meet every Marine Corps requirement, such as beach gradient, or using the interim mobility solution of leased commercial ships, EPFs, and LCUs for the next decade?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The combination of vessels that comprise the LMBS are proven platforms with the least interim operational risk to bridge the gap in the Marine Corps' ability to conduct littoral maneuver and overcome challenges in sustainment, intra-theater mobility, and tactical maneuver until the LSM is sufficiently fielded.

General SMITH. The combination of vessels that comprise the LMBS are proven platforms with the least operational risk to bridge the gap in the Marine Corps' ability to conduct littoral maneuver and overcome challenges in sustainment, intra-theater mobility, and tactical maneuver until the LSM is sufficiently fielded. None of those solutions meet the full requirement, necessitating a mix due to limitations in capacity and capability of each. All other existing solutions would require further modifications, such as fuel, berthing, etc. that would increase cost and potentially incur engineering issues to those designs.

152. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, has the Navy determined that there are survivability concerns with the leased commercial vessels, EPFs, and LCUs that constitute the MLR interim mobility solution?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The interim mobility solution is acceptable to the Navy until a fully capable LSM is delivered. The leased commercial vessels, EPFs and LCUs, are proven, acceptable platforms for interim MLR mobility as MLRs work toward Full Operational Capability.

General SMITH. The interim mobility solution is acceptable to the Navy until a fully capable LSM is delivered because the leased commercial vessels, T-EPFs and LCUs are proven platforms and appropriate for MLR mobility as MLRs work toward FOC.

153. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, why is the interim mobility solution acceptable to the Navy when the initial LSM design was not?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. LSM design will be determined in early 2025. The LMBS does not replace the need for the LSM and no other vessel in the Navy's inventory meets the LSM requirements. LMBS is a phased approach to provide interim operational mobility and tactical maneuver capacity until the LSM is available in sufficient quantities to support an MLR.

General SMITH. LSM design will be determined in early 2025. The LMBS does not replace the need for the LSM and no other vessel in the Navy's inventory meets the LSM requirements. LMBS is a phased approach to add operational mobility and tactical maneuver capacity until the LSM is available in sufficient quantities to support an MLR.

154. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Franchetti, and General Smith, the Army is developing two new watercraft, the Maneuver Support Vessel (Light), which will replace its LCU-8 fleet, and the Maneuver Support Vessel (Heavy), which will replace its LSV fleet. Did the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps coordinate or collaborate on a common set of operational or survivability requirements for the MSV(L), MSH(H), and LSM given that all three are expected to operate in the same theater and face the same adversary?

Admiral FRANCHETTI. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have collaborated on the programs to determine areas of shared interest and subsequently determined each of the programs have different sets of requirements and timelines.

General SMITH. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have collaborated on the programs to determine areas of shared interest with all aspects of DOTMLP-F; although, subsequently determined each of the programs have different sets of requirements and timelines. MSV (L) is already in production and is small in comparison to the requirements set forth in the LSM design (i.e. 1 tank). MSV (H) is approximately 2 years behind LSM. The LSM program office is sharing lessons from the acquisition process, the Analysis of Alternatives, and from industry engagements.

FORCE DESIGN CALIBRATION

155. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Marine Corps recently announced it would reactivate one of the light helicopter squadrons it deactivated in 2022. HMLA-269 will stand up again in July. The helicopters will be brought back to operation from the sites where they had been preserved since the deactivation. During the confirmation process, you said you would not shy away from recalibrating the Force Design modernization effort. The HMLA-269 reactivation seems to show that you're doing that. What other personnel, equipment, and organizational changes have you made to the Force Design initiative?

General SMITH. HMH: east coast Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron numbers will increase from 1x 1.0 squadron to 2x 0.75 squadrons.

HMLA: east coast Marine Light Attack Squadron numbers will increase from 1x 1.0 squadron to 2x 0.75 squadrons.

Infantry Battalion: IBX30 iterative experimentation has resulted in an 811x Marine sized battalion force structure.

Artillery: Initial actions had M777 battery reduction to 7x batteries of 6x tubes; however, current initiatives are planned for 10-12x batteries of 8x tubes.

Further refinements will be published later this year at the completion of the Campaign of Learning Audit Group (COLAG). Currently, COLAG 2024 outputs are being assessed by the DOTMLPF-C Working Group to determine supportability and associated risk(s). The initiatives under assessment span across the total force and aim to balance readiness with modernization.

156. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, last year you responded to a QFR after your confirmation hearing with the following: "Pre-Force Design 2030, the Marine Corps maintained 21 cannon artillery batteries organized with 6 howitzers for a total of 126 howitzers. In fiscal year 2027, the Marine Corps will retain 7 batteries organized with 8 howitzers for a total of 56 howitzers, a roughly 56 percent reduction." Is the Marine Corps still moving toward 7 Active Duty cannon artillery batteries each with eight howitzers?

General SMITH. No; While initial Force Design actions planned for a reduction down to seven Active component cannon artillery batteries with an increase from six to eight howitzers in each battery, after additional analysis, the Service's artillery modernization plan now retains 12 Active component cannon artillery batteries with six howitzers each.

157. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, last year you responded to a QFR after your confirmation hearing with the following: "the Marine Corps will retain 6 Reserve component batteries, which will also increase to 8 howitzer batteries in fiscal year 2025." Has there been any change to that plan?

General SMITH. No; the Marine Corps will maintain eight reserve batteries of six howitzers each.

158. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, the Army is conducting a self-propelled howitzer performance demonstration later this year and an evaluation in fiscal year 2026. Is the Marine Corps considering a transition from towed cannon artillery to self-propelled cannon artillery?

General SMITH. No; While the Marine Corps will continue to experiment with alternative indirect fire systems, the Service is currently not considering a transition from towed cannon artillery to self-propelled cannon artillery.

159. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what is the total number of infantry battalions in the total force and what are their manning levels?

General SMITH. As of 1 July 2024, within the Active component, the Marine Corps possesses 21 infantry battalions with one of these battalions established as a permanent Littoral Combat Team (LCT). All 21 of these battalions are manned at 100 percent, meaning that the Marine Corps has fully funded those billets. While manning reflects the number of funded billets, staffing numbers more accurately reflect the numbers of marines filling those billets. Staffing of individual battalions fluctuates based on available inventory of personnel and where the units are in their deployment cycle.

160. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what is the total number of aviation squadrons in the total force, broken down by type and PAA?

General SMITH. Within the Active component (AC) and Reserve component (RC), the total number of aviation squadrons are depicted below:

Squadron Type	T/M/S	Number of AC Aviation Squadrons as of 1 July Fiscal Year 2024	Number of PAA
VMFA(AW)	F/A-18C/D	6	12
VMFA	F-35B	10	10 ²
VMFA (12 PAA)	F-35B	2	12
VMFA	F-35C	2 ¹	10
VMA	AV-8B	2	16
VMM	MV-22B	15	10
VMGR	KC-130J	4	15 ²
HMH	CH-53E	4	16
HMH (.75)	CH-53E/K	2	12 ²
HMLA	AH-1Z/UH-1Y	6	15/9
HMLA (.75)	AH-1Z/UH-1Y	2	12/6
VMU	MQ-9A	2	6 ²
VMFAT	F-35B/C	2	25
VMMT	MV-22B	1	20
HMHT	CH-53E	1	16
HMLAT	AH-1Z/UH-1Y	1	15/9
VMUT	MQ-9A	1	4 ²

Note 1: Two VMFA (F-35C) Squadrons are C-5 and not counting toward AC numbers

Note 2: Not all Aircraft delivered

Reserve Squadron Type	T/M/S	Number of RC Aviation Squadrons as of 1 July Fiscal Year 2024	Number of PAA
VMFA	F/A-18C/D	1	12
VMM	MV-22B	2	20
VMGR	KC-130J	1	12
HMH (-)	CH-53E	1	8
HMLA(-)	AH-1Z/UH-1Y	2	10/8
HMLA DET A	AH-1Z/UH-1Y	1	5/5
VMFT	F-5	13	12

Note 3: VMFT-402 Ceremonial Standup in 4th quarter of fiscal year 2024, currently borrowing (4) F-5s from VMFT-401

TRAINING IN THE ARCTIC

161. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, is it more expensive to move personnel and equipment to Alaska or Norway to train?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps spent approximately \$2,250,000 in 2023 supporting Northern Edge, Artic Edge, and Red Flag exercises.

162. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, how much did the Marine Corps spend on Exercise Nordic Response 24 in Norway?

General SMITH. The Marine Corps spent approximately \$24,000,000.00 in 2024 on Exercise Nordic Response.

163. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, how many marines participated in Exercise Nordic Response 24 in Norway?

General SMITH. Approximately 2,200 marines from II MEF and various other units participated in Exercise Nordic Response.

164. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what times of the year have marines trained in Norway?

General SMITH. Marines train episodically in Norway with over the course of the year. Nordic Response 24 occurred 5 March to 22 March 24 and Northern Edge 25 is scheduled for 28 May to 18 June 25.

165. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, will the Marine Corps contingent for Arctic Edge 25 be the largest training event the Marine Corps has conducted in Alaska since 2018?

General SMITH. Arctic Edge 25 is planned for approximately 350 marines from various units to include 7th Mar Reg, 2d Bn 4th Mar, MACS-24, and CLR 45.

166. Senator SULLIVAN. General Smith, what is the approximate timeline to change the SMCR unit type that is currently stationed at JBER?

General SMITH. Joint Base Elmendorf maintains an enduring SMCR presence in the form of the Inspector and Instructor (I&I) staff and assigned reservists. Time required to change the unit type would be significant which and require detailed analysis of Home Training Center (HTC) personnel impacts to include recruiting, technical schools and supporting establishments.

Separate but more flexible are episodic JBER events that are manned with Active Duty Operational Support (ADOS) orders in which rotation timelines will vary dependent upon Reserve personnel availability. There are additional episodic support staffs all of which utilize Annual Training (AT) orders. AT orders are typically limited to 14 days whereas the marines/sailors participating in Alaska based events are allotted 22-day rotations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RECRUITING

167. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, The Navy discloses names of Commanding Officers that are relieved of command. The Navy did not meet their recruiting goals last year and will not meet their recruiting goal this year. What is/are the names of the person or persons in the recruiting chain of command that were held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy met its contracting mission of 40,978 recruits in fiscal year 2024. Due to a recovery in recruiter performance as a result of several deliberate initiatives, Navy entered fiscal year 2025 with a significantly greater number of recruits in the delayed entry program than the previous 2 years (fiscal year 2023–12 percent (4,524), fiscal year 2024–12 percent (4,872), fiscal year 2025–25 percent (10,150)). Some of the initiatives that resulted in this include:

- Detailing an experienced two-star admiral to lead Navy Recruiting Command (was historically a one-star in their first flag job).
- Standing up Recruiting Operations Center, which was created to monitor recruiting efforts in real time, focused on data driven processes to increase production per recruiter and remove variance among our 26 Talent Acquisition Groups.
- The Every Sailor is a Recruiter initiative, which is a program for currently serving sailors to share their experience and provide leads of interested applicants to Navy recruiting.
- Standing up the Navy Recruiting Reserve Command
- Increasing recruiter manning, which enabled the Navy a greater reach and engagement with the youth population.
- Establishment of the Future Sailor Preparatory Course for physical fitness (FSPC-P) and academic (FSPC-A), which provides pre-boot camp support to potential future sailors to strengthen their ability to succeed at boot camp.

While we have had recent success and are projected to continue through fiscal year 2025, making recruiting mission remains one of the Navy's top priorities. As such, this effort falls on all of us in uniform to support—and every one of us is accountable to ensure success in future years. Moreover, we continue to advocate for a National Call to Service, and have appreciated the leadership from Congress and other members of government, the private sectors and academia that recognize the national security imperative of this mission.

168. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, was the Rear Admiral in charge of recruiting held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Navy met its contracting mission of 40,978 recruits in fiscal year 2024.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SHIP MAINTENANCE DELAYS

169. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, Ships are delayed getting out of maintenance and major ship building programs are delayed. The first *Columbia*-class submarine is 12 to 16 months late. The fourth and fifth blocks of the *Virginia*-class submarine are 36 and 24 months late. The first *Constellation*-class frigate is 36 months behind schedule. The future aircraft carrier *Enterprise* (CVN-80) is approximately

18 to 26 months late. What are the names of persons in leadership at NAVSEA that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

170. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Aircraft Carriers that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

171. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Ships Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

172. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Integrated Warfare Systems Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

173. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Unmanned and Small Combatants Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

174. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Ships Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

175. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Attack Submarines Leadership been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

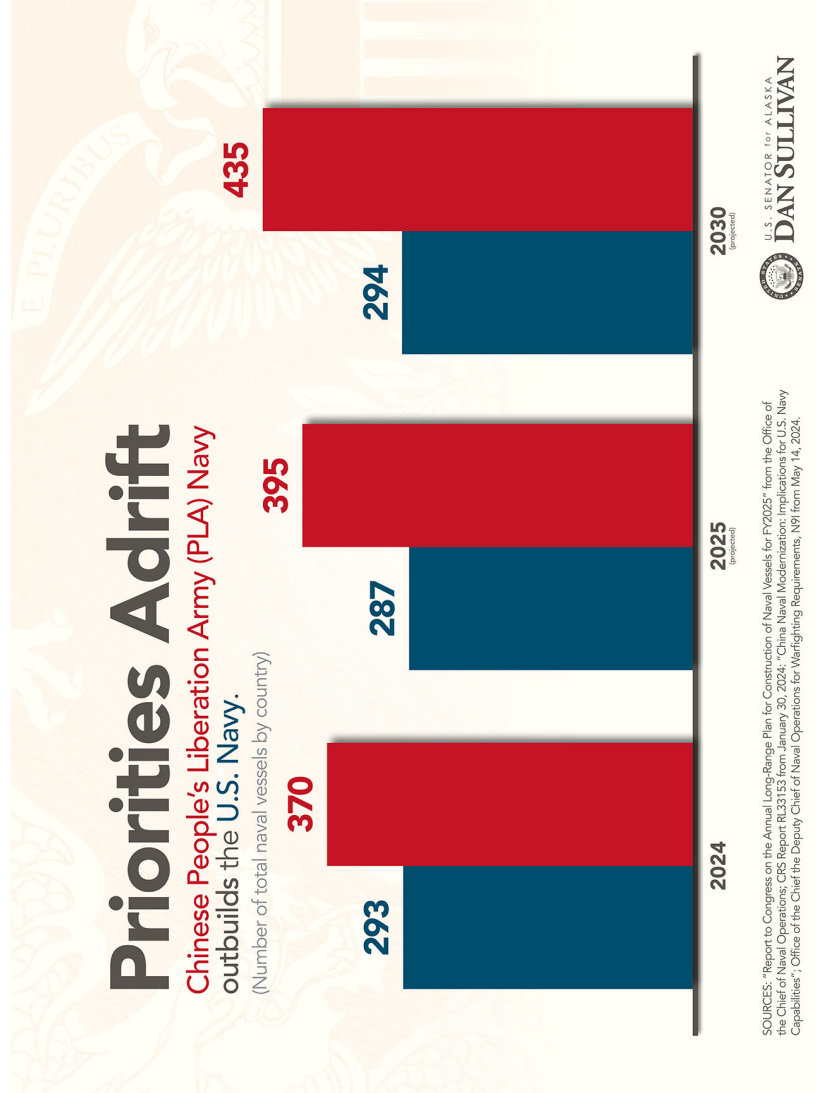
Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

176. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Strategic Submarines Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.

177. Senator SCOTT. Secretary Del Toro, what are the names of persons in leadership at PEO Team Undersea Warfare Systems Leadership that have been held accountable and how were they held accountable?

Secretary DEL TORO. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Honorable Nickolas Guertin, and I hold every Program Executive Officer and Program Manager accountable for their performance. However, the macro conditions challenging the U.S. shipbuilding industry must be weighed in the assessment of their performance. The Navy's officers and civilians that lead their programs will be accountable for the actions they take to overcome those challenges and restore Navy shipbuilding programs to on-cost and on-schedule performance.



Appendix

Navy Reserve Training and Administrative Time Requirements Summary

Tier 1 Ready Now Annual Requirements (Hours)	35.77	Total Annual Requirements (Hours)	103.03
Tier 2 Deckplate Annual Requirements (Hours)	45.07	Total Annual Requirements (Drill Days)	12.88
Tier 3 Training Annual Requirements (Hours)	10.50	Total Annual Requirement (DWE)	6.44
Tier 3A Navy RC-Specific Admin Annual Requirements (Hours)	11.70		

TIER 1 REQUIREMENTS: READY NOW

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
AT/FP Training	Annual Anti-Terrorism / Force Protection Level I Training	DODINST 2000.16	All SELRES	1.00	0.80	0.80	Online Training	https://atfelvel1.dtic.mil/at/signin	FLTPMS
AT/FP Training	Active Shooter Training (Drill/Table Top)	NAVORTHINST 10-222 USFF at OPORD 3300-17	All SELRES	1.00	2.50	2.50	Online/ NOSC/ NRA/ Unit-Delivered		FLTPMS
BCA	Biannual Measurement	OPNAVINST 6110.1H	All SELRES	2.00	0.50	1.00	NOSC/NRA/ Unit-Delivered	http://doni.daps.dia.mil/Directives/06000%20Medical%20and%20Dental%20Services/06-100%20General%20Physical%20Fitness/6110.1H.pdf	PRIMS
Common Access Card (CAC)	Maintain valid CAC. ID required IAW Geneva Conventions. DOD CAC-specific requirement from HSPD-12.	DODINST 1000.1 HSPD-12 of 27 Aug 04	All SELRES	0.33	1.10	0.37	Local DEERS Site		DEERS
Dental Exam	Dental Class 1 or 2 for deployment.	DODINST 6025.19 MANMED P-117 Chap. 6	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	MTF		MRRS
Flu Shot	Influenza Vaccination by 1 January of calendar year.	DODINST 6025.19 NAVADMIN 270/09	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	MTF / NOSC MDR		MRRS
GTCC	Annual GTCC Cardholder Training to maintain GTCC account	OPNAVINST 4650.16	Regular Travelers and mobilizers	1.00	1.00	1.00	Online Training	https://www.navyup.navy.mil/site/ccpmd/training/travel/tccbhtml/tccbhtmlmainmenu.htm	
Immunizations	Hepatitis A, Tetanus-Diphtheria, MMR Vaccinations current as well as Tuberculosis screen and PAP/Mammogram A/R. HIV test every 2 years.	DODINST 6025.19	All SELRES	1.00	0.50	0.50	MTF		MRRS
Information Assurance Training	Annual Training to maintain access to DOD Computer networks	DODDIR 8570.1 SECNAVINST 5239.3A OPNAVINST 5239.1C	All SELRES	1.00	0.50	0.50	Online Training	http://ase.disa.mil/eta/aaav/aaav/index.htm	FLTPMS
NMCI Documentation	Verify signed user agreement and SAAR Forms for access to NMCI network	COMNAVRESFORINST 5040.1B	All SELRES	1.00	0.20	0.20	NOSC IT Department-delivered	http://private.navyreserve.navy.mil/3447B/m6N61%20Project%20Management/SPAWAR%20Access%20Documents/SAAR_OPNAV5239-14.pdf	
Page 2 Verification	Annual Verification of Record of Emergency Data within 180 days of AT. Can be verified through NSIPS self-service account. Changes administered by NOSC/NRA Admin.	MILPERSMAN 1070-200	All SELRES	1.00	0.10	0.10	Online Verification or NOSC/ NRA/Unit Admin-delivered	http://private.navyreserve.navy.mil/3447B/m1CNFRF_NLCA/TOOLBOX/Verify%20Page%202%20via%20NSIPS%20ESR.ppt	NSIPS
PARFQ	Biannual Completion + Medical Waiver if required	OPNAVINST 6110.1H	All SELRES	2.00	0.80	1.60	Online Form Completion	https://primis2008.bol.navy.mil/	PRIMS
PFA	Biannual Completion	OPNAVINST 6110.1H	All SELRES	2.00	2.55	5.10	Unit-Delivered	http://doni.daps.dia.mil/Directives/06000%20Medical%20and%20Dental%20Services/06-100%20General%20Physical%20Fitness/6110.1H.pdf	PRIMS
PHA	Completion of Annual Physical by end of birth month. Includes Annual health Record Review as required by MANMED	DODINST 6025.19 SECNAVINST 6120.3 MANMED P-117 Chap. 16	All SELRES	1.00	4.00	4.00	MTF	http://doni.daps.dia.mil/Directives/06000%20Medical%20and%20Dental%20Services/06-100%20General%20Physical%20Fitness/6110.1H.pdf	MRRS
Physical Training (PT)	Drill Weekend PT	OPNAVINST 6110.1H	All SELRES	12.00	1.00	12.00	Unit-Delivered	http://doni.daps.dia.mil/Directives/06000%20Medical%20and%20Dental%20Services/06-100%20General%20Physical%20Fitness/6110.1H.pdf	Local
PII Training	Annual PII training by August of each CY	DODDIR 5400.11-R SECNAVINST 5211.5E	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Online Training	https://ile-lms.nko.navy.mil/ItemDetails.asp?DisplayEnroll=true&CourseRef=1067222	FLTPMS

TIER 1 REQUIREMENTS: READY NOW—Continued

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
Seabag / Supply	Complete Applicable Seabag Requirements	COMNAVRESFOR P4000.1	All SELRES	0.10	1.00	0.10	NOSC/NRA/Delivered		Local
Security Clearance	CNO-directed continuous SECRET eligibility. NACLRC required every 10 years to maintain. Electronic submission via eQIP system.	SECNAVINST 5510.30B	All SELRES (minus Seabee/CS/MU)	0.10	3.00	0.30	Electronic Submission of Form	http://www.opm.gov/e-qip/ http://www.opm.gov/e-qip/reference.asp	
Security Education	Security Indoc Brief at Command. Security and CI refresher annually. Security debrief.	SECNAV M-5510.30 SECNAVINST 5510.30B	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		
Urinalysis	All personnel tested at least once per fiscal year (15% per unit per month per OPNAVINST).	OPNAVINST 5350.4D	All SELRES	1.00	1.70	1.70	Unit-Delivered		
				Tier 1 Annual Requirements (Hours)		35.77			

TIER 2 REQUIREMENTS: DECKPLATE NAVY BASELINE

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
ADAMS	ADAMS for Leaders—one time career class for CO/XO/SEA	OPNAVINST 5350.4D	First-time SELRES CO/XO/SEA	0.05	4.00	0.20	External Class	https://www.nko.navy.mil/portal/personaldevelopment/home/adams	ADAMS
Advancement Exam (E-1 to E-6)	Semi-Annual Advancement Exam	BUPERSINST 1430.16F	SELRES E-1 to E-6	2.00	3.00	6.00	NOSC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		
Advancement Exam Worksheet Verification (E-1 to E-6)	Semi-Annual Worksheet Verification	BUPERSINST 1430.16F	SELRES E-1 to E-5	2.00	0.20	0.40	NOSC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		
CDB	Career Development Board Every 6 months minimum for RC Sailors. Attend and serve on CDBs.	OPNAVINST 1040.11C NAVPERS 15878K	All SELRES	2.00	1.00	2.00	Unit-Delivered		
CMEQ/CAT Team Surveys	Annual CAT Team Survey and within 3 months of COC	OPNAVINST 5354.1F	All SELRES	1.50	2.00	3.00	NOSC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		
Command Indoc-trination	Command/NOSC Indoc for newly reporting personnel	NAVPERS 15878K OPNAVINST 1740.3C	All SELRES	0.34	4.00	1.36	NOSC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		
Enlisted Leadership Development Training	ELD-Facilitated Leadership Training once per paygrade	NAVADMIN 185/19	SELRES E-4 through E-7 Selectees	0.15	32.00	4.80	ELD Facilitator-Delivered		FLTMPs
ESR Maintenance	Establish / Maintain ESR. ESR maintenance requirements will grow approaching FSR phase-out 30Sep10	NAVADMIN 292/06 NAVADMIN 043/09	All SELRES	1.00	0.20	0.20	Individual		NSIPS
EVALs/CHIEFEVALs/FITREPS	Complete personal input for FITREP/EVAL. Rank assigned personnel, chop their evals and debrief.	BUPERSINST 1610.10B	All SELRES	1.50	3.50	5.25	Unit-Delivered		NAVIT98A
Family Care Plan Verification	Establishment and annual certification of Care Plan Certificate and CarePlan Arrangements	OPNAVINST 1740.4D	SELRES single parents, dual mil spouses and A/R	1.00	0.10	0.10	NRC/NRA/Unit-Delivered	http://doni.daps.dla.mil/Directives/01000%20Military%20Personnel%20Support/01-700%20Morale%20Community%20and%20Religious%20Services/1740.4D.PDF http://www.npc.navy.mil/ReferenceLibrary/Forms/NAVPERS/FourColumnDetails/NAVPERS_1740-6.htm http://www.npc.navy.mil/ReferenceLibrary/Forms/NAVPERS/FourColumnDetails/NAVPERS_1740-7.htm	NSIPS
Mid-Term Counseling	Annual Personal Counseling Session	BUPERSINST 1610.10B	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		NAVIT98A
Enlisted Leader Development (ELD)	ELD training approx. every 5 years	NAVADMIN 254/21	All SELRES Enlisted	0.20	32.00	6.40	Facilitator-delivered		FLTMPs
Officer Leadership Training	Leadership Training Every 5 years	ALNAVRESFOR 005/11	All SELRES Officers	0.20	16.00	3.20	CPD-Delivered		FLTMPs
Ombudsman	Appoint and coordinate required actions and training with unit Ombudsman	OPNAVINST 1750.1F	SELRES CO	0.04	1.00	0.04	Unit-Delivered		Local
Reserve Affiliation Success Workshop	Required course for all new affiliates to learn and understand Reserve Policy and procedures	OPNAVINST 1040.11D NAVPERS 15878L	All New Affiliates	2.60	4.00	10.40	NRC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		

TIER 2 REQUIREMENTS: DECKPLATE NAVY BASELINE—Continued

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
Re-Enlistment Mandatory Training	Hazing Policy and Prevention, Fraternalization Awareness and Prevention, Homosexual Policy, Family Readiness Training	OPNAVINST 1500.22F NAVADMIN 098/10	All Re-Enlistees	0.18	4.00	0.72	NRC/NRA/Unit-Delivered		FLTPMS
				Tier 2 Annual Requirements (Hours)		45.07			

TIER 3 REQUIREMENTS: GENERAL TRAINING

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Training	Annual CTIP refresher training	DODINST 2200.01 OPNAVINST 5300.11	All SELRES	1.00	1.0	1.0	Online Training	https://ile-lms.nko.navy.mil/ItemDetails.asp?DisplayEnroll=true&CourseRef=366000	
Safety Training	CNRFC-directed Non-Supervisor Safety Training Baseline for all Reserve units: Safety Orientation, HAZCOM, Ergonomics, Fire Prevention and Fire Extinguisher, ORM, Monthly Safety Talk.	OPNAVINST 5100.23G 29 CFR 1910 OPNAVINST 5100.39C	All Military, SELRES, Civilian Employees	1.00	2.50	2.50	NRC-Delivered Online Training	https://esams.cnrc.navy.mil/ESAMS_GEN_2?login	ESAMS
GMT 1	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program	ODI 6495.02, OPNAVINST 1752.1C	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		NEL
GMT 2	Cyber Awareness Challenge	SECNAVINST 5239.3C	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Online Training	Navy eLearning (NwL) (DOD-CAC-2024.0)	NEL
GMT 3	Counterintelligence Awareness and Reporting	DODD 5240.06, DODD 5205.16	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		NEL
GMT 4	Records Management	SECNAVINST 5210.8E	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		NEL
GMT 5	Suicide Prevention Program	OPNAVINST 1720.4B	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Unit-Delivered		NEL
GMT 6	Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)	DODI 5200.48	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Online Training	TWMS-686564	NEL, TWMS
GMT 7	Operations Security	SECNAVINST 3070.2A	All SELRES	1.00	1.00	1.00	Online Training	TWMS-717067	NEL, TWMS
				Tier 3 Annual Requirements (Hours)		10.50			

TIER 3A REQUIREMENTS: NAVY RC-SPECIFIC ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
2N1 AOD	Necessary IOT to compete for an APPLY leadership billet	RESFORNOTE 5400/REFORINST 1412.2	SELRES Officers	0.1	28	2.8			NSIPS
APPLY Board JOApply Process	Research and apply for Reserve Unit Billets via the APPLY process	COMNAVRESFORINST 1001.5F CH-1 COMNAVRESFORCOM NOTICE 5400 Series	Officer SELRES	0.33	3.00	0.99	Online	https://apply.navyreserve.navy.mil/	APPLY
AT/ADT/DTT Application Submission via NROWS	Complete and Route NROWS AT/ADT/DTT Application (80% of population)	COMNAVRESFORINST 1001.5F	All SELRES	1.80	0.30	0.54	Online	https://nrows.sscno.mmc1.navy.mil/nrows/secure/dod_consent.do	NROWS
AT/ADT/DTT Travel Claim Submission / Liquidation	Complete AT/ADT/DTT Travel authorization and voucher and submit for approval (80% of population)	COMNAVRESFORINST 1001.5F	All SELRES	1.60	1.30	2.08	Online	https://dtsproweb.defensetravel.osd.mil/dts-app/pubsite/all/view/	DTS
AT Waiver	Generate and Route AT Participation Waiver (20% of population)	COMNAVRESFORINST 1001.5F	All SELRES	0.20	0.30	0.06	Unit-Delivered		
Berthing Sign-Up	Berthing sign-up for those granted berthing privileges by NOSIC	COMNAVRESFORINST P400.1	SELRES needing berthing	1.00	0.30	0.30	Unit-Delivered		
CEI Verification	Annual Verification of Employer Data or Update when SELRES changes civilian employers	USD(P+R) Memo of 21 March 2003 DODINST 7730.54 BUPERSINST 1001.39F	All SELRES	1.25	0.20	0.25	NOSC/NRA/Unit-Delivered or Online Verification	NSIPS.	
MyNavy Assignments	Research and apply for Reserve Unit Billets via the MNA process (Enlisted only)	RESPERSMAN 1300 series	Enlisted SELRES	0.33	1.50	0.50	Individual	https://mynavyassignment.navy.mil/mna/index.action	MNA

TIER 3A REQUIREMENTS: NAVY RC-SPECIFIC ADMINISTRATION—Continued

SUBJECT	REQUIREMENT	DIRECTIVE	AFFECTED POPULATION	ANNUAL REQUIREMENT	TIME COMMITMENT FOR EVENT (HOURS)	ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT (HOURS)	DELIVERY METHOD	WEB CONTENT	SYSTEM
IDT Drill Pay Muster	Complete IDT Muster (Avg per member per unit)	COMNAVRESFORINST 1001.5E	All SELRES	12.00	0.45	5.40	Unit-Delivered		EDM
IDT Operational Support Data Capture	Report unit OS data last Friday of each month (Unit CO only)	COMNAVRESFORCOM Notice 1001 Series	SELRES CO	12.00	0.10	1.20	Online Data Entry	https://205.85.24.104/	
Meal Signature Sheets	NSIPS Meal Pass Log or Meal Signature Record (NAVRES 1291/1) for meals consumed by eligible SELRES	COMNAVRESFORINST P4000.1	Enlisted SELRES	12.00	0.03	0.30	Unit-Delivered		
NROWS Budget Estimator (BE)	Unit annual AT budget submission and maintenance (Unit CO only)	COMNAVRESFORCOM Notice 1001 Series	SELRES CO	1.00	0.05	0.05	Online Data Entry	https://nrows.sscno.mmc.navy.mil/nrows/budget.do	NROWS
Annual Incentive Pay Recertification	Submit recertifications for Incentive Pays	RESPERMAN M-1001.5 (CH-12)	Eligible SELRES	0.07	0.50	0.03	Online Data Entry	https://private.navyreserve.navy.mil/cnrc/N-Codes/N1/CNRC_N11/Pages/Default.aspx	
				Tier 3A Annual Requirements (Hours)		11.70			

