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**PROTECTING AMERICAN INTERESTS IN
A CONVERGENT GLOBAL THREAT
ENVIRONMENT**

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ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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PROTECTING AMERICAN INTERESTS IN A CONVERGENT GLOBAL THREAT ENVIRONMENT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, February 12, 2025.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:01 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Mike Rogers [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROGERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

Welcome to our first hearing of the 119th Congress where we will examine a hard truth. The United States faces the most challenging threat environment since World War II. China is investing heavily in its military and threatening to outpace the United States.

Russia's military, despite suffering massive casualties in Ukraine, is rapidly reconstituting. In fact, the Russian army is larger today than it was before the conflict.

North Korea has doubled down expanding its nuclear capabilities.

And while Israel has dealt a blow to Iran, the Ayatollah continues to harbor nuclear ambitions. And with the help of his terrorist proxies, he's attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea and American troops across the Middle East.

Alone, each of these adversaries poses a significant threat to the United States, but they are no longer acting alone. They're building an alliance dedicated to countering American interests.

China, Iran, North Korea are actively supporting Putin's war machine. Iran is providing Russia with thousands of drones. North Korea is supplying thousands of artillery shells, ballistic missiles, and soldiers.

However, it's China that's become Russia's most important lifeline. In accordance with their "no limits partnership," Xi is keeping Putin's economy afloat by buying Russian oil and gas. And without Chinese semiconductors and dual-use components, Russia's defense industrial base would have already come to a screeching halt.

This growing cooperation extends well beyond the war in Ukraine. Putin has expressed public support for Xi's ambitions to reunify Taiwan. Meanwhile, Russia has helped China expand its nuclear arsenal, as well as enhance air defense, anti-ship and submarine capabilities.

In defiance of western sanctions, Russia and China have funded the Ayatollah's malign agendas by purchasing large amounts of Iranian oil.

As for North Korea, Russia reportedly intends to share advanced space and satellite technology to aid Kim's development of ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles].

This deepening alignment creates the risk that conflict anywhere could quickly become a multi-front war. We must take this threat seriously. We must take the --make investments necessary to deter and, if necessary, defeat this new axis of aggressors.

Yet, today, the U.S. defense spending as a percentage of GDP [gross domestic product] is at its lowest level since before World War II. This is not enough to deter our enemies.

Just look at the consequences of underfunded and un-credible American deterrence over the last four years:

The Taliban retook Afghanistan; Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor; Iran and its proxies perpetrated the worst attacks on Israel since the Holocaust; Kim abandoned the pursuit of peaceful reunification and, instead, put his country on war footing; and China has become increasingly aggressive, escalating against Taiwan and the Philippines.

Given these threats, it will take significant investments to restore peace through strength. We must get our defense spending back above four percent, at a minimum, of our GDP. That starts with a reconciliation process that includes robust defense spending. Our allies and partners must follow suit and spend more on their own defense as well.

The United States cannot and should not face this convergence of threats alone.

But just spending more is not the answer. The weapons we are buying cost too much and take too long to get to the war fighter. Every dollar has to be spent smarter. As such, additional investments must come hand in hand with reforms to field innovation faster, improve efficiency across the DOD [Department of Defense].

I truly believe we are living through a watershed moment. The decisions we make in the months ahead could be the difference between war and peace.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on their assessment of these threats and what advice they have for this committee on how we deter them.

With that, I yield to my friend, the ranking member, for any opening comments he may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for bringing together this hearing. I think it's a perfect way to start the committee's work this year, to really analyze the challenges we face. And I think you laid them out reasonably well.

We have a group of adversaries that are coming together with the common purpose, basically, of reducing the influence of the U.S. in the world. There are certainly a lot of differences between Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, terrorist groups like Hamas, and

Hezbollah, and ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria], but the one thing they all share in common is they would like the U.S. to have less influence in their part of the world or the world in general.

And they have found increasingly, as the chairman outlined, ways to work together, even within their differences, to try to accomplish that goal. I think that's the frame we need to think about this in. We face that challenge from these adversaries because they want to push us out and reduce our influence.

And the second part of the challenge, I think the chairman also laid out quite well, and that is how Department of Defense responds to that, and how we get better at acquisition and procurement.

It takes too long to purchase the systems that we need. Because the other big way the world has changed is the rapid pace of changing warfare. And we've seen this in Ukraine. Drones, counter-drone technology, secure communications, disrupting those secure communications, it is a constant 3-D chess game.

If you are in a conflict, you need to update your systems constantly, quickly, and efficiently. The Pentagon is not built for that.

Members of this committee who were on here before have heard me often cite an article on Foreign Affairs from about, I guess, six months ago now that talked about how the Pentagon was built to be the 1950s Ford Motor Company. And that is great, but what they need to be is the 2022 Apple, okay, an innovative technology company instead of a process-oriented company.

Improving efficiency and effectiveness at the Pentagon is absolutely crucial. The chairman is right, more money alone isn't going to solve the problem. And whenever any group comes to me and asks for more money, which is just about every single day, by the way, my response is: What are you doing with the money you got?

And if you can't answer that question, it doesn't really bode well for what you are going to do with any more. So, it's really important that the Pentagon gets to a more efficient and effective place.

And, you know, the much-talked-about DOGE [Department of Government Efficiency] could be a positive in this regard. They could go into the Pentagon and make it more efficient and more effective. And I would urge members of this committee to make sure that they do that instead of engaging in personal loyalty tests for personal vengeance. That is not going to help anything. We've got work to do.

And then when you look at what the U.S. response should be, broadly, to this, I have concerns, and I'm really interested to hear what the witness had to say about that, that we are still basically on the post-World War II mantra of, "We want to dominate." Okay? We have all these adversaries. We, the United States, have to be big enough, strong enough, and powerful enough, I guess, to bring them to heel.

I don't consider that to be possible in the world we face right now. China is a peer competitor with us, unlike anything the Soviet Union had, because they've got a strong economy. They are also building up their military, but their economy is strong. Plus, they have got the partners that we laid out.

We are not going to be able to meet this alone. So, the partnerships are going to be crucial. There has been much denigration of

our allies recently of, you know, we are getting a bad deal on NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], we are getting a bad deal on South Korea. There is a fundamental misunderstanding that the alliances that were built post-World War II were, yes, dependent on a disproportionate amount of U.S. military support. Okay?

But what isn't understood is, we benefitted from that more than any other country in the world. We have been the most powerful economy the world has ever seen for 80 years because of the stability that that brought. Let us not toss those alliances aside because we think they're not doing enough for us. We have to figure out how to make those alliances work as we go forward.

And we also have to have a principle. Because there is another big part of this, what I like to refer to as the undecided vote. As we try to exercise our influence, Russia and China are also trying to spread theirs, the BRICS [Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa] countries, their ability to try to create an economic alternative to the U.S. level of dominance.

Their ability to succeed on that is going to be dependent upon countries like India, and Brazil, and South Africa, and elsewhere. Are they going to align with them or are they going to work with us? We have to understand their interests in doing that.

And one key part of this is the notion that the U.S. believes in sovereignty. We don't believe that Russia should be able to take Ukraine. We don't believe that China should be able to grab territory from a half dozen different countries. So, it is a problem when the President of the United States talks about taking Greenland, and Panama, and Gaza. And the Canada one I still don't fully understand. But when you talk about that as well, it seems to say, "Hey, what is the American message: Might makes right. If you want it, go get it."

That is not a message that is going to accrue to our benefit in the world.

So, I hope we will consider all of that as we try to figure out how to meet the two huge challenges: one, a world in many places that is uniting against us; and a Pentagon that is not up to where it needs to be to build the equipment we need at the scale and pace that is necessary to put us in the best position to meet our defense interests.

With that, I look forward to the witnesses' testimony and to the questions.

Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ranking Member.

I would now like to introduce our witnesses.

First we have General Jack Keane, Chairman of the Board for the Institute for the Study of War. He is also a former 4-star general who served as the Army's Vice Chief of Staff.

We welcome Dr. Mara Karlin, is a professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She has served in numerous senior roles at the DOD, including as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities.

Welcome, both.

General Keane, you are recognized first.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN “JACK” M. KEANE, RETIRED,
CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR**

General KEANE. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me back to share some thoughts with you today.

I am very familiar with the work of the committee and your dedication and tireless effort to provide for the national defense, and the sustained support you provide for the armed forces and their families. I am privileged today to be with my colleague, Dr. Mara Karlin, a highly-respected national security professional, who has devoted much of her life to help protecting the American people.

I was honored to participate in the Congressional Commission that examined the NDS [National Defense Strategy] 2022. We found common ground on the dangers we are facing and issued a bipartisan, unanimous report. Frankly, we were alarmed and called for change and urgent action. Your hearing topic today was central to our report findings and recommendations.

The threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging, as our chairman indicated, since 1945, and include the potential for near-term major war. The United States last fought a global conflict during World War II. The nation last prepared for one, for such a conflict, during the Cold War. We are not adequately prepared today.

China and Russia’s “no limits partnership” has only deepened and broadened, to include a military and economic partnership with Iran and North Korea, each of which represents its own significant threats to U.S. interests. The new axis of nations opposed to U.S. interests create a real risk, if not a likelihood, that conflict anywhere could become a multi-theater or global war.

Clearly, the dominant power in this group is China, which the NDS 2022 identified as the pacing challenge. However, the reality is China is outpacing the United States and has largely negated the U.S. military advantage in the Western Pacific through 20-plus years of focused military investment.

Meanwhile, the United States military capability eroded due to the 9/11 wars and underfunding conventional capabilities. Indeed, China outguns the United States in every military category: surface ships, offensive and defensive missiles, anti-ship missiles, regional air power, and ground forces. The only area, as you know, is submarines, where the United States maintains an advantage.

The convergence of the four powers led by China and Russia, while it is not a formal security alliance, their cooperation has significantly accelerated and increased, given the war in Ukraine and their desire to help Russia to win. If Russia wins, so does China, Iran, and North Korea.

Their underlying common interests, as the ranking minority stated, is to weaken U.S. leadership and the global order the United States and like-minded democracies have fostered for almost 80 years. This development cannot be taken lightly and it is fundamentally altering the geopolitical landscape.

This group has assisted each other in overcoming international sanctions, have bolstered each other’s military capability, and fostered support to each country’s sphere of influence.

The next National Security Strategy and the subsequent NDS must address the strategy and resources to effectively deter these adversaries, with the primary focus on China. And it certainly should include our allies and partners.

It will not be easy or cheap. We must rebuild the military. Readiness is down. The Army, Navy, and Air Force are much too small. We need to restore deterrence by increasing defense funding.

Since the end of World War II to the present, defense spending as a share of the federal budget has overall declined. It is now at 13 percent, which suggests the United States could spend a much greater share of its budget on defense, as it has in the past.

The nation spends a smaller share on defense because other forms of spending have taken a priority. It is that simple. This is a policy choice, not a fiscal constraint. During the Cold War, funding peaked at 6.8 percent, with an average around 6 percent for the period.

During the Iraq-Afghanistan it was 4.7 percent.

I agree with Chairman Rogers and Chairman Wicker to increase defense spending closer to five percent of GDP above inflation beginning with the next two years. It underscores the urgency of the crisis we are facing, to restore deterrence, increase much-needed capabilities, fix the defense industrial base, and also fix the defense's ossified business practices.

And there is much that can be done to reduce waste and inefficiency. And let's welcome DOGE if they can help.

Thank you. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Keane (retired) can be found in the Appendix on page 67.]

STATEMENT OF DR. MARA E. KARLIN, PROFESSOR, JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

The chair now recognizes Dr. Karlin.

Dr. KARLIN. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. And I am honored to be seated next to General Jack Keane, a thoughtful and serious defense leader.

Today's threats are complex and interconnected. The plasticity of this period, wherein major regions are being fundamentally reshaped, contains challenges and opportunities for U.S. national security interests. An age of comprehensive conflict has begun.

This is total war in which combatants draw on vast arrays of resources, mobilize their societies, and attack a broad variety of targets, reshape their economies to prioritize warfare over all other state activities.

We see war changing in three ways:

First, the continuum of conflict has collapsed.

You know, in an earlier era, we might have seen the terrorism and insurgency of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, as inhabiting the low end of the spectrum of conflict intensity. The armies waging conventional warfare in Ukraine as residing in the middle, and the nuclear threat shaping Russia's war and China's growing arsenal, is sitting at the high end. Today, there is no sense of mutual exclusivity.

To put it in cinematic terms, when it comes to war, we see everything, everywhere, all at once.

Second, the demography of war has expanded.

The post-9/11 wars were defined by the outsized impact of terrorist groups, proxies, and militias. Today, state militaries are back, but non-state groups have hardly left the stage.

And, three, the return of deterrence.

In the post-9/11 era, deterrence was rarely invoked, since the idea seemed irrelevant against nihilistic non-state actors like Al Qaeda and ISIS. Now, almost every debate about U.S. national security boils down to deterrence. These include deterrence by denial: the act of making it difficult for an enemy to achieve its intended objective, like we saw with Iran's conventional military attacks on Israel.

Or deterrence by punishment, which requires credibly threatening an enemy with severe consequences if it takes certain actions, like we saw with a coordinated diplomatic effort paired with credible threats when Putin threatened to use nuclear weapons.

And the third approach is deterrence by resilience, which we see through the rationale behind the historic and ongoing dispersal of U.S. military bases in the Indo-Pacific.

So, given that we have the most turbulent global security environment in decades, the United States needs to focus on three things:

First, prioritizing China but not ignoring other threats.

No other country has the will and, increasingly, the capability to fundamentally reshape the global security order, an order that has benefitted our national security interests for 80 years.

The tricky strategic question isn't whether the United States should prioritize the threat posed by China. The answer to that is yes. But, instead, how to address the other threats, like Russia, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. And this presents less of a binary choice than previously, given their cooperation.

The United States has finite resources, of course, but ignoring threats is shortsighted.

Two, we need to strengthen America's military and other tools of statecraft.

The defense budget is both at the highest level in U.S. history and a historic low level as a percentage of GDP. But it is more important for us to focus on what should and should not be funded than a top line. Investment should include nuclear modernization, undersea platforms, uncrewed systems across domains, resilient space architecture, cyber, artificial intelligence, munitions, the submarine industrial base, and R&D [research and development].

We can look at creating a focused deterrence fund to support our efforts in the Indo-Pacific, which would make it easier to target resources related to the pacing challenge of China.

Even with more funding, the military requires cuts to evolve in line with the security environment. This could include excess infrastructure, older ships and aircraft, and compensation costs.

Beyond resources and platforms, it is often said the people who serve are our military's greatest asset. Having a force whose members have varied backgrounds and experiences is a strategic and warfighting advantage vis-a-vis China and Russia.

The Secretary of Defense is required to give all of you an update this month assessing the National Defense Strategy. I recommend you request assessments on the wars in Europe and the Middle East, threats to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, and the use of U.S. troops on the border, including the impact on the military's ability to prioritize China, and the administration plans to empower the Department of Homeland Security to fulfill its statutory obligations, rather than relying on the U.S. military to do so.

Now, of course, relying solely on the U.S. military to address global threats is a recipe for disaster. The United States has several tools in its statecraft toolkit, including diplomacy, development, and economic carrots and sticks. Underfunding or degrading U.S. soft power means the United States will rely on hard power. Ultimately, that approach is not only inefficient but it will cost more, in American treasure and American lives.

Finally, I would just highlight that America's unparalleled network of allies and partners sets it apart from every other great power in history. This is a net positive. It is ultimately more effective and less pricey.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Karlin can be found in the Appendix on page 86.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Karlin.

I now recognize myself for five minutes for questions.

General Keane, I appreciate in your opening statement acknowledging that you believe that the goal of getting to five percent of defense spending, GDP, five percent of GDP in defense spending by the end of this President's term should be the goal.

But I am really interested in your recommendations on how we could improve the acquisition process and enhance our defense and organic industrial base to be able to take that additional money and turn it into capabilities.

General KEANE. That is the major challenge--

The CHAIRMAN. Your microphone.

General KEANE. Excuse me.

Certainly that is a major challenge that we are facing. I mean, we know we have workforce issues out there. We have got global supply chain issues.

But, as I think many of you saw, what the Reagan Institute published, you know, when Ronald Reagan did that much-talked-about and successful build-up during the Cold War, he was moving from a capacity that was very different than we have today.

At that time, we had 51 tier one defense organizations. We are down to five today. And that collapse took place as a result of the end of the Cold War back in the early nineties and the so-called peace dividend. Everybody was for it. And I am not relitigating those issues. But that consolidation then collapse, went too far.

And, also, the cut in the military, which was on average about 40 percent went too far. And we know that because we found ourselves fighting two wars sequentially in Iraq and Afghanistan as opposed to the number one superpower being able to handle both of them at the same time simultaneously. We couldn't; we didn't have the land forces to do it.

So, here we sit, now, with a major challenge on our hands. As I indicated, China is outpacing us in just about everything. And when you look at our ability to catch up to it--and that is a classified briefing all on its own, and if you haven't seen it, please take a look at it--we are very challenged to catch up.

So, the defense industrial base has got to have, in my view, a number of things:

They need consistent, reliable funding.

Second, they need continuous demand to sustain their workforce and supply chain flow so it is not uneven, where some of the suppliers then pull back from them, and then they have an interruption and it is another year, it is another two years, before they get that back online.

The requirements process, I am not an expert in all the services, but based on what I know about a couple of them very well, it is out of control. And the requirements creep has got to stop. It is delaying programs and it is increasing cost. We have got to discipline the services to do that and hold them accountable.

And I was as guilty as anybody in this in my four-and-a-half years as the vice chief. But the risks have changed now. We have got to accept risk in our business practices in the Pentagon.

This business of avoiding zero tolerance for error has got to stop. Nobody runs a private business like that out there, but we do here. And we have got thousands of civilians involved in this process taking no risk. Everything is about performance. It is all about schedule.

And we have got to stop over-testing. And that is fundamental to the preposition that we have to take as much risk out of this process.

You know as well as I do, Mr. Chairman, multiple Secretaries have looked at this process. We have got to finally come to grips with fixing it. And the defense industrial base is a good place to start our business practices; inside the Pentagon is, also. It is much needed.

We can't kick this down the road anymore.

And I agree with the comments that have been made. It is not just about the increase in funding, it is how we spend the money. Because if we don't fix the process, then we are going to squander some of the taxpayers' dollars like we have done in the past. We have got to end it.

And we need your cooperation here, to be frank about it. We have a generation of continuing resolutions. Gentlemen, ladies, it has got to stop. That handicaps the services. It means less money. And it also delays programs.

If the services come to you with a program they need to get rid of because it is a legacy system that is no longer relevant, many are relevant but a lot are not, if it is in your district and in your state, we have got to let it go.

We can't keep fighting the services over it--the risk is too great. We have got to stop it. We can afford that in peacetime with no major threats. But the barbarians are at the gate here. All right? We have got to stop it.

And you got to, you have to open the aperture wider so the services can go out to the non-defense commercial industry and buy bulk.

For example, if you leave the Army program of record to itself, they will get less than a hundred drones this year. What they need is about 20,000. But they can't go get that because it is not a program of record. And to get a program of record like that would likely take a few years.

The Ukrainians built 1.4 million drones inside Ukraine this year. Next year, they are targeted on four million. Inside Ukraine. Obviously, with U.S. startups and with European startups. But if they can do that, we, we have got to find our process. We have the industry that can support it.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. I can assure you that the ranking member and I are in complete agreement. This is a top, in fact, the top priority for this committee. This year's NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] is to deal with the acquisition, and infrastructure, and process, and reform it, as well as getting defense spending up.

I recognize the ranking member.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Well, first of all, I want to do a little Amen and Hallelujah to requirements tee-offs. Okay. If this committee does nothing else, we can somehow accomplish passing our appropriations bills on a regular basis.

Remember, October 1 is the goal. And now we're heading to the middle of March. I would settle for December 1. Okay. We just do that, huge accomplishment.

And second, on the requirements, you articulated better than anyone I have heard. And I get it, we could always do a little bit more, if you do this. But it has reached just an absurd point.

I remember when I was touring LCS [littoral combat ship] when they were refurbishing it and talking with the workers on it, one said that there are 1,200 pages of requirements for how to paint the portion of that ship that is below the waterline. Twelve hundred pages of requirements to do that. I mean, just reading the damn thing is going to cost how many man hours before you figure out how to do it. So, figuring out how to get out the requirements is crucial.

Dr. Karlin, I want to ask just a provocative question about China.

It seems unlikely that we are going to defeat China in any sort of meaningful sense of the word. They are a global power and economy. And, yet, that seems to be a lot of the focus of our efforts. You know, economic, we have got to build our military strong enough to be able to beat them.

Am I wrong that that is an unrealistic objective? Or if I am right, what is a more realistic way to look at how we should confront the challenge that China presents?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, very much, Ranking Member Smith.

You know, I would agree with you that, unlikely we were going to defeat China--

The CHAIRMAN. I think your microphone needs to be turned on.

Dr. KARLIN. Sorry about that.

I would agree with you, Ranking Member Smith, that it's unlikely to defeat China. It also isn't necessary; right?

Mr. SMITH. Agree.

Dr. KARLIN. What makes a lot more sense is to deter China.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Dr. KARLIN. And you had said about "we"--and I would just suggest that our "we" has a really wide aperture.

Right now, China does not want a war with the United States. It definitely doesn't want a war with a whole bunch of our allies around the Indo-Pacific, our allies around Europe who have gotten increasingly nervous about China's irresponsible behavior as well.

So, the key is to deter China, to show China today is not the day; that their approach to upending the international rules-based security order doesn't work and isn't going to be profitable.

Mr. SMITH. Can I ask one aspect of that, if we are not going to defeat them, if we are going to deter them, we also have to figure out how to coexist with them. And what are, what is some advice in terms of policy approach to diplomatically figure out how to coexist with China?

Dr. KARLIN. You know, when we look at history with countries that we haven't gotten along with--the Soviet Union is a great example--we always maintained talks with them. Even if those talks were folks reading talking points to one another, that was really important. It helped us understand how are they seeing threats, where are their, what is their understanding of escalation. And so, we can't ignore China. There are areas to cooperate.

The most minimum areas to cooperate, I would suggest, would be having regular talks with them about how we understand threats, particularly threats around the Indo-Pacific. China has a historic modernization and diversification of its nuclear arsenal. And right now we have exactly zero talks with them on that.

We should be pressuring them on that. We should be publicly highlighting that they don't want to have those conversations because, frankly, that is really dangerous for the world if we have a, you know, relatively new and incredibly strong nuclear power not willing to discuss how it is thinking about its weapons and its doctrine.

Mr. SMITH. Okay, absolutely.

And just quickly, because I don't have much time left here, I am also curious about how we strengthen our partnerships and alliances and build off of the AUKUS [Australia-United Kingdom-United States] success. When we talk about everything we need to build, we can't build it alone. We need to better partner with people.

And one of the key aspects of AUKUS is trying to get through some of the restrictions on that cooperation. Just for, for both of you in the limited time we have left, what else can we do to strengthen the ability of our partners to help manufacture the equipment that we all need?

Dr. KARLIN. Absolutely.

So, it is in our interests; right? These allies and partners around regions like Europe and the Indo-Pacific see a lot of threats similar to us. They have their own funds and they want to use them in ways that also make sense for us.

So, I think about it in terms of the life cycle of cooperation: how can we work together on research and development; how can we work together on using our militaries collaboratively in terms of force management; and how do we build our future militaries together?

Look, for countries like the United Kingdom and Australia it should be very easy for us to cooperate. These countries have stood by us in just about every war that we fought over the last 100-plus years. We don't need to kind of have unnecessary regulations on them.

Mr. SMITH. Right. Thanks.

And I am out of time. I apologize, General Keane.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

And, General Keane, thank you. You are a champion understanding that we are in a conflict we did not choose. And that is dictatorships with rule of gun invading democracies with rule of law.

It began on February 24, 2022, with the invasion by war criminal Putin into Ukraine; and October 7th, the regime in Tehran invading Israel.

Then I am really grateful with your work with the American Enterprise Institute to put together, indeed, the convergence of where the dictatorships of war criminal Putin, the regime in Tehran, the Chinese Communist Party, working together with North Korea, indeed what a threat this is to world peace and security.

So, I want to thank you for what you have done.

Also General Keane, what an extraordinary opportunity we have, and that is that Iran's network of proxy groups are showing signs of weakness, as we see with the overthrow of the Assad regime just a month-and-a-half ago, how exciting that was to see his regime go under.

And also, the success of Israel, Prime Minister Netanyahu, his success at going after Hamas and Hezbollah.

What can we do to capitalize on the weakness currently of Iran and support freedom there?

And, also, what is your view about what should be done to avoid Iran securing a nuclear capability?

General KEANE. Yes, thank you, Congressman.

Yeah, what has taken place in the Middle East certainly was an overreach on the part of Hamas and Iran in that sense in terms of strategic failure. They obviously had some tactical success on October the 7th. But give credit to Prime Minister Netanyahu and his dogged determination to finally do something about this. Certainly they were surprised and at fault for some of, some of the things that took place on October the 7th, but their response has been nothing short of remarkable.

As we have seen, Hamas, militarily as an organization, has been decimated. There are thousands of fighters there and they are still in control of Gaza.

What happened to Hezbollah is much the same. They had to withdraw tens of thousands of Hezbollah out of Syria with the collapse of the Assad regime.

And we know full well that Iran desperately wanted that strategic platform if it ever intended to dominate or control the Middle East. That is why tens of thousands of Hezbollah and other militias became the ground force to sustain Assad, his ground military, which was not very effective. That is why Qasem Soleimani got Russia to come in in 2015 because of the inadequacy of Assad's air power and sustain that regime when the opposition forces were gaining ground once again.

This has been a major strategic platform. And they have lost it. Iran has never been back on its heels as much as it is today in the 44 years of its history.

And I agree with Prime Minister Netanyahu and where the President is on this. There is an opportunity here to stop them once and for all. They want a nuclear weapon. Why? Because of the regime. It is that simple. And we have the opportunity to make certain for a fact now that that doesn't happen.

You can use coercive diplomacy and make it clear to them that an Israeli strike, supported by the United States, is an alternative. But you can dismantle this program with verification by the United States and other inspectors, to include U.N. [United Nations] inspectors, by a date certain. Or we will dismantle the nuclear enterprise ourselves.

We know that Iran's conventional military is weak, and their ability to defend the regime against an air attack, they are extremely vulnerable as a result of the Israelis having achieved deterrence over Iran.

We cannot pass up this opportunity. It is right in front of us. The regime is weaker than it has ever been. The people are frustrated, as you all know. And we have been talking about the change driven by the people for years. It is all of the intelligence services are telling us that it is much closer than it has ever been.

So, we could seize this opportunity and not pass it up. And we can't get into kind of a diplomatic negotiated effort where the Iranians pull what they have always pulled: delay, delay, delay, deny inspections, and the rest of that. There has to be a date certain, verification or the alternative. They are back on their heels. We need to finish this once and for all.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much. And I am just so grateful for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Courtney.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to both witnesses today for your thoughtful testimony.

Dr. Karlin, again it is great to see you at the table again. And, again, just want to compliment you for the great work that you did in terms of the creation and implementation of AUKUS.

Again, this committee codified in three consecutive National Defense Authorization Acts in 2023, 2024, and 2025 different provisions that are now in law to execute AUKUS.

So, for example, for the first time in history we are selling nuclear powered submarines to Australia.

We also implemented long-overdue reform in defense export controls, which Mr. Smith just referred to.

Also, the execution of a direct financial investment by Australia into the--of \$3 billion into the U.S. submarine industrial base.

Investment by another country in the U.S. was such a novel sort of idea that we actually had to pass a law to allow the Treasury Department to accept payment from Australia. And as a result of those authorities, we now have joint training at Groton Submarine School with Aussie sailors and officers. It is in its second year. They are now serving on board Virginia Class submarines.

Aussie shipyard workers are doing repair and maintenance work on U.S. subs in Hawaii and Guam.

And last Friday Richard Marles, the defense minister for Australia, was in D.C. and formally transmitted a deposit of \$5 million out of that \$3 billion and had a good meeting with Defense Secretary Hegseth.

On Sunday Australia got blindsided by the announcement that they were going to be part of the 25 percent tariffs on steel and aluminum. And I say blindsided because we have a trade surplus with Australia. We export more to Australia than they export to us. And they have been--we have had a free trade agreement with Australia since 2002. There are no tariffs that are in place right now.

And at a time when, again, they are making direct financial commitments into the U.S., the total cost of AUKUS, which they have kind of budgeted for over the next 10 years, is \$360 billion. This is a country whose population is less than the State of Texas.

So, again, as somebody who, again, was part of this collaborative effort, and again I would note the Prime Minister actually had a conversation with President Trump on Tuesday which both sides described as a good conversation. And the President said he is going to give serious consideration to carving out or exempting Australia from the tariffs, again, primarily because we have a trade surplus with them.

Can you talk about the strategic argument for taking that action by President Trump?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you very much, Congressman Courtney. Thank you for your leadership and this committee's leadership on making AUKUS a reality, which has been progressing pretty nicely since it was kicked off a couple of years ago.

As you noted, Australia is putting huge amounts of resources into its military, transforming it, frankly, in line with the vision that the United States has.

If you are wondering how effective AUKUS is, I would just note that China hates it. So, that is a really nice piece of criteria for us to judge it by, particularly because it is bringing together a close European ally and a close Asian ally to work together in terms of how we are using our militaries, practicing that use, and potentially there are contingencies: one could imagine our militaries cooperating.

Again, it is hard to recall a conflict in which the Australian military was not standing side by side, next to the U.S. military as we were waging it.

You highlighted, Congressman, something really important and historic. We have never before had a country take money and put it into our industrial base. That creates American jobs, period, full stop. That is better for the U.S. military, period, full stop.

And, in fact, I think it could be a model. I would just note that we are talking about \$3 billion or so that Australia will be, will be giving into our industrial base, again, resulting in American jobs and a stronger relationship with countries that is crucial for deterring China.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Doctor.

General Keane, again, President Trump did say he was going to give good consideration to this. And that's quote/unquote that is there.

And just, again, back in 2017 there was a similar sort of event that took place. And, again, the U.S. made a decision to exempt Australia, again partly just on economic and trade issues. But, again, you understand the strategic importance of that country right now.

Can you just, you know--

General KEANE. No, I would absolutely agree with, with the exemption. And, hopefully, that, that, that is what is going to take place here. It makes all the sense in the world.

And let me just say, make a point about allies and partners.

I think over the last two administrations both have strengthened the relationships we have had facing these threats that are so real to us. NATO has obviously been strengthened. You can make the stress that Putin may have more to do with that than anybody else. But both administrations played a role in doing it.

Certainly the Abraham Accords, both administrations have supported it. President Trump repurposed Quad, and President Biden strengthened it.

And AUKUS was a novel, imaginative program that is going to pay great dividends for us in the future as has been well-stated here.

And, certainly, this trilateral engagement, which surprised me, South Korea, Japan, and the United States working together, is another step in the right direction. Look it, we are never going to have a Pacific NATO like we have where homogenous countries in Europe, with common cultures and the rest of it. There's different kinds of government, different cultures. But patching these countries together to work against the common objective, the last two administrations deserve some credit in moving us in the right direction here.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expires.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane and Dr. Karlin, thanks for joining us today.

General Keane, I want to start with you.

We talk about the effort of deterrence. Where I see the world today is very much where it was in 1938 with building axes of evil, with China, China being the center of that universe. And as we look at what China is doing, you know, our intelligence agencies

show that they spend north of \$700 billion annually on their, on their defense. They want to be a world force.

We spend our dollars much more on a worldwide basis than they do.

China has the largest navy in the world by numbers. I would argue their ships are much, much more impressive today than they were a decade ago.

Also, if you look at their total production capacity, they can build 232 ships for every one ship that we build. If you take all of our shipyards, put them together on a geographic footprint, they would not fill the geographic footprint of the largest of the 13 Chinese shipyards.

If you look at where they are today, they are on track to have 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035, with no nuclear arms limitation treaty in sight.

If you look at where we are today, China wants to dominate the world. We are not even in a position where we can hope, we can hope to have any sort of deterrent effect, the disparity is so big. And disparities in military powers through the ages have been the emphasis behind aggression by another nation.

When those differences are large, that is, that is really an antagonistic opportunity for China to be able to, to move.

I want to look at what can we do in the short term to be that deterrent force. You know, the way that we look at closing the gap is not, as you talk about, programs of record, years of writing requirements, years of acquisition, years of putting these systems in place. Listen, I'm not against exquisite systems, but you are not going to field exquisite systems any time soon.

The question is, is how can we take what is an asymmetric advantage, with us being the best creators and innovators on the Earth, with us building expendable and attritable systems at the same pace that we see happening elsewhere in places like Ukraine, how do we close that gap?

And what we see right now is not anywhere close to being deterrent. I agree with, I agree with Ranking Member Smith, I want us to be a deterrent. I want us to be a deterrent. I don't want war. But this big a gap is provocative.

How do we close that gap so we don't find ourselves in that situation?

General KEANE. Yeah, well, that is a great question, Congressman.

And let's just state this. I mean, we have been here before.

When during the Cold War the Soviet Union, when you looked at its military by comparison to ours--and, obviously, NATO was involved--they outmanned us and outgunned us in every major category: 10 to 1 in divisions, thousands and thousands of more tanks, artillery pieces. You name it, they outgunned us on it.

And we did a couple of things. We had some very imaginative generals at the time. They came out of the Vietnam War like we are just coming out of 9/11. They saw that threat. They experimented with different capabilities. And they determined what they needed to do.

They knew they could not defeat the Soviet Union, but could they impose costs on them that would deter them from conducting an

invasion? That is what they concluded. Much as Dr. Karlin just spoke of, I totally agree, that is kind of where we are now.

And, so, that led to the development of multiple rocket launch systems, the Apache helicopter, Abrams tank, Bradley fighting vehicles, and air defense systems. And they put their money on that.

And then we did something else, we exercised right in front of them every two years in something we called Reforger. So, we achieved credible deterrence.

Why?

One, the capabilities we had were real, and they knew it would impose costs.

Two, they saw us exercise it. And that not only validated what we had, but it also validated our intent to use it, that we were dead serious.

That is credible deterrence. The capability is there. The adversary sees it and he knows you are willing to use it.

I believe our maritime strategy in the Pacific has been flawed for years. It lacks imagination. We know our surface ships are vulnerable to hypersonic swarming weapons. And if we use them, most of them are going to go away.

And the American people aren't prepared for these kinds of high capital losses, and to things and to people. We know full well that our bases in the Pacific are vulnerable to long-range offensive weapons.

And we have got to change what we are doing there. And, certainly, as we have seen the character of war changing right before our eyes, we have to take advantage of it.

We know our submarines work because we can get to the China coastline close enough to interdict their batteries and their airfields, and take some of that offensive capability away. But we cannot take most of it away.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

General KEANE. We can with autonomous above the sea and submersibles below sea. We have got to start using our imagination to take, build operational concepts that really make some sense.

The CHAIRMAN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Norcross.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you.

First of all, thank you for your opening comments, the global threats. And it appears by any measurement that there is certainly agreement on what those threats are, at least on the high end.

But following up on Ranking Member Smith's conversation of do we defeat a China, my question is a little bit different on that.

How do we drive a wedge, how do we keep the convergence or this axis of aggression from forming even stronger? So, if we go back five years, it was very different. How do we drive that wedge from it continuing to progress the way it is?

Why don't we start with you, Dr. Karlin.

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

I think that is exactly the right question to ask because there are ceilings and limits to these partnerships, and there are also opportunities in them. Right?

So, General Keane highlighted about how the Russians weren't able to save Syrian President Bashar al-Assad over the last year

the way they had for many, many years. That turned out to be a pretty good opportunity for the Middle East, and particularly for the people of Syria.

I would also say when we look at, you know, how to drive a wedge and see these limits, who is dying right now for Russia? As far as I tell it is only some North Koreans. I don't see Chinese or Iranians dying for them.

That is looking very different than the United States. We have tens and tens of allies who throughout history, but especially in the post-9/11 wars, have been willing to do so.

So, I think highlighting those sorts of wedge issues can be really worthwhile. Showing that, you know, showing the Russians that, actually, this partnership with China isn't worth all that they think it is, or this partnership with Iran, that it, it has some real challenges as well.

Mr. NORCROSS. General?

General KEANE. Yes. The military aspect of this--

The CHAIRMAN. Microphone.

General KEANE. The military aspect of this we have discussed. All the elements of national power have got to come into play here. And, obviously, we are competing with them economically, diplomatically, technologically, militarily, and geopolitically.

We are making good progress, I believe, geopolitically with our allies and partners in the region. But there is more that we can do there.

Technologically, I have--I believe certainly that our, our debt credit capitalism can beat their state capitalism, that we can out-think, outwit, and out-innovate these guys over time. And we have to unleash our commercial sector here to help us do just, just that.

We don't have to take a backseat to what is happening there. We know that they are economically challenged. And when they are exceeding what we believe is prudent in the region, we have to deal with that. We have to have a strategy to deal with their gray zone operations.

You know, they have moved from just four or five years ago a few hundred interdictions of Taiwan's air defense identification zone to 1,700 last year, and 3,000 in the past year. We have to have a counterstrategy to deal with that.

And I grew up with talking to China. And I believe the President of the United States wants to continue to do what the previous President did in talking to China. But they have to clearly know, also, where the prohibitions are. And we should be very unequivocally clear to them about what those are.

Yes, there is, there is much we can do. And we have to use all the elements of national power to do that in concert with our allies.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you.

And I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. DesJarlais, for five minutes.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, I had a few questions for you on Ukraine.

But first I would like to submit for the record an article written by our witness General Jack Keane that was in the Washington

Post last month titled "America Must Continue to Arm Ukraine without American Tax Dollars."

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page:]

Dr. DESJARLAIS. General Keane, in this article you suggest that Ukraine should transition from an aid recipient to a defense consumer, potentially leveraging its natural resources as collateral for U.S. weapons purchases.

Your article seems to have already made an impact here in Washington, with President Trump offering something similar last night.

Can you expand on how the U.S. can help facilitate this transition from recipient to defense consumer?

And what role can American industries play in helping Ukraine to develop these assets while securing its defense?

General KEANE. Yes. Yeah, the basis for that was Mark Thiessen--you know, he is a brilliant journalist--is watching the debate that took place in this country for six months over whether to continue to support Ukraine. While there was some, some opposition over ideology and not willing to be involved in something like that in Europe, most of the opposition really had to do with funding.

And it occurred to us, let's take the American taxpayer out of this equation.

So, step one is put pressure on the Europeans to release the Russian frozen assets, most of which are in Belgium and spread around a few other countries as well. There is some opposition to that. But I think the administration can put significant pressure on them to get that to take place.

The second thing certainly had to do with Canada's geological survey company identifying \$26 trillion worth of minerals and other assets that are in, in Ukraine, and using that as either an investment or as collateral for loans to be able to get the Ukraine defense industry stood up. They are making progress in that.

And that is what they want. I mean, they want to, they want to break the umbilical cord themselves. They know they need help from the United States and NATO in the near term, but they want to be able to sustain their own military capability.

And, believe me, they have built one of the most powerful militaries in, in Europe today. So, that is where they are.

And you are right, President Trump is talking about making a deal with Ukraine to repay through investment purposes the money that we have paid out to Ukraine and the money that we would likely pay out in the future.

So, yes, there are real opportunities here to do that. And the Ukrainians are absolutely committed to building their own defense industry. And it is something that we should assist them in doing.

And, I mean, the foreign military funding that we do through the State Department, and we, we have given them \$11 billion in loans to Poland; \$12 billion in loans to Romania; \$2 billion in loans to Taiwan, to do what? To help build their own defense capability.

And certainly we can do that with the Ukrainians. And now we know for a fact they can pay those loans back.

So, so there is a good news story here, I think. And then, hopefully, the administration will pursue it aggressively.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. And in the last one I am going to shift to Iran for a minute. We have touched on it briefly, but you previously noted that Iran is very, very vulnerable at the moment, and they know it.

Given this vulnerability, what specific measures, economic, militarily, or diplomatically, should the U.S. and its allies take to exploit these weaknesses?

And on the flipside of that, what risk do you see allowing Iran's vulnerability to persist without stronger action?

General KEANE. Yeah. Well, I think the administration is moving rapidly to return to imposing sanctions on Iran and close the loopholes that, you know, clearly exist. China is, obviously, buying their oil at discounted prices. And we have never--we were, if my numbers are correct, we had them down to something like 200,000 barrels. And then they got up to millions now under loosening up the sanctions on the Iranians.

There is ample opportunity economically to suppress them. We know that gets their attention.

And we also know the rising dissent that is in the Iranian society. They are, they are fed up with what has been going on for four decades. And they have suffered the consequences as a result of it.

I believe the more pressure we can put on them, and certainly our allies now should be very willing to join us. You know, we were doing it singularly when we pulled out of the nuclear deal back in 2018.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair will now recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Moulton.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, I would love to ask you a couple quick questions as--I'm over here. Thanks.

You're a mentor to General Petraeus, who is one of my mentors, and appreciate your long history of service to the country.

I think one of the most important things that you've said to us this morning speaking to members of the House Committee on Armed Services in Congress is that we have got to stop supporting parochial projects for our districts.

There's a long history of that on this committee. You know, members from Wisconsin reporting the Littoral Combat Ship, a ship pretty misnamed when it was not certified for combat.

Members of Congress from Arizona supporting the A-10 long after the Air Force said we need to get rid of it to make more room for more modern aircraft in our budget.

And untold numbers of carriers and surface ships that, as you described, will be eviscerated by the Chinese navy in the Pacific that keep getting supported by members that represent shipyards around the country.

I'm curious about your take with--you know, I was a Marine lieutenant. Only made it to the rank of captain. Didn't get very far up like you did.

But if I were stationed on the beach in Taiwan and I had two options, a \$13 billion brand new aircraft carrier at my disposal or

the number of drones that I could buy for the price of that aircraft carrier, which if you paid \$20,000 would be about 650,000 drones--if you were that lieutenant which would you pick?

General KEANE. That is such an easy choice, Congressman. The drones would be the answer. Listen, eventually, like in every new technology, there will be an effective countermeasure to drones.

But that countermeasure is not here. I mean, it's being experimented with. It's microwave, it's directed energy and the rest of it. But right now drones dominate.

I mean, I just took a briefing. I was in Europe on Ukraine and Russia and the use of drones. I mean, battalions alone are using 400 drones in the air at one time.

Mr. MOULTON. You can use a \$5,000 drone to kill a \$5 million tank.

General KEANE. You know--

Mr. MOULTON. And, yet, we're still selling a lot of \$5 million tanks to Poland. It's not just the Pacific, it's everywhere. We have got to get our allies and partners to catch up here.

General KEANE. The reality is, as I mentioned, the submarines offer us stealth to get close. Well, so do the drones--

Mr. MOULTON. Right.

General KEANE. --above the sea and some below the sea as well, and I've played multiple war games for dealing with the most dangerous scenario, the--China's invasion scenario--and to stop them--we're not talking about defeating them, but to stop them it takes about a 10 to 15 percent change--excuse me, 15 to 20 percent impact on them.

Those submersibles and autonomous above the sea vehicles could make that 15 to 20 percent change--

Mr. MOULTON. And I'll point this out too, General.

General KEANE. --and that's why I'm saying we have to use our imagination.

Mr. MOULTON. If you--you've got 650,000 drones, every single one of them that you kill doesn't kill an American or Taiwanese soldier but you take out that one aircraft carrier and you've got 5,000 souls at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

How do we get Congress to wake up to the danger they are causing for our national security by not being willing to put parochial interests aside and invest in the military technologies of the future?

General KEANE. Well, education, and this committee has been much closer to the issues than any of the other committees, you know, in the House side here, obviously, and you have to educate your peers on this.

Mr. MOULTON. Let me ask you another question about education.

In the Pacific you talked about the importance of allies and partners. When I go to the Pacific--I was in Vietnam not too long ago and they talked about what China is doing with their Belt and Road Initiative, offering to build a whole high-speed railway for a billion dollars.

We had offered Vietnam one used Coast Guard cutter. What is the importance of State Department funding, of USAID [United States Agency for International Development] money going to these allies and partners to win over their friendship?

General KEANE. Well, it's--I think it's pretty critical. I mean, you know, China does provide economic assistance to gain geopolitical influence and that's what this is all about, not only in the Indo-Pacific region but also in the Global South as well.

Mr. MOULTON. And when you strengthen--when you ask our partners to stand up and stand together as allies, when you talk about the importance of deterrence and standing by the nations we want to defend against dictators like Xi Jinping and Putin, would you ever say that it's unrealistic for Taiwan to remain sovereign from China?

General KEANE. Sovereign in terms of completely independent?

Mr. MOULTON. Would you ever say it's unrealistic for Taiwan to not be taken over by China?

General KEANE. Well, I--

Mr. MOULTON. I think the answer is probably obviously no.

General KEANE. Right.

Mr. MOULTON. So I'm wondering why our Secretary of Defense is in Europe right now saying it's unrealistic for Ukraine not to have its territory taken by Russia.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Bacon.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. I'm over on the side over here.

I appreciate both of you being here and I respect you both. My first question is for General Keane. We are spending the lowest on defense since 1940 as a share of GDP, 2.9 percent. I think it's inadequate to modernize our triad to help deter China, Russia, Iran, and do quality of life.

Do you share that sentiment and what do you think the right percent should be?

General KEANE. Yes, I do share that sentiment. I really believe--I was on the 2018 NDS and we believed the funding should have been three to five percent. About half of that commission believed it should have been closer to five percent. If we had started it back then we'd be in much better shape today.

Now we have a much greater risk and therefore we need a much greater sense of urgency to move in the right direction. So I truly endorse what Chairman Rogers and Chairman Wicker want to move towards and we have got to move towards it with a sense of urgency with the parenthetical statement that we have to fix our business practices and fix the defense industrial base and how we do business with them and how the Congress does business as well.

Mr. BACON. I echo your sentiments on that.

Dr. Karlin, what does Europe look like and Central Asia look like if Russia prevails in Ukraine, and what will be the costs to the United States if Russia prevails--the greater cost in the long run?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

It looks pretty ugly, right? I mean, right now we have seen, particularly post-Cold War, a Europe that's largely free, whole, and at peace, a Europe that, largely, wants to stand next to the United States, cooperate with us economically.

If you start to see a Europe that is just riddled with fear that different countries will be the next on the chopping block with Russia, it's not going to be in our national security interest.

So this story starts with Ukraine, of course. Right now Russia occupies about 20 percent or so of Ukraine. But if it doesn't end there it's going to be problematic.

If I might just note, Congressman, General Keane has mentioned about reforming business practices a couple of times and I know this is an important issue for the committee.

I might suggest two things to look at. One, the U.S. Marine Corps has managed to transform and be the only military service to pass a clean audit. Why is that? How did they manage to do that?

Two, the Congress has been--U.S. has given U.S. Special Operations Command special acquisition authorities so they have easily been the fastest in making change and being able to purchase the sorts of capabilities that they need.

To what extent can those capabilities, can those special authorities be translated across the force? Thank you.

Mr. BACON. Particularly interested in trying to apply that to Cyber Command as well. We're trying to model after special ops command.

My next question is back to General Kane, or Keane. Excuse me.

Last I checked, under the Biden administration they owed \$10 billion in weapons to Taiwan. We're behind. That's not a good way to do deterrence. How do we strengthen deterrence in regards to Taiwan today? How can we do it the fastest?

General KEANE. Well, we just discussed one way to do it and it's not that expensive, and that is to take advantage of the new drone technology that is out there and put a significant amount of it into Taiwan.

Look, the problem you mentioned is, you know, obviously Taiwan can purchase these items, which they have, through foreign military sales and the backlog there, and that's our defense industrial base.

The problems we have, you know, providing those systems to our own services are similar to what the problem that Taiwan is facing and so that system has got to be fixed.

And we have been talking about that for some time but in the meantime, there is much that we can do to strengthen their defensive systems, and I also think we can do considerably more training than what we have been willing to do and I don't think we have to do it covertly. We just tell the Chinese we're going to do this and these are the reasons why we're going to do it.

But yeah, there's much we can do in the near term to help them. Then--and we have to educate them on the changing character of war that is really taking place so they can appreciate the value in the new technology that is available and what lessons can really be learned.

I know they're watching it but we can help them understand it and even more how to apply it militarily, so it has some significant impact.

Mr. BACON. With 15 seconds left, Mr. Chairman, I'll yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California Mr. Carbajal.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to General Keane and Dr. Karlin for being here today.

I bet all my veteran colleagues today wish they were United States Marines with that clean audit that the Marine Corps just came forward with, including--especially the Air Force.

As you both established in your remarks, the United States is facing a threat environment like we have never seen. Both China and Russia are seeking to increase their influence across the globe like through China's Belt and Road Initiative.

As we all know, the Trump administration decided to freeze all foreign assistance and is attempting to gut the USAID program. Foreign assistance is critical--a critical component of how the United States has built soft power and goodwill with other countries.

In fiscal year 2023 with a budget of over \$40 billion, less than one percent of the U.S.--total U.S. budget, USAID provided assistance to around 130 countries, and in fiscal year 2023 some of the top recipients of USAID assistance were Ukraine, Ethiopia, Syria, and Afghanistan, countries that Russia and China want to increase influence, in just to name a few.

Dr. Karlin, can you speak to the importance of soft power and the role it plays in maintaining U.S. leadership globally and preventing the influence of near peer adversaries from growing, and does soft power make hard power more effective?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you very much for that, Congressman.

Let me give you a great example. As this committee knows well, we have exactly one U.S. military base on the continent of Africa in Djibouti--excuse me, we have a base that is a priority in Djibouti and China has one base in--on the continent of Africa, which is also there.

There's a terrific piece by Bush administration AID administrator Andrew Natsios today talking about how our soft power, how our AID assistance helped make that base a reality.

About a year or so ago I was doing negotiations with the president of Djibouti and he also highlighted that the reason that that base has been able to stay and to flourish has been because of our soft power, because of our assistance, what AID has done and what the State Department has done.

Of course, if we're looking at a map that is really important in terms of a strategic location. So that's a story that we can actually take around the globe, especially when we're looking at places that are particularly precarious.

When we have got folks with a diplomatic background or development background who are in places like Pakistan or in places like Yemen we get a much better understanding of that and ultimately it means that when--hopefully we won't have to use military force but if we do we'll be a lot more effective.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. The Department currently has a budget of around \$840 billion and consistently has programs running behind schedule and running over cost.

It seems to me that almost every report or study on what the U.S. needs to do to increase competitiveness with the PRC [People's Republic of China] is to increase defense spending. I do not think

we can continue to increase the Department's budget and expect to magically start outpacing the PRC.

This is the point I raised at our September hearing on the findings of the NDS Commission report.

Dr. Karlin and General Keane, in your view is the DOD capable of effectively executing a defense budget that is five percent of GDP, which would be nearly \$1.4 trillion?

And do you have recommendations for how the Department can maximize use of their budgets rather than throwing money at problems?

General KEANE. Well, I wouldn't recommend going to five percent without making the changes that we need to make and we have laid out those changes.

We have to fix our business practices in the Pentagon and we have to hold the Pentagon, you know, responsible and accountable for that and we certainly have to fix how we do business with the defense industrial base and also with our own organic industrial base, and I think the Congress has to take a tough look at itself in terms of how it does business with the Pentagon.

And I think if we do those things then, yes, we can move in the right direction with increased funding but if we don't make those other changes, I mean, I think we probably have consensus here we're going to start throwing taxpayers' money away again and that's just--that is irresponsible. We have got to stop it, given the threat that we're facing.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Dr. Karlin?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

Look, it really depends on what you're going to spend that money on, right? If we spend it on a whole bunch of Littoral Combat Ships or A-10s it'll deliver and it won't be terribly worthwhile.

So, for example, we really need to invest in our nuclear modernization. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the Department of Defense took a ton of risk on that for reasons that made sense at the time but also means that right now all three legs of the triad have got to be updated.

I think in particular in terms of looking at cost cutting and how to make investments smartly, the Department of Defense needs to figure out how to work more collaboratively with Congress on retiring legacy systems while in a more holistic way bringing on capabilities that, frankly, deliver for the military while also being helpful to your district.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Gimenez.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With regards to USAID, I believe that USAID does spend money to advance American interests but I also believe that it spends money not to advance American interests, and I think what's going on right now is just an auditing of that, getting rid of those things that do not advance American interests and then keeping those things that do advance American interests.

And so there is no agency that is sacrosanct that can't be looked at. As a matter of fact, as somebody who used to run a bureauc-

racy, I know that bureaucracies get out of hand and they lose sight of their mission, and then you got to bring them back, okay, and reconstitute them and redirect them to do the right thing. And so that's my view on USAID.

General Keane, there's--you know, the word regime change, or the two words regime change, seem to be dirty words. Okay. People don't want to hear it--we shouldn't be doing that.

I don't share that opinion. As a matter of fact, I believe that when we can, we should turn enemies into friends and one of the things that we should be looking at right now is seeing what we can do with Iran.

If we can turn Iran and we can have regime change that would be--what would that do to that region and what would that do for American security interests if we, in fact, were able to change the regime in Iran?

General KEANE. Well, the major destabilizing factor in the Middle East has been Iran and how they decided to go about their business, and it was very novel.

They began using proxies in other countries to accomplish their strategic objectives and they hit the Reagan administration with that in blowing up our barracks--our embassy in Lebanon and in our embassy in Kuwait and, you know, that--

Mr. GIMENEZ. So, General Keane, I only have five minutes. Could I--could you say yes, it would be good--it would be for American--it's in Americans' best interest to have regime change and--

General KEANE. Yeah. And but to do that also we have to work with our intelligence agencies, the Israelis. What they do inside of Iran is nothing short of remarkable in the resistance groups.

Just about every single one of their operations that they are conducting inside of Iran covertly are done with the cooperation of resistance groups.

So there's a lot of things that we can do to assist this inside of Iran as well and that-- the discussion should be, you know, in a closed-door session with our intelligence services as to how we can assist that.

But the general pressure that is on Iran and the problems they're having now they have never had to this degree in the 40-plus years they've been in power.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you.

Dr. Karlin, do you sense that there is a resistance or a risk avoidance culture inside the DOD?

Dr. KARLIN. I think the Department of Defense gets concerned about risks not least because it's got to use American taxpayer money smartly, and when it fails the consequences are massive.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Massive in what sense?

Dr. KARLIN. Massive in the loss of American lives in wars potentially lost. It is in many ways a no-fail culture because unlike so many other parts, whether it's business or government, when the Department of Defense calls things wrong people die.

Mr. GIMENEZ. I'm actually homing in more on defense weapons systems and development of defense weapons systems. Is there a risk avoidance there?

Dr. KARLIN. I think it probably varies a little bit by military service, but the Department of Defense would probably benefit from endorsements, frankly, by this committee that--

Mr. GIMENEZ. Which is exactly where I was going. Okay.

Dr. KARLIN. Yes.

Mr. GIMENEZ. All right. That actually I could say that we're the cause of it, that they are so afraid of being--of having a system fail and come before this body that we were going to--I don't know if I can say this--ream them, okay, for doing that.

Dr. KARLIN. I think there is--sorry, sir.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Yeah, okay. That we need to change in here too and accept the fact that every once in a while something will fail.

You know, everybody--a lot of people take shots at Elon Musk but one thing I really admire about Elon Musk, all right, is that he launches a Starship. It blows up, and he says, great, we learned a whole bunch of things. Let's launch another one, alright, until he gets it right.

If that were NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] we would be investigating the first Starship launch, right, and we still wouldn't be on the second. And that's the problem that we have because then, oh my God, you spent a billion dollars of taxpayer money and it blew up.

How could that happen? And I think that that is a disservice. Actually it's holding us back in the area of defense.

Dr. KARLIN. It's a team sport, right? And so to the extent that the Department calls things wrong, which is inevitable, right, be able to have a serious classified conversation with the committee, what worked, what didn't work, and why not.

And then, frankly, folks are going to look at precedent and see the extent to which the Congress is going to be supportive of folks who are innovative and didn't quite get it right.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you. My time is up. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you both for the conversation and for your service.

The title of this hearing is "Protecting American Interests in Convergent Global Threat Environments" and the message that I've taken away from you all is that we need to increase defense spending to as much as five percent but we also need to cut inefficiencies and spend less.

We need to be ready tonight. They need to think today is not the day. These are the headlines of this hearing. I'm going to start with the DOGE.

The DOGE is supposed to be in charge, in my understanding, of the latter, and Chairman or a Ranking Member Smith mentioned that in context, in principle, in concept, it's not a bad idea. I agree with him on that.

So far the DOGE has visited the OPM--the Personnel Management Office CMS [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services], the Department of Education, Department of Treasury, Department of USAID, the Small Business Administration, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and at least publicly they're saying, ap-

appropriately, that their purpose is to reduce waste and fraud and spending and, again, this I agree with.

It is said that the Pentagon--the DOD--is possibly next. It is said that as early as next week they will be visiting the Pentagon.

General, do you think that the DOGE, the 20 to 40 people whom you're aware of who are part of this organization, is qualified to do the kinds of things with the DOD that they've done with the Department of Education or with USAID?

General KEANE. I've always wanted people who get assigned to the Pentagon some of them to have--come from business backgrounds.

When I was asked to be Secretary of Defense by President Trump in the first administration I couldn't do it for personal reasons, and recommended Jim Mattis to him.

But I recommended to them also bring in a business person who's had--who's done startups, who's done major turnarounds, who knows how to drive an organization to efficiency.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And, General, sir, I don't disagree with you.

General KEANE. And I think we need that, and if these people who--I don't know who the DOGE people are.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Exactly.

General KEANE. But if they have business backgrounds and they can take a look at our business practices here and make some changes that just make sense to them, I'm all for it.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And, sir, with the exception of Elon Musk I believe these to be, largely, 19 to 25-year-olds who, largely, cannot possibly have extensive business backgrounds yet because they're just plain not old enough to have those backgrounds.

General KEANE. Well, I'm not going to make a judgment based on their age but I think it's--

Ms. HOULAHAN. That's richly ironic because in the military it is all based on time and grade. You know, your ability to understand and know something is based on how long you've been there and what you know, and I guess what I'm asking, sir, I don't disagree with you.

I am a business person and did serve in the military. But we cannot possibly expect 20 to 40 people to go through our data--our sensitive Department of Defense data and have any way of explaining to the American people what is waste and what is fraud with any sort of accuracy.

And if it's okay, I'm going to move on to my next question, and this question is for Dr. Karlin.

Doctor, today I believe the news headline said that Secretary Hegseth has ruled out NATO membership to Ukraine. He says--and it's interesting, he used the word unrealistic, which was the same word that he used for other descriptions that the U.S. is no longer going to prioritize European and Ukrainian security.

And to your point, in your opening remarks you talked about sort of the undecided vote, the people who are on the sidelines who are not necessarily yet deciding which team they are on, so to speak.

I really am worried, and I wanted to kind of get your opinion on the larger political threat. Again, the title of this hearing "Protecting American Interests."

What do you think this message says to those who are our allies on the continent and those who are our allies abroad, and also those who are trying to decide whether to be an ally of ours?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you for that question, Congresswoman.

I also would find those remarks a little bit disturbing, right. So what we have seen in Russia's war on Ukraine is approximately 700,000 Russian casualties. That is an order of magnitude, thank goodness, than anything our country has faced for a very, very long time.

And in particular, as you note, a whole bunch of countries across key regions are watching exactly what happens. That's always how it works, right?

So when there are folks who say just focus on this one problem in the world and don't worry about it, the challenge is everyone is watching.

I can assure you that the reason we have a number of Asian allies supporting Ukraine is partially because of concern out of Ukraine, right, and partially because of concern about how irresponsibly Russia acts.

It is also because they see a through line here between how one deals with a bully like Russia and how one will or will not deal with a bully like China.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Excellent points.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from the strategic territory of Guam, Mr. Moylan.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, in your testimony you mentioned that most Americans are not paying attention to the state of national security, and I can report that on Guam national security is a kitchen table issue.

The military footprint directly impacts how much we pay for utilities, housing, and groceries. Each time North Korea tests a new missile it makes our local paper.

On Guam, our local agencies must employ capabilities on a scale of a small municipality to counter the full spectrum of China's enhanced competition and coercion.

Federal grants help Guam stand up to these threats by supporting our port infrastructure, cyber security, power grid resilience, and other targets.

So as a question to both witnesses, how do you see federal support for local entities on Guam within a wider national security framework?

General KEANE. Well, thanks for the question, Congressman.

You know, Guam is an important part of our military infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region and, obviously, we have to do better at protecting our bases and hardening those bases and giving them the capability to defend themselves.

We know from playing war games the reality is that those bases would be under attack from long-range missiles and also air power, and we have to turn that around in part of our program of deterrence as we have laid out in the past.

And thank you also for the people of Guam and for their steadfastness and the support that they have been providing to the

United States military at our bases there and throughout the region.

It's something we should be proud of, and thank you for your support as well, Mr. Congressman.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, General.

Doctor?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you very much.

Sir, the chairman highlighted the strategic location of Guam and I would just wholeheartedly endorse that. When you look at the Indo-Pacific, which is the priority region, one can't help but see just the importance of bases across military services on Guam.

Efforts in recent years to try to increase dispersal, resilience, hardening of those bases, have only grown more important. So I would concur wholeheartedly also with General Keane's gratitude to the people of Guam and to you, sir.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, both of you.

Now, as you said, Guam is recognized as a strategic hub in the INDOPACOM [United States Indo-Pacific Command]. Yet, it has been threatened, treated as a spoke when it comes to infrastructure investments.

So to further your statement, do you agree that focusing on infrastructure improvements will strengthen Guam and should it be a priority in our national strategy?

General KEANE. That's a simple answer. Yes, it should be.

Dr. KARLIN. Indeed, and those improvements should really look at resilience. You know, deterrence by resilience was a big element in the last National Defense Strategy.

I'm guessing the next National Defense Strategy will spend a lot of time looking at deterrence as well. So making sure that if, God forbid, there is some sort of attack on Guam, that infrastructure, those people, are able to withstand that and push forward.

Mr. MOYLAN. I appreciate your testimonies. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Ryan for five minutes.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you both for being here.

I especially want to thank you, General Keane, for including your lifelong Yankees fandom in your biography. I share that and appreciate that, amidst all the great things you've done in your life and career. I just want to note that to the committee.

On a more serious note and to your credit, General Keane, you have been a long-time clear, strong voice on the threat from Iran and the importance of our partnership and alliance with Israel, especially in the moment that we're in including today.

Some of the important and powerful quotes that I noted we have an opportunity to stop them once and for all. They're back on their heels, and that continuing to highlight, which I certainly agree with, that Iran is, quote, "a major destabilizing factor in the region."

And even going back to last year you, I think, rightly criticize the Biden administration for their hands off approach to Iran and creating, at a minimum, a lack of clarity about our resolve and strength.

Given that, I want to raise a concern that I think, I hope, is a bipartisan concern. The senior appointee of the new administration for the Middle East--the DASD [Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense] for the Middle East--does not share that opinion, which I think it should be a broadly held American view.

Mr. DiMino, who was just appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, has said that the Middle East, quote, "does not really matter for U.S. interests," has argued that, quote, "vital or existential threats in the Middle East are," quote, "best characterized as minimal to nonexistent."

He also very concerningly characterized Iran's two missile attacks--unprecedented direct attacks on Israel--as, quote, "fairly moderate" and described our strikes against the Houthis and our attempts to deter them as, quote, "futile."

I'm almost--I'm just speechless. The dissonance there versus, I think, a common picture that so many of us here on this committee hold this, I think, ignorant and isolationist rhetoric appointed--espoused by a senior official is very concerning to me and I think should be to the committee, given the opportunity and the risks with Iran.

I'd ask you to speak to that to the degree you're willing, sir.

General KEANE. Yeah, certainly. Well, certainly, I fundamentally disagree with that position, and the last two administrations have both stated that we have three geographical areas where U.S. vital interests are at stake--the Indo-Pacific region, the Middle East, and Europe.

And I find it hard to believe that the appointed Secretary of State Marco Rubio would hold that view.

Mr. RYAN. Agree.

General KEANE. I find it hard to believe that the National Security Advisor Michael Waltz would hold that view. The national security apparatus of any administration has--will always have people who have differing views and that gentleman certainly is entitled to that.

But I don't believe that will represent the consensus of the Trump administration's national security viewpoint. We have already discussed this.

I mean, the fact there's war in Europe is not an isolated event and the fact there's war in the Middle East and Iran operationalized all of its proxies is not an isolated event.

These events are connected, and President Xi is preparing for war and threatening war and that is not an isolated event. They really see an opportunity here for themselves to collectively take advantage of the United States and like-minded democracies I think as we all pretty much agree with here.

Mr. RYAN. No, and--

General KEANE. And it runs totally against that viewpoint. I had not heard that viewpoint but I disagree with it.

Mr. RYAN. No, I appreciate that, and I just--I agree and have heard very different things from other, as you mentioned, senior leaders. So I just think it's important we have clarity, especially given the importance of clarity and credibility when it comes to deterrence.

Limited time. I more just want to introduce this idea and build on one of my colleague's, Ms. Houlahan's, point. We have talked about acquisition reform. We have talked about streamlining the Pentagon.

I think there--we all agree there are many areas of focus, big programs of record. I would also note some small things like, for example, the new Secretary of Defense spending \$137,000 to paint his home while we have soldiers across our force with floors caving in and roofs caving in, which was very disappointing to me.

Separating that aside, if we're going to go in and do this streamlining I think it's critical we address the security concerns of those junior staffers that Ms. Houlahan mentioned from DOGE and the potential conflicts of interest of Mr. Musk, which I don't have time to go into, but are billions of dollars of contracts directly tied to his programs.

I yield back, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman from New York. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. McGuire, for five minutes.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, I served in our Navy for 10 years in special operations and I know there's some talk here today about streamlining process, and the good thing about Special Ops is we can open purchase and we can get things quicker, often cheaper, and we can buy a lot of things off the shelf right now.

There's talk of programs that we have to pay for 15 years because we had a contract for 15 years, but they're outdated. So I would totally agree that we need to make some decisions.

Now, I agree with the chairman when he said that our weapons cost too much, it takes us too long to get them. But we are spending 2.7 percent of our GDP right now, which is less than we spent all the way back to before World War II, and if China has more ships than us, more airplanes than us, and everything else except submarines, there's no other way to catch up unless we increase percentage of GDP.

And so I would ask you, what are some things that we do, whether it be Congress, whether it be the President, to help us speed up the process of new technologies and getting them to the troops?

And that would be for General Keane.

General KEANE. Yeah. Well, one of the things I think that would be very helpful is to let the Defense Department have considerably more access to the non-defense commercial sector.

I was just at an exercise in Europe watching the Army deal with the realities of the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine. So there was an opposing force there using Russian tactics and technology, a lot of electronic warfare, and U.S. using lots of drones and other technologies.

The great thing that was there reminded me of what you just referenced, Mr. Congressman, is all the contractors representing these technologies were there listening to the troops talk to them about what needs to be done, approve this, this one is no good, et cetera.

And it reminds me--iterative process that Special Ops has gone through for a number of years with the close association it has. So there's much we can do now.

We don't have to wait five years to start changing capabilities. There's capability out there that we can get in to our--into our ranks and start making changes and the Congress can help do that.

I know the Chief of Staff of the Army has been talking to many members about doing this thing and opening the aperture so he can go out and make these purchases and not have to wait for years in terms of a program of record.

That changes how we do business but it also recognizes the sense of urgency that we need to have to deal with this problem and start solving it in the near term.

Mr. MCGUIRE. So the second question.

We talk about China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and their various sub factions during these proxy wars. They're kind of united right now.

So I think that we have these hot spots all over the world so I that we have these hot spots all over the world so we are definitely under more threat today than we have been in a long time, and so we have got to be prepared.

I remember Ronald Reagan talked about American exceptionalism. He talked about building a 600-ship Navy and he inspired me to join the Navy and be part of that, be part of something bigger than myself.

I don't know what the number is. We're somewhere under 300 ships now and, you know, again, ships aren't always the answer but, you know, we can't compete with our enemies.

I want to know--I have a question for both Dr. Karlin and General Keane. If somehow Iran were to get a nuclear weapon, how would that impact the region? You know, I guess I'll start with Dr. Karlin, and we don't have much time but--

Dr. KARLIN. It would be a catastrophe. It would be a catastrophe because I don't think any of us should really trust the decision making of the Iranian regime.

It would be a catastrophe because a number of countries around the region, such as Saudi Arabia, will now feel as though they need to get nuclear weapons to protect themselves and the more countries that have nuclear weapons the more dangerous it will be. We'll now be relying on having responsible--

Mr. MCGUIRE. Okay. Because of time, General Keane?

General KEANE. A nuclear arms race in the Middle East is the answer. What would take place as a result of that? And it's a recipe for disaster.

When Henry Kissinger was alive he believed the most dangerous thing facing the world today was a nuclear arms race in the Middle East because it would likely result in an exchange of nuclear weapons for the first time.

Mr. MCGUIRE. So I'm very much in strong support of limited federal government. But if the government should do anything it should be able to keep the homeland, keep the American people safe at home and abroad.

And, okay, this is the best committee I could possibly be on is Armed Services Committee and so I've got a lot to learn. I'm glad to be part of it.

But I would ask you if we knew we got actionable intelligence that they are going to have a nuclear weapon tomorrow, and as much as you can say in this purview, what should Israel do? What should the United States do?

And I'll start with General Keane.

General KEANE. Well, we have the means and the capability to stop that from happening and we should do that. If it required that degree of urgency, that means a military operation, and we have the capability to do it and also not to hurt innocent civilians in doing it.

Mr. MCGUIRE. [Off mic.]

The CHAIRMAN. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Cisneros.

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Jim Mattis, former Secretary of Defense during the first Trump administration, once said if you don't fund the State Department fully that I need to buy more ammunition, ultimately.

So I don't think it's a cost benefit ratio. The more we put into the State Department's diplomacy, hopefully, the less we have to put into the military budget as we deal with the outcome of approval of American withdrawal from the international scene.

This hearing is about the convergence of global threats. My colleagues have discussed the importance of combating those threats posed by our competitors and adversaries including the PRC, Iran, Russia and North Korea.

We have also discussed the ways in which those competitors and adversaries work together and advance their interests at the expense of ours. But we need to discuss how a U.S. pursuit of isolationism would help adversaries undermine U.S. national security.

So, Dr. Karlin, how does removing the mission of USAID and possibly a reduced State Department budget like in the first Trump administration put our national security at risk?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

Look, the more that we have fragile countries, underdeveloped countries, the more likely in many places that the folks in those communities are going to make decisions that will not work in our national security interests, right?

If folks are going to be mired in poverty, if they're going to be in situations where their governments aren't taking care of them and no one else is, they could turn to alternatives like terrorism which, ultimately, could hurt our national security interests.

I would also note a big theme of this hearing has been that we are in a big competition with China. The Chinese are quite enthusiastic about the announced cuts to USAID and to U.S. diplomacy because they see this as an opportunity for them to come on in.

And as we all know, when we look at conflicts in the past, the Cold War being a great example, you don't always win those just on the battlefield.

You win those by taking a holistic approach using all the tools in your tool kit so, hopefully, fewer members of your country--fewer members of your military end up having to die.

Mr. CISNEROS. General Keane, care to comment?

General KEANE. Well, foreign aid, certainly, and support to other countries is literally part of the elements of national power. It's important.

I think we have all been horrified by some of the examples of the spending of USAID. I think that a prudent measure has been taken.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who enjoys quite an amount of support in the Senate and in the House of Representatives here--bipartisan support and respect for him--he's taken this program under his wing and I think he'll make prudent decisions in what we should continue to fund.

Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water, so to speak, and, obviously, eliminate the programs that are indeed wasteful and certainly horrified many of us looking at that list.

So I think we can move forward here in a positive way to continue to support activities that make sense to U.S. national interest.

Mr. CISNEROS. But you agree it is important to fund these international interests like the--funding the State Department is a key to our national security in order to ensure that we don't have to put troops on the ground in order to do that?

General KEANE. Oh, absolutely, and, you know--and the State Department at times, you know, they have been underfunded.

They were underfunded when I was Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and they just didn't--they're not organized the way the Pentagon is to deal with all of you either. I mean, we almost have a small army in the Pentagon to--how to work Congress and have relationships, et cetera.

I was stunned by the difference. But yes, the State Department is an important national instrument of our national power and, obviously, should be funded.

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you.

Dr. Karlin, I know you worked very hard on these at the Pentagon. When you were there you were working very hard on these alliances and partnerships that we helped build there through Department of Defense.

But if we continue on President Trump's path to isolationism by, let's say, removing ourselves from defense alliances like NATO or intelligence alliances like Five Eyes, is there a cost to our national security?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

There actually is a pretty big cost to our national security. So as you know what happens when a crisis or a challenge or an opportunity emerging a number of countries call up Washington and say, here's how we understand what's happening--how do you assess it and how can we collaboratively plan the way forward?

That's collaboratively, right? It means that they're going to be giving their own resources. Their militaries may be involved--their diplomats.

Ultimately, that ends up actually being a lot more efficient for us and it ends up being less costly as well. So if we don't have countries cooperating with us in terms of intelligence sharing, if we don't have countries looking at the threats posed by countries like

Russia and China and saying how do we work together to counter this, I worry a lot about us standing on our own.

Mr. CISNEROS. With that, thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Harrigan, for five minutes.

Mr. HARRIGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Smith, and thanks to both of our witnesses today for your testimony. I really appreciate the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of your remarks.

I've become a very big believer that we can either invest in the military that we have today or we can invest in the military that we need in order to defeat China tomorrow, and I do not think that we can do both of those things.

And I think that I identify very strong, General Keane, with some of your statements earlier that challenged myself and my colleagues here that we have a number of legacy systems in our military that are no longer relevant to the future fight that America could be forced to face one day.

And I don't want to press you but would you be willing to share what some of those systems are across our different services, in your opinion?

General KEANE. Yes. Well, certainly, you know, bringing the service chiefs in here and letting them deal with that they all have, you know, their own list of what that really means.

But some of these systems that we have today are just--in terms of their capabilities are not relevant to, you know, the war that we would be involved in if we do go to war with China.

So the reality is is that when it comes to legacy systems we have old bombers and, obviously, we have a new bomber that's coming but it's going to take so long to get there.

I think we have to take a hard look at our surface fleet. I'm not a naval expert but I do know how vulnerable that surface fleet is.

We need a certain amount of ships, obviously, as a global power to make certain that the navigation routes that help sustain a global economy through peaceful engagement, we need a number of ships to be able to do that.

The Navy believes they're about 70 short in doing that. But also we have to take a hard look at ships we do have in terms of the quality of those ships and how relevant are they for the future.

I think all the services owe you a rundown on exactly the question that you just asked and with some degree of specificity about those systems. There's always a reluctance to deal with this in a public forum because then for sure something is going to happen that's negative to them and the money will never go to the area that they want it to go to.

The United--the Army itself--land forces--we have seen the Marines make some fundamental changes and I know the Army is attempting to make fundamental changes to help deal with the war in China, and they're developing multi-domain organizations that have offensive and defensive missiles associated with them.

There's a recognition that--when we look at the Indo-Pacific and think of it as an air and maritime theater much of the land that surrounds the navigation routes are actually key terrain, and our

World War II leaders understood that dramatically and used it as such.

And we have to recognize that we can take advantage of that key terrain which accesses the navigation routes that the Chinese would be using and we have to change the capabilities out there as well.

We, obviously, don't need tanks out there because that kind of war is not going to be fought. It's an air and maritime theater enabled by land power as war in Europe is a land power theater enabled by air power.

But we have to make those kinds of fundamental changes in the Pacific region by land forces to assist in the air and maritime theater. But the best answer, I think, would come from the chiefs themselves in terms of what specific programs that they really have on their chopping block and seek your support to make the kind of changes that they need to do.

I mean, they're all underwater when it comes to the budget--you know, have major readiness issues. The Army hasn't been at the size it's at since prior to World War II.

The Air Force is sitting at a 40-year low and I already mentioned the Navy is about 70 ships short. So they need to increase in size as well as capability to be able to meet the objectives that they have in dealing with the threat.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

And the chair now moves to another North Carolinian, Mr. Davis, for five minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and to the ranking member for convening us today and, importantly, to our witnesses, thank you both for being here.

Since coming to Congress, for me, I've fought to make sure Ukraine, in particular, had the resources it needed to protect itself against Russia's unprovoked invasion.

And, Dr. Karlin, thank you so much for your earlier testimony. My question to you specifically is as we're moving forth now, what support does Ukraine need from allies like the United States to put itself in the strongest possible negotiating position and does that include, if you can speak specifically--we know F-16s are making their way to Ukraine.

Can you speak towards that? And also training--pilot training.

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you very much, Congressman, and that's exactly the right way to think about this, right--how to make sure that Ukraine's military is as capable as possible because wars end in negotiations generally and that's how one can expect this will come together.

In terms of continued support, as you know so well, Congressman, a lot of it comes from the United States and a lot of it comes from a number of other countries--50-plus countries or so that are actually meeting this week with the Ukraine Defense Consultative Group and that has traditionally been convened by the Secretary of Defense. For the first time it will actually be convened this week by the Brits.

So making sure that Ukraine has the continued support for its military is really important. The Ukrainians have a good idea of how the battlefield is changing and what can be most useful. I

think in particular what we're seeing is the utility of, like, uncrewed systems.

Frankly, I would also say U.S. advising has been worthwhile as well. The U.S. Army has used artificial intelligence to really support the Ukrainian military.

Their efforts in the sky are increasing--you know, will increasingly start to make progress in terms of the F-16 front. It just takes a while, right, in terms of that training, getting those pilots ready and capable to do so.

So I would strongly recommend the United States should enthusiastically continue to participate in the UDCG [Ukraine Defense Contact Group], continue its assistance and work closely with Ukraine to figure out not just what are the platforms that it needs but what kind of training, what kind of advising, because oftentimes that can be the secret sauce for their military, not just the stuff.

Mr. DAVIS. Absolutely. Thank you.

In the most recent National Defense Strategy analysts reference the significance of pacing change or the pacing challenges--I'm sorry--that the People's Republic of China poses.

General, a question for you today. When we think in terms of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, moving are they moving quick enough to encounter any potential acceleration of a buildup that may come from the PRC, especially in the Taiwan Strait?

General KEANE. Yes. I think some of that's been quite remarkable, Japan, certainly, the case in point. I mean, they've turned their entire defense budget around and completely committed to it.

You know, the trilateral arrangement that the Biden administration sought with the United States, Japan, and South Korea I think is historic in every sense of the word, you know, that South Korea and Japan coming together because of a common enemy.

Obviously, South Korea does have challenges in terms of its present government internally but their commitment that they have made to return to robust training with the United States and also recognizing, you know, how Kim Jong-un has changed any thought of reunification with South Korea and is claiming the Peninsula in terms of their own sovereignty, and aligning with the other three countries in terms of the Peninsula being their sphere of influence is a fundamental change and South Korea certainly is standing up against all of that.

And Taiwan, I think there's more that they can do and Congressman Moulton was all over this in terms of some of the innovation of changes that they can make that could strengthen their defenses while they're waiting for the major industrial items that they're owed as a result of their \$11 billion purchases.

So yes, we're moving in the right direction but there's more that can be done.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Messmer, for five minutes.

Mr. MESSMER. [Off mic.]

VOICE. Is the microphone on?

Mr. MESSMER. Is it now on? There we go.

All right. Start over. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

The threats that the U.S. is facing today are more challenging and serious than ever and now is the time for the U.S. to focus on increasing defense spending.

General Keane, currently China has the world's leading hypersonic missile arsenal and they continue to develop conventional and nuclear-armed hypersonic missiles while the DOD has continued to experience setbacks.

Because of this, the DOD established a hypersonic flight test bed called MACH-TB [Multi-Service Advanced Capability Hypersonic Test Bed], a program that is designed to increase the cadence and decrease the cost of developing hypersonics.

This program is leveraging commercial practices to rapidly scale flight testing of hypersonic technology. Could you talk about the value of having a robust testing program that would increase the cadence and decrease the cost of hypersonics like MACH-TB to support the technology maturation process for hypersonics?

General KEANE. Certainly, China has the lead on hypersonic weapons. They have deployed these weapons so they're currently in their arsenal, and we are catching up here.

But look, this is the United States and I'm convinced we're going to get there with our own capability. And hypersonic weapons, as we all know, they are difficult to track, difficult to intercept.

It's a new reality of war itself, and as they are going to use--an intimidating aspect of it is back in '21 when China launched a fractional orbital bombardment system and circumnavigated the globe and we could not track that nor would we be able to intercept it, and it would have the capability also to carry a nuclear weapon.

So, yeah, this is advanced technology. We're behind, but I'm convinced we're absolutely committed to get these weapons and get them deployed as quickly as possible.

Mr. MESSMER. Okay. As a follow-up to that, over the past four years the Biden administration missile defense priorities of the DOD were put on the back burner. It's great to see the Trump administration has already signaled it will reprioritize missile defense systems.

General Keane, as I alluded in my last question, our adversaries are producing hypersonics systems at an unprecedented rate.

How important is it for the Glide Phase Interceptor program, which is supposed to provide America's first defense against hypersonic vehicles and--a program that Biden delayed until 2035 against the directives from Congress be reprioritized for the DOD?

General KEANE. Well, as Secretary of Defense Hegseth has said, this is now a major priority for DOD. I mean, obviously this committee will have to see the details of what that means as a part of the National Defense Strategy, which certainly they'll be crafting, and what are the specific capabilities that need to be there.

But I think it's an absolute step in the right direction.

Mr. MESSMER. Okay.

While we're talking about missile defense, what do you see as the long-term trajectory for the Iron Dome for America executive order by President Trump?

General KEANE. Well, I think we need to take a deeper dive in this to understand what are we really talking about here.

I mean, obviously we're not going to deploy defense missiles all over the United States. This has a lot to do with space-based technology and how do we track and how do we defend using space in a way that we're not using it today.

So more work needs to be done in terms of the conceptualization of this. But in terms of the objective and better able to protect our homeland, given the advance that hypersonic missiles and sophisticated cruise missiles that Russia at least has aspirations of that can circumnavigate the globe, these are fundamentally objectives that are worthy of conceptual study and also deployment and we need to find out more about how we best can get at this and I think we're in the very early stages of it right now.

Mr. MESSMER. Okay. Thank you. That kind of leads into my next question. Do you think a space-based interceptor system is needed to protect against hypersonics?

General KEANE. Yes, and the previous administration felt the same way about that. I mean, we have to make advances in space to be able to identify, to be able to track, and then also to be able to intercept and we don't have that capability today.

Remember, all of our systems are designed to track ICBMs that are coming in the Northern Hemisphere from the east or the west, and with the development of these hypersonic glide vehicles that can circumnavigate the globe they can come from any direction and we have got to be able to identify, track, and intercept that we don't have that capability today.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. MCGUIRE. [Presiding.] Representative Crow of Colorado, you have five minutes.

Mr. CROW. Thank you, Chairman.

General, I just wanted to start with you and respond to something that you said in the opening, which I agree with--there is near consensus on a bipartisan basis in this committee that our procurement and contracting systems are badly broken, that we are wasting tens of billions of dollars on systems that are not effective, that are not efficient, they're not being fielded quick enough.

That is not in the interests of our constituents and taxpayers, that we need drastic reform, and it's one of our biggest national security issues.

Again, near consensus on that issue and I liked your analogy about talking about DOD from the business frame, right--that no business would operate that way.

I struggle, though, with squaring that with the constant asks for more money, right, because how can we say that it should operate more efficiently and more like a business if--and if it's wasting tens of billions of dollars and inefficient and DOD hasn't passed an audit ever, and then we should just pump tens of billions of dollars more and increase the top line.

Because the DOD is a rational organization, actually, and rational organizations respond to incentives, and if the incentive structure is broken then you have to change that incentive structure.

So I would just posit to my fellow members that if we want to change the incentive structure and make this big change then we

have to tie increases to the top line and increases to additional funding to that reform--that bifurcating those actually will make no sense.

And because we have been debating this as long as I've been in Congress--reform, reform, reform, efficiency--six plus years, and virtually nothing has changed. So we have to connect the two and I'd love to work with anybody who would be willing to do that.

Dr. Karlin, to go to you, I am deeply concerned with the lack of capturing lessons learned in the Ukraine-Russia war, right. There is--this is the most brutal war since World War II, massive amounts of casualties, massive amounts of destruction, and both the Ukrainians and the Russians are actually learning quickly and they're adapting quickly.

But what I'm hearing from our own people, both our intelligence agencies and our DOD, is that we're not. We were not both putting those lessons to the COCOMs [combatant commands] and we're not putting them into the schoolhouse to adapt our battle drills, to adapt our TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures], to do new things. It's just not happening.

So can you talk to me, has that been your experience as well and how do we tackle that?

Dr. KARLIN. Thanks for highlighting that, Congressman. As you know also it's often easier to learn the lessons of others than ourselves and to do that introspection.

We saw that with the U.S. Army, which really studied the 1970 Arab-Israeli war or the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea, arguably, probably a lot more than they studied, say, their role in the U.S. war in Vietnam.

So learning from others is really important. It's a lot easier, lower costs. My understanding was that the Department of Defense actually has been doing a lot of that.

When I was still there throughout 2023 we sponsored a massive effort that got briefed to the most senior levels of the Department of Defense that took, gosh, probably almost a year or so to try to get at a number of different lessons learned, tactical operations--

Mr. CROW. Is that housed in CALL, in the Center for Army Lessons Learned? Is that where it's housed?

Dr. KARLIN. This was actually the Office of the Secretary of Defense that sponsored that.

Mr. CROW. OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense].

Dr. KARLIN. Indeed, and we did it in collaboration with the Joint Staff. But because we saw it was just so important we wanted it done at headquarters, frankly, with a whole bunch of smart operators so that it could get into the budget and the strategy process as well.

So I'm familiar with that. I'm sorry I can't speak as well to the educational systems and how professional military education can be, although I have found that in visits recently to both West Point and the Army War College the questions on these topics are boundless.

Mr. CROW. I'd love General Keane to weigh in on this issue and give me your perspective. Obviously, ISW [Institute for the Study of War] does a lot in this front. So what is your view of those lessons learned?

General KEANE. Well, the Army has now institutionalized it, and you mentioned it. I just took a classified briefing a couple of weeks ago on lessons learned and, you know, and we have done this--it's one of the services that does this very robustly and then proliferates it through its education system.

Not only did I take the briefing on the lessons learned but what was its implications. The purpose of the briefing is, well, here's what is happening--what is the implications for the United States Army in terms of the changes we'll make, and the exercise I saw was in play demonstrating those new capabilities and the changes that the Army had to make based solely on those lessons learned.

I can't speak to whether they're being transported to the COCOMs. I'm assuming the Indo-Pacific commander and others are all over this. I would imagine their staffs are doing it.

But institutionalized is the important thing here because that's how you change the education system and the operational capabilities of the forces.

Mr. CROW. Thank you.

Mr. MCGUIRE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Representative Crank, Colorado, you have five minutes.

Mr. CRANK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your insight today and your testimony. I appreciate that.

General Keane, you talked earlier about the way that we're buying drones, for instance, right now that we've got maybe--you know, we can buy a hundred drones when we need 20,000 drones.

And I guess I think of this--and my colleagues have talked about this a little bit--but the threat of lower cost, easily attainable weapons like drones or cyber warfare that many of our adversaries are using, how do we become--how do we prevent becoming Goliath in the David versus Goliath with the rock that hits us in the head when we're really thinking that we're invincible in other areas?

I guess I'd ask your thoughts on that for both of you. General, or whoever would like to go first.

Dr. KARLIN. Sure. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

I mean, you're exactly right, that this is becoming more of a challenge and we have seen this in particular against our troops in places like Iraq and Syria.

And so the U.S. military has had to worry about how to deal with this problem in terms of platforms, to be sure, but also in terms of tactics, techniques, and procedures and I think that may be part of the secret sauce for how to deal with a counter uncrewed autonomous system challenge.

General KEANE. Yeah. Well, the changing character of war has been really quite dramatic. We have not seen anything quite like it.

When you look at what is happening in the war in Ukraine, so this is a land-based war, obviously, where that's the focus. Ukraine doesn't really have an air force but they obviously--they have what's called the drone corps.

They've had to form this because they recognize that to maximize the capability of surveillance and killer drones, it's much better to have it in a separate organization where you have all that innova-

tion together as opposed to being in a tank battalion or an infantry battalion, per se.

And when you look at the battlefield itself where the where the Russians and the Ukrainians are closing, the casualties are enormous. But the reality is that drones are influencing those casualties more than anything else. Artillery still does more casualty producing as a weapon system than anything else.

Drones are second, but the drones are the--give the proponent the ability to see the battlefield and detect movement and capture that movement, so much so that you can put a killing system on it in a matter of seconds.

So warfare as we know it has dramatically changed and how best you integrate this capability is really the--what has taken place right before our eyes. The Russians still have huge tactical problems in terms of their leadership, the willingness of their force to fight, and the skill sets that they have.

The Ukrainians are outnumbered but they have a huge amount of creativity and innovation and they have the will to fight. They're fighting for their families. They're fighting for the preservation of their way of life.

But yeah, that the technological changes on the battlefield are quite dramatic. Combined arms maneuver, which is what we were seeing a little bit of last year, is hardly taking place at all because if you move you get killed.

If you are identified you get killed, and it's really quite remarkable how this change is impacting ground warfare. I've not seen anything like it in some time.

Mr. CRANK. Well, and maybe I would ask this question. I probably don't have time to get much of an answer.

But on Iran, very quickly, how do we break this Iranian regime? You know, I remember back during the Obama administration we had a student uprising and I think we lost an opportunity there to get rid of this Iranian regime.

Are we at a moment here where they're broken and we could finally push that over the edge and bring freedom and liberty, perhaps, to the people of Iran?

General KEANE. You know, I remember that very well and that was the summer of 2009, you know, where the people are actually saying, where are you, you know, President Obama, similar to comparing it to Reagan and Poland, you know, in supporting the factory workers.

All I can tell you for a fact is that they are in the weakest position they've been in since the regime was formed and the hostility inside the country is significant.

And you know how they solve this. I mean, if the people take to the streets again by the tens of thousands, by the hundreds of thousands, they will go out there and kill as many of them as they possibly can to get them off the streets. Their security services, you know, will unleash themselves on those people.

Mr. MCGUIRE. The gentleman's time has expired.

General KEANE. I don't know what it's going to take specifically for that kind of implosion to take place. But based on the information I'm receiving they are much closer to it than they have ever

been. I don't know whether we're weeks away or months away. I just don't have those kind of facts.

Mr. MCGUIRE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Representative Tokuda, Hawaii, you have five minutes.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, you know, I know a number of questions have been asked to date, but to echo on to the sentiments of my colleagues I agree with what former Secretary Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee, that if you don't fund the State Department fully then I need to buy more ammunition.

He was clear that our international affairs budget and our defense budget are inextricably linked in terms of our advancing of our national interest, but that ultimately the State Department and its programs needed to come first and be backed up, second, by our military. If not we will trade this soft power diplomacy for our boys and girls on the front line.

I also want to echo the alarm expressed by many members of this committee and in countries across the world with the administration's freeze on foreign assistance and attempted shutdown of USAID.

No matter how long these policies last they have sent a shocking and harmful signal to our partners, allies, and, yes, our adversaries about our commitment--now questionable commitment--to our shared values and interests across the globe.

General Keane, Dr. Karlin, for the record, just a yes or no will suffice. Has the attempted shutdown of USAID and the freeze on U.S. foreign assistance alarmed our allies and partners and emboldened and abdicated our soft power leadership role to our adversaries including China and Russia.

A simple yes or no will do.

Dr. KARLIN. Yes,

Ms. TOKUDA. General Keane?

General KEANE. Well, listen, the problems we have seen the USAID had in terms of what they are funding--

Ms. TOKUDA. The loss of this funding, billions of dollars of funding, yes or no, are we abdicating our role as a soft power leader throughout the globe, emboldening our adversaries like China and Russia?

Does it give them a leg up, yes or no?

General KEANE. I believe we need to continue to fund the State Department in terms of programs that make sense, that add value, and add to our national security, period.

Ms. TOKUDA. Okay. So I would take that as a cautious yes.

I want to focus specifically on our State Department then. Funding for nonprofit organizations that work on China-related issues from outside of China--they track protests, monitor state censorship, and document ongoing human rights abuse including those related to the Uyghur genocide. Since the funding freeze, many of these organizations are in crisis, forced to abruptly suspend their work and lay off staff.

This is a critical blow, we know, to the already limited information flow outside of China and it puts us and the global community at an extreme disadvantage in terms of holding the Chinese Communist Party accountable.

General Keane, Dr. Karlin, from your perspective as former Pentagon leaders, how important is this kind of information on China to the types of decisions we have to make at the Pentagon, especially in terms of shaping the information environment around China?

General KEANE. Well, certainly it's important and it's vital to have that kind of understanding, going forward.

But as I said before, we need all the elements of national power applied in dealing with the threat of the Chinese Communist Party and its intent to dominate the region and replace the United States as the world's global power. All the elements of national power integrated together have to be applied in concert with our allies and partners.

Ms. TOKUDA. But we're literally robbing ourselves of one tool from the toolbox.

Thank you. Dr. Karlin?

Dr. KARLIN. Congressman, I would absolutely agree with what you've heard from General Keane.

Look, we can always turn to the Department of Defense to solve problems. The challenge with that is they're not always good at solving certain problems, right? Development experts, diplomats, are often going to be better in circumstances.

Moreover, there's going to be an opportunity cost, and so if we're having the Department of Defense do things that maybe are more expensive or are not on the priority list, that will cause a problem.

Just one example, right, to the extent we have pilots from the U.S. Air Force that are flying migrants elsewhere that's actually a lot more expensive than using chartered aircraft, for instance.

It also means those pilots aren't spending that time thinking about what I think much of this committee concurs with, which is the primary challenge of China.

Ms. TOKUDA. Absolutely. I think you also agree that when it comes to being able to gather intelligence and information we should not be limiting ourself.

But to your point, Dr. Karlin, dollar for dollar many of these non-profit organizations that we have funded had amongst the most effective in giving us the intel we need from places like China.

Lastly, I--time up, I want to raise the Pacific Islands that are so geostrategically important to the Indo-Pacific region.

For years China has been making major inroads in this region, peeling away Taiwan's diplomatic allies and deepening security relations that pose a major risk to our posture and operations.

Last year China regained its place as the second largest bilateral donor to the Pacific, surpassing the U.S. just again. Just this week the Cook Islands are expected to sign a partnership agreement with China.

Do you both, familiar with this area, believe that when we are shutting down and suspending support to these foreign assistance programs that we are basically abdicating and giving away the Pacific Island region, critically important to our adversary China?

Mr. MCGUIRE. The time has expired.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you. If I can request that that question be sent out and responded to? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Briefly. Real brief.

Representative Hamadeh, Arizona, you have five minutes.

Mr. HAMADEH. Thank you.

General Keane warns that the threats we face today are the most serious since 1945 and, yet, as Dr. Karlin's testimony describes, we confront adversaries operating beyond the traditional boundaries of conflict across a highly integrated battlefield that spans from cyber-attacks on our home front infrastructure to nuclear brinkmanship abroad from the leading state sponsor of terror, Iran.

The central challenge is this unprecedented convergence of threats where rising revisionist powers are deep in cooperation to undermine American interests worldwide while rogue regimes collude to blunt our countermeasures.

Nowhere is this more apparent than the no limits partnership between Russia and China, who support each other's territorial ambitions while enabling weapons development that jeopardizes our over match.

Meanwhile, North Korea and Iran trade ballistic missile technologies that threaten our greatest allies and shipping lanes like the Houthis have been doing in the Red Sea.

Congress must assess this net assessment of allied defense spending, industrial base output, force readiness and modernization timelines against our adversaries rapidly fielding advanced combined capabilities.

America must lead in developing the most lethal forces to deter this axis of aggression before it spirals into a global conflict.

Now, my first question is for General Keane.

General, do our current capabilities match our adversaries' rapid fielding of hypersonics and AI-enabled technologies?

My district has all the Taiwanese semiconductors coming into it so I know the semiconductor space is really critical to this.

But I'm just wondering do our current capabilities match our adversaries' currently?

General KEANE. Well, in terms of hypersonic capabilities assisted by AI, no, they do not. The reality is that, you know, as we mentioned China is ahead of us on this. They have their assets deployed and we're still testing ours.

Other capabilities we obviously, you know, have advances that they don't have, particularly in submarine warfare. But we have a ways to go here and that's the reality of it.

It's not just--what China has managed to do is not just numbers in terms of quantity. The quality that they are producing in terms of their platforms is quite sophisticated and it's grown in quality through the years.

That's the reality of what we're--our systems are excellent as well. I'm not suggesting that they're not. But there is a difference and, as I pointed out, when you get about a thousand miles from the coast of China the advantage moves decisively to China in terms of a military advantage that they have.

Mr. HAMADEH. Thank you, General.

And this question is for both of you but let's start out with Dr. Karlin. What are the most critical reforms Congress should prioritize to ensure the defense industrial base can sustain high-intensity conflicts across multiple theaters?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

I would just note, by the way, that in addition to looking at Chinese capabilities it's important to look at experience of which they have virtually none.

The last war they fought was nearly 50 years ago and it didn't go so terribly well for them. In terms of what Congress can do regarding the defense industrial base, two things jump out.

One is on time appropriations that gives them and, of course, the Department of Defense some sort of predictability that when we put out a strategy going to align the resources appropriately.

And then I think, secondly, Congress can have some important and hard conversations with the defense industry about them delivering the things they have committed to delivering in a timely manner and then trying to figure out when things aren't looking the way that they should and need some real change, what needs to happen.

Congress' leadership on the submarine industrial base is a really good example here.

Mr. HAMADEH. And if I can go back--do you think foreign military sales also is combined with this with our defense industrial base?

Because I've been hearing that some of our allies have been reducing their American military equipment and weapons and shifting to other places because they're not able to get a lot of the equipment on time.

Dr. KARLIN. I'm not familiar with them reducing and I actually used to oversee all of our foreign military sales throughout most of the Biden administration.

That process has gone much faster than it used to go, the technical aspects of that process, not least that thanks to lessons learned from Ukraine and then from assisting Israel post the October 7 attacks.

So usually folks want U.S. military platforms. They're oftentimes the best. I think one challenge can just be there are so many customers it becomes an issue of prioritization.

Mr. HAMADEH. All right. I yield back.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Representative Tran from California, you have five minutes.

Mr. TRAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I welcome and thank the witnesses for being here.

Dr. Karlin, I am a big proponent that our military's greatest asset is its people. Additional funding, weapon platforms, and equipment and even the most sophisticated capabilities are meaningless without a robust and cohesive fighting force.

Each of the military services are facing recruiting challenges amid a disinterested recruiting market and other factors. My question to you is what solution would you offer to overcome the current recruiting challenges facing our military today?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you for that, Congressman, and I wholeheartedly agree with you. Our people are our secret sauce, absolutely.

So there have been these recruiting challenges over the last few years. We saw last year or so that those are starting to turn a cor-

ner, for example, with the Army, and I think the Army is a really interesting model here.

They've set up some different ways for folks to join where they've been able to get some of that training, get some of that education, so then they are--kind of have those capabilities that are needed to really be successful soldiers. So I think that's one important piece.

Another broader piece, frankly, is trying to bridge the gap between those who serve in the military and the American public, right. This is a gap that has really grown into a gorge.

It's not least because one half of 1 percent of Americans serve in the military and folks who serve are often going to be on these kind of big, sprawling bases rather than spread out around the country.

So really kind of upping the recruitment effort in spots where folks don't have a lot of interaction with folks in uniform and trying to incentivize that interaction to just lower those barriers so all Americans understand here's what it means to join the military.

Here's what a day in the life of someone who serves looks like and here's why you might want to consider it.

General KEANE. Congressman, can I add to that?

Mr. TRAN. Sure.

General KEANE. First of all, in '24 all services met their recruiting objectives, so they have figured out what the issues are and much of it had to do with improving their own programs, and I think the Army had a pretty innovative program in dealing with people who couldn't pass the Armed Forces test.

And they didn't teach the test to them. What they wound up doing is teaching arithmetic, I call it, right, and reading to people because they're coming out of education systems in the United States that are wanting.

The second thing, to get to your point about people, our retention--all services' retentions are almost at record levels, which tells you that the people who are serving are getting a meaningful and purposeful experience that they value and the degree of satisfaction is high.

My concern about it, having spent 20 months looking at the National Defense Strategy and the services applying that strategy, is we're so much smaller than what we should be.

We're asking--but the requirements are going up given the threats we have been discussing here today. We're asking more of them. That's the concern I have.

If we don't grow them, then that retention will go down because life balance is going to change with their families. It's not happening. Their morale is good and they feel purposeful of what they're doing. I totally agree with you our people are our most important resource.

Mr. TRAN. Thank you, General.

My next question before I start that is as a veteran myself, I chose to serve because of the distinct privilege to give back to my country and my community.

Yet, recent actions by this administration to attack members of the military and undermine efforts to be more inclusive are harming the sanctity of service and threaten the allure of service for potential recruits.

What impacts do you believe President Trump's recent actions to abolish DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] efforts within DOD will have on our ability to adequately recruit and retain new talent? Dr. Karlin?

Dr. KARLIN. Our military, as you know, Congressman, is stronger when we have different types of folks serving in it, right. Folks with different backgrounds, different experiences, from different parts of the country and where they feel like this is an environment where they can thrive. We have a ton of evidence that that is the case.

I'll just give you one data point, which is about 20 percent or so of our active-duty force is women. They are playing critical roles throughout the U.S. military.

And so when we have an environment where folks maybe feel like not everyone has those opportunities it ends up inhibiting the terrific kind of capabilities that is the U.S. military. That, again, sets the U.S. military apart from our competitors like China and like Russia.

Mr. TRAN. Thank you so much, Dr. Karlin.

I, for one, am deeply concerned that the President's attacks on the service members will have a chilling effect on recruitment.

Later today, I will be sending a letter with some of my colleagues on HASC [House Committee on Armed Services] challenging the decision to disband certain cadet clubs--

(Simultaneous speaking.)

--at West Point.

Mr. VAN ORDEN [PRESIDING]. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognizes himself for five minutes.

I wanted to really talk about naval policy, sir, but I got to clear up some things.

First and foremost, I want to welcome the vast majority of my Democrat colleagues to the DOGE Caucus because they want to streamline the acquisition process. So you're all welcome. We get together twice a week.

Ma'am, I understand your experience in Djibouti. I lived there and I served there, and my experiences there are remarkably different than your testimony, and USAID is essentially paying tribute around the world like we did to the Barbary pirates and that's why they need to be completely defunded and rebuilt from the ground up.

So Thomas Jefferson did not want to get us involved in foreign conflicts but he did on purpose because he didn't want to pay tribute anymore, and the Barbary pirates were taking our citizens and allies hostage and selling them into slavery. So let's just remember that.

And also, ma'am, I would ask you, Dr. Karlin, have you ever been sitting down in a wadi somewhere and surrounded by the Taliban and have an A-10 come over and rip off some 30 millimeters and save you and your friends' lives?

I'm going to guess the answer is no. So when we're talking about these legacy systems we have to understand that A-10 platform has saved countless of my Navy SEAL [Sea, Air, and Land] brothers, Special Operations forces around the world, and general purpose forces. So let's not just throw that out.

General Keane, I want to personally welcome you home from Vietnam. Your service is remarkable, and if no one's told you that I'm going to tell you that now.

And our experiences were very similar. My generation fought Afghanistan. I fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and in the Horn of Africa.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is my first conflict. And we just have to acknowledge the fact that we have the most highly educated and powerful military in the history of the planet and we have not won a war in 80 years.

That's what you and I have in common, sir, and part of the problem is--and, Ms. Karlin, you're representing academia, essentially, here--is that. There's a great book. If you haven't read it, it's called "Best and Brightest." It was published in 1972.

We haven't learned. We simply have not learned. We didn't learn from Vietnam. We didn't learn from Afghanistan. We didn't learn from Iraq, and I'm very, very concerned that we're stumbling our way back into another one of these conflicts by not focusing on the most important thing we can and it's the first self-truth, that humans are more important than hardware.

And when we focus--and a lot of these systems are critically important. But we have to understand at the end of the day we have to have a group of people that are willing to go into a room and shoot somebody in the face, and that's what wins a war. I just wanted to frame that.

So, General Keane, I understand that you're not a naval expert. But looking at the de-evolution of my Navy I don't think we have a naval expert at this point.

We have given the Red Sea over to the Houthis and I don't understand that. The Straits of Malacca--what are we doing?

So, General Keane, if we remember that humans are more important than hardware what do you think you, as a recognized expert for decades in military leadership, what can we do to reshape the most important piece of this puzzle and that's the human?

General KEANE. Well, using the example that you're describing, I mean, it's our unwillingness to confront the adversary that permits this, you know, disaster going on in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.

I mean, just think about this. We have had anti-ship ballistic missiles fired at Navy warships. When's the last time that's happened? That's never happened.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. It's never happened.

General KEANE. And it has happened recently and what did we do about that? Not much of anything.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. So, General, I--

General KEANE. And we were in seconds--there were 300 people on that ship. We were in seconds of that ship exploding.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Correct.

So, General Keane, I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt but I just have a very limited time.

My colleague Mr. Gimenez asked you a question, Ms. Karlin, about risk aversion and what he was referring to is our naval officers and many of our military officers are--have become careerists,

and I'd say that's why we lost Vietnam, that's why we lost Afghanistan, that's why we lost Iraq.

So when our general officers and our field grade officers are focused more on their career than they are accomplishing the mission, which is protecting our citizens and our allies, we lose and until that changes we'll never win another conflict again.

My time has expired. Mr. Sorensen from the great city of Illinois is recognized for five minutes.

Mr. SORENSEN. Thank you to the gentleman, Mr. Chairman from Wisconsin.

Good morning all. Welcome to our witnesses.

General, thank you for your great service to our nation.

Dr. Karlin, thank you so much for giving your insight and speaking truth.

As my first hearing as an Armed Services member, let me tell you what an honor it is to be sitting in this chair today. My district is central and northwestern Illinois. It's home to the Rock Island Arsenal, our Army's first army Headquarters. Also, the 182nd air-lift wing at Peoria.

I'm proud to represent the men and women at these entities both uniformed and civilian, and the work that they do to support our national defense interests at home and abroad.

In your written testimony, you both discussed the importance of our defense industrial base and how critical it is to counter Russia and China's growing influence and aggression.

Before diving into my questions I'd like to touch briefly on the importance of our organic industrial base and the work at the Rock Island Arsenal.

Having played a key role in every conflict going back to the 1830s, generations of Illinoisans in my district have worked at the arsenal, building the equipment that keeps our men and women safe.

In 1832 the Rock Island Arsenal began a story of American innovation, leading the world in cutting-edge technologies and advanced manufacturing.

The labor of those in our region is the story of the heartland that we would ever think about putting an arsenal on an island in the middle of the Mississippi River--hard workers, good neighbors, serving their communities every day and our nation by providing the resources needed to uphold our values here and around the world.

It's, therefore, mission critical to the United States' readiness that we have the tools to equip the arsenal and the organic industrial base to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Dr. Karlin, I'll begin my questions with you. In this era of complex and interconnected global threats can you speak to the importance of focusing not just on the weapons systems but on the infrastructure and the men and women who build and maintain the systems we need?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

Absolutely. You know, in 2018 General Keane and I both worked on a National Defense Strategy commission and in that we assessed that we really had to focus on the defense industrial base.

We were worried about the state of it, worried, in particular, about the state of our munitions. Well, lo and behold, a couple years ago those concerns become spectacular as we see the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Now, the good news is folks have all gotten to learn the lesson while not being engaged directly in a war with American service members. So the progress that has been made with the defense industrial base over the last two and a half, three years or so has been crucial.

I would also really commend Congress because your leadership, especially on the munitions piece, like with multi-year procurement authority, has been incredibly important.

I mean, frankly, as you know well, having the people is absolutely important. They've also got to have the stuff.

Mr. SORENSEN. Thank you, Doctor.

General Keane, you spoke on the importance of consistent funding for the industrial base and the investments that we have made over the past several years in particular to update our facilities.

Can you elaborate a little bit more on the importance of continuing to ensure modernization is prioritized in the budget?

General KEANE. Yeah. This is very important. The organic industrial base, which is the Department of Defense owns themselves, is absolutely critical, separated from the commercial part of the defense industrial base.

And starting with the second half of the Trump administration, major funding began and it continued right through the Biden administration, and the war in Ukraine certainly elevated the significance of that, particularly as it came to ammunition plants and the like.

So we went literally from \$200 million to \$800 million to \$1 billion a year and then this committee supported a \$4 billion supplemental in terms of funding for artillery ammunition, and we managed to build our first new small arms plant since 1941 in a place called Lake City, Missouri.

This is 50-caliber and below. So the war in Ukraine has truly emphasized that many of our facilities are outdated and some of them actually are not as safe as they should be because of the processes that they're using.

We have got to fix it and we have got to continue the funding that has begun by two administrations, the Trump administration and the Biden administration.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. SORENSEN. Thank you, General. I look forward to meeting the--

(Simultaneous speaking.)

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The chair now recognizes Madam Goodlander from the small yet mighty state of New Hampshire.

Ms. GOODLANDER. Thank you, Mr. Van Orden, and thank you to our witnesses for your service to our country and for being here today for this hearing.

It's an important one for me because it's my first hearing as a member of the House Committee on Armed Services. It's truly the honor of my lifetime to represent the state I love so much--small but mighty, indeed, the state of New Hampshire--in the people's

House, and at a time of great division in our country I am so excited to be serving on this committee and proud to be doing so because we don't agree on a lot a lot of the time but today we have agreed on several core things and how refreshing and hopeful is that.

One of the things--one of the through lines in the work that you've both done in your many years of service to our country and in our conversation this morning has been the imperative of a defense industrial base that is prepared to meet the moment, an American defense industrial base that is innovative, that is nimble, responsive, and competitive, and you've pointed us to some important things that we can do here in Congress, including on time appropriations and a return to normal order, which is a huge priority for me.

But you've also both pointed to a really important fact, that in 1991 we had 51 primes. Today we have five. We have seen incredible consolidation in our defense industrial base just like we have seen consolidation in industries across the American economy.

General Keane, you wrote in your written testimony something I couldn't agree with more, that American democratic capitalism can outwork, outwit, and out-innovate China's state capitalism. It's so true.

But capitalism without competition isn't the kind of capitalism that the American people deserve. So I want to ask both of you, starting with you, Dr. Karlin, how has consolidation in the defense industrial base undermined American military readiness?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you very much, Congresswoman, and I wholeheartedly agree with all those points you highlighted.

Look, consolidation at the end of the Cold War might have made sense for that moment in time, but as you note it was really dramatic, right--an order of magnitude change in our defense industry.

And that meant not only are you not having folks kind of producing the material, you don't have the same number of folks innovating and thinking about what the next thing should be that we should be investing in.

Now, we saw about, frankly, three decades or so that consolidation being problematic. What we have seen, interestingly, in the last few years is other types of companies start to come into this space, right.

Other types of companies we might not naturally think of as doing defense starting to do defense and getting more comfortable with that and playing more of a role in our national security interests.

So while I've been quite concerned about that consolidation, I am hopeful that, in particular, given the efforts over the last few years, particularly by this committee, to work with the defense industry and the involvement of other types of companies that we can start to see those shifts that we need through serious focus.

Thank you.

Ms. GOODLANDER. So I want to open it up to you, General Keane, but I want to ask you also, we talked about the stuff and we have talked about the people, and you've both said it--the men and women of our joint force are our secret sauce. They are our most important resource.

I want to ask you both what is the single most important thing you think that Congress can do to make sure that our recruitment and retention numbers keep us in a place to be the most powerful military force the world has ever known.

General KEANE. Well, from my perspective, we're too small and our requirements are growing, so we have to authorize our services to grow to meet those requirements because that will eventually impact, you know, people's life balance.

Look, war breaks out, the mission comes first and families are a distant second. That's just the way it is. But when we're at peace, services, families, are trying to find some kind of life balance and the force I see out there is being stressed because the requirements are climbing.

So we have got to grow that force so there's--the life balance truly is there for them. I don't want to be negative about how that force today feels about themselves. They feel very good about themselves.

Their sense of satisfaction about what they're doing is high, and the number-one indicator of morale in the service is retention rates and ours are almost record-breaking.

So we should feel good about that and this committee should feel good about some of the funding that's taken place to help that. More needs to be done, as we have stated.

Ms. GOODLANDER. In my final three seconds, I think something we all agree on also, should the Pentagon be subjected to a full audit?

Dr. KARLIN. The Pentagon, all parts of our government, should be able to go through an audit and pass an audit. It's responsible to American taxpayers.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Vindman from Virginia for five minutes.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Fallon from the great state of Texas for five minutes.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you to our very experienced chairman. Thank you. Appreciate it. You got to give him a little grief, General. He's a Navy SEAL. You know, I'm an Air Force guy--Army.

General, Omar Bradley said, and I'm sure you've heard, tactics are for amateurs and logistics are for professionals, and I think we, given the daunting task of World War II, did a pretty good job with logistics on the fly for those almost four years, and then we seem to have kind of lost the lessons learned in Korea.

And so I wanted to just ask you, obviously, contested logistics in the INDOPACOM AOR [area of responsibility] is a topic of great debate. In your view, what has the U.S. done or should do to secure and expand the access in the region?

General KEANE. Well, the reality is a number of changes I think need to be made, certainly. On World War II bases, which we're pretty much relying on, they are all vulnerable to China's attack, long-range weapons, air power.

We have to harden them but we have to--and the Air Force is moving in this direction in terms of establishing expeditionary bases that they can set up in a number of days.

We need to present that kind of a problem to the Chinese. In other words, it complicates their problem, and expeditionary bases we have to--and then we have to make certain that those bases are also defensible.

So yes, what the Chinese are trying to do is deny us access, and the other thing that we know if we move our surface ships and if there's validity in war games, and I think there are some validities, I don't think war games are an end in themselves.

What I get out of it is not so much who wins and loses but what do you learn about your own capabilities--what works and what doesn't work--and our surface ships are very vulnerable. That is the reality and it's not going to change in the near term.

But our submarines are absolutely very effective and we can use submersibles and above-the-sea autonomous vehicles as well, not by the hundreds but by the thousands, to make certain that we're imposing cost, and that gives us access.

One of the problems we have if you play a war game China is going to take down the major bases that we intend to fly our air power into. So we find out--we find ourselves using air power from as far away as Australia or from as far away as Alaska, and that's not nearly what we need to have.

So yes, there--deny access is the asymmetric warfare that China is imposing on us. But given the technology that exists, given the willingness to change the strategy and the operational concept, I believe with some imagination, we can break down that denial of access that we have and begin the kind of penetration.

What we're not talking about--we're not talking about defeating China here. We're talking about imposing enough cost on them to deter them from taking offensive actions against us, much as we did with the Soviet Union.

They outnumbered us significantly, I mentioned before, and the reality is we put together an imaginative operational strategy that imposed cost on them and it effectively deterred them from conducting that invasion that they truly wanted to do.

And that is where we need to be, and we need to exercise it also right in front of them, which we did every two years in front of the Soviet Union, and we don't do enough of that operationally.

We do individual exercise with--bilateral with a country or one or two with others, but we don't really put together an operational plan and exercise that plan, and I think a mistake and, hopefully, we'll make changes to get on with doing that.

It is about convincing your adversary that the cost that we can impose on them is too significant for them to take the operational risk to start that conflict.

Mr. FALLON. General, real quick, do you think, given the changing realities of warfare, that we should focus maybe more and lean in on subs and UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicle]?

General KEANE. Yeah, absolutely, and I know Dr. Karlin would agree with us--would agree with me. I mean, our submarines have a decisive advantage. We just don't have enough of them.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The chair now recognizes--yes sir.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Vindman from Virginia for five minutes.

Mr. VINDMAN. Thank you, General Keane, Dr. Karlin.

I'm excited to join this committee at a critical time in our nation's history to make sure that the next generation of warfighters serving today is equipped for the next fight including many of whom are stationed on the three installations I represent in my district.

Without regard to political party or ideology, national security and support to our uniformed services must be bipartisan while also ensuring accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

The current threat environment demands a bipartisan, nimble, and rapid approach to countering both today's and tomorrow's adversaries using all elements of national power including diplomatic, information, military and economic.

General Keane, you talked about this axis of adversaries that has loosely formed with Iran, North Korea, China, and Russia. I call it an axis of autocrats.

We have recently seen Iran weakened as a result of Israel's military actions. Russia is also under strain after three years of war in Ukraine. Since this is a team sport and looking at U.S. and its partners versus the axis of autocrats holistically, we want our strength to be greater than theirs.

In the short term, next year or 18 months or so, the Russia dimension of this axis is actually the one that we can influence the most dramatically and at a relatively low cost compared to our budget. In military jargon, sort of an economy of force operation.

We can and must do this while acknowledging that China is the pacing threat that we need to be gearing up for. Do you agree with this assessment? And that's both for you and Dr. Karlin.

General KEANE. Yeah. Certainly, Russia obviously thought they were going to be able to take Ukraine in a matter of days if not weeks.

They overestimated their own capabilities and underestimated the Ukrainians', and now--I mean, in the last two months they've taken 48,000 casualties and each month they've advanced X number of miles across the front line of troops--40 to 50 miles in the course of a year.

They truly have their challenges, but in their minds they are winning, and that is why Putin is so resistant to actually come to the negotiating table. He will probably want concessions to get there.

I think we're on a pathway here if we stay committed and stay committed to Ukraine, that it is possible to put enough pressure on Russia to force them to the negotiating table. But that means you're going to have to add more to Ukraine than what we are currently doing.

Mr. VINDMAN. I agree, General Keane, and I appreciate that assessment.

Dr. Karlin?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

I would agree with what you highlighted and, frankly, if one is worried about China, which I think seems to be the overwhelming

kind of consensus of this committee, one has to care about European security.

What happens in Ukraine is being watched much, much more than just across Europe but across the Indo-Pacific as well.

Mr. VINDMAN. Thank you. So you mentioned that your op-ed--you talked about rare earths. 60 percent of those rare earths are in occupied regions.

Forty percent are in Ukraine, and so I posit that it's better that Ukraine, a U.S.-EU aligned country, control these assets that are critical to manufacturing all kinds of things, including weapons, than Russia and its axis of autocrats.

General Keane, let's sort of drill down from the strategic to the operational/tactical. We have already talked about drones and the utility of drones and how important they are to the next battlefield.

And I agree with you that we probably need to rebalance these capital assets that we have with drones. It is probably not an either/or. It's a both, and just what amounts.

So in your testimony you said services need congressional relief to purchase large quantities of drones from the non-defense commercial sector that are outside of a program of record.

Are you familiar with prior examples where Congress has provided this authorization? And 20 seconds or less because I want to give each of you a chance.

General KEANE. No, I'm not aware of it. I mean, my information comes from the Army service chief and his desire to do just that, and that kind of permission in the bulk that he's looking for hasn't been given him as of recently. I may be off a little bit but--

Mr. VINDMAN. Thanks, General. I think that's our job and so we need to focus on that.

Dr. Karlin?

General KEANE. I totally agree.

Dr. KARLIN. I would just add that it really is worth looking at U.S. Special Operations Command special authorities for acquisition because they have managed to, in many examples, move much more quickly, more deftly, more innovatively.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Higgins for five minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, China's sea power capabilities and shipbuilding progress has been fascinating and startling to observe.

General Keane, you stated in your testimony that autonomous above water vessels and below water submersibles begin to close the gap between where we are as the defender of the free world and the responsibility of this committee to provide the Pentagon with what it needs to prevent and dominate any looming military conflict, particularly regarding autonomous vessels for the Navy.

It seems to me, as an American who loves his country, I'm watching what happens and the system doesn't seem to be functioning very well. You know, the amount of money that we're spending versus the product that we're actually deploying for our war fighters, there seems to be quite a gap.

One of my colleagues across the aisle earlier mentioned that--the gentlelady stated that young Americans studying DOD books can't possibly be counted on to explain DOD expenditures.

Well, let me say the DOD has failed seven audits. Seemed like us old guys are not doing too well either. Perhaps we should give an opportunity to the new administration to examine these books and track this money and as a Congress we have to do a much better job on communicating very well with the with the Pentagon's frontline requirements.

And to that, General Keane, I will ask you to address the autonomous vessel requirements. How do you envision our immediate response? You stated that U.S. leaders experimented with new technology to determine what worked best and produced those quickly during the Cold War.

What can we do? How would you speak to that, how Congress can move to encourage the Pentagon and the existing process to embrace a new paradigm of what we face?

General KEANE. Yes. Well, the Pentagon is very much aware of the lessons that have been learned in the changing character of war as a result of Russia and Ukraine on the battlefield and applying those not just to land warfare but the sea warfare.

The Indo-Pacific commander, Admiral Paparo, is moving in this direction and he is breaking from the past and moving in a direction of what I just described as more autonomous vehicles both above and below the surface and that makes all the sense because that is how you overcome the asymmetric successful strategy that China has been applying to deny us access to their military capabilities that are on their mainland and that is how we deter them, if we put those military capabilities into practice.

Mr. HIGGINS. Precisely. I concur.

In my remaining time I'd like to get--I'd like to get your thoughts on--you said something I felt was quite courageous earlier.

You said you would not recommend going to five percent of GDP expenditures without reform with the current process that we're talking about right now--the way we spend money and how does that tie into it.

It seems to me that we could immediately, quickly move into autonomous production but for land vessels, sea vessels, undersea vessels, and aircraft to help us close the gap and that it would be far more affordable.

We could, like, make the corrections of the way we're spending American treasure and how--what the lethality level of our military forces are, what power we can project worldwide. It seemed like the bang for the buck right now is in autonomous vessels. Would you concur and agree with that?

General KEANE. I absolutely concur and there are service chiefs that are right on top of this. The combatant commander in the Pacific is.

Yes, you can get a lot of capability for considerably less funding than what it takes to build a major platform and--but we got to get on with the reform as well.

And look, if we're going to open our books to young business guys as opposed to old business guys, as mentioned by one of the Congress people who had objected to it, I mean, what are we intimidated by?

Mr. HIGGINS. Right.

General KEANE. Let's have someone look at this thing.

Mr. HIGGINS. It may be true.

General KEANE. We have been looking at it for years and we don't have very good answers.

Mr. HIGGINS. May be true. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. I yield.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Bell and simultaneously offers my deepest condolences for your Kansas City Chiefs, sir.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and also Vice Ranking Member Davis. I believe this is your first hearing in this role.

Congratulations, and it's also my first hearing on this committee, which I'm very proud to serve not only in this committee but also my district back home in St. Louis.

In a time where political influence is increasing worldwide from adversaries like China, Russia and others, the United States must utilize all of its resources to ensure we remain a global force and counter these threats.

Countering our adversaries and protecting our national security will require a multi-pronged approach that also focuses on our defense intelligence capabilities.

This includes the work of support agencies within DOD that aid in our security efforts. The National Geospatial Intelligence Agency West, which is located in my district in St. Louis, is one of those agencies.

And just for time's sake quickly, Dr. Karlin and General Keane, can you talk about NGA's [National Geospatial Intelligence Agency] important role in supporting our forces everywhere in the globe?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

Simply put, it's critical, right. NGA has consistently helped as I've worked for six Secretaries of Defense. I'm guessing General Keane will say something quite similar in helping us understand what the threats are on the horizon, what the threats are that we are countering today, and how we can best counter them.

General KEANE. I associate myself completely with Dr. Karlin's comments.

Mr. BELL. General Keane, for any future fight in the Pacific we're going to have to heavily rely on Air Mobility Command, which is headquartered just outside my district, to move goods and forces around the fight.

Can you talk about their importance in the Pacific both in peacetime and wartime?

General KEANE. Well, yeah, absolutely. I mean, the challenge the United States has always had as a global power is--and we're oceans away usually from where the threat is, and so Air Mobility Command is absolutely crucial in getting us to the theater.

What has changed is the power projection that we have done in the past and the last major one was in Iraq in 2003. The next one we have to do, if it is to the Indo-Pacific region, it will be contested. In other words, they will cyberattack the deployment of it and they will kinetically attack it as well.

So a strategic deployment being made that is uncontested if the foe is China is not going to happen. It will be dramatically different

than anything we have experienced in the past, going all the way back to World War II when our deployments were contested. So Air Mobility Command is vital in being able to do that.

Mr. BELL. And my last question is also for you, General Keane. In your written testimony you mentioned the size of the force being too small. With recent attacks on service members' quality of life from health care and other angles, are you concerned this will actually hinder the growing--hinder growing the force?

General KEANE. No. I still am convinced once we get the message out, and the services have done a good job in relooking themselves in how they talk to the American people, how they talk to young people, how they talk to influencers, and they've all proved it.

It's getting the fact out there that there's value added by service in the military, you're going to grow as a human being. We're going to strengthen the values that your family or your religion has given you, and you're going to have a meaningful experience.

You don't necessarily have to make a career out of it but you're going to have an experience that will help you as you move along the pathway in your journey in life. We have done a better job at communicating with the American people. The Congress has helped us with compensation, which is also very important, and we need help also how we take care of our families. Put that package together, I'm optimistic.

Mr. BELL. Thank you. And it's a privilege to yield my time back to the vice ranking member.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The chair now recognizes Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses today.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. [Off mic.]

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. We'll yield. We'll yield.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. That's two today.

The chair now recognizes my great friend Mr. Mills from the state of Florida.

Mr. MILLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to see you actually sitting up there. It's good to see one of the oldest members and the least attractive sitting there as chair. It makes my heart warm.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Thank you.

Mr. MILLS. General Keane, thanks so much for being here. Ms. Karlin, thank you so much.

As we look at the lessons learned during the last few years of warfare, from Ukraine to Yemen, it is clear that rapid innovations in technology and driving rapid innovations and tactics small businesses are driving that innovation here in the private sector, and in the commercial sector especially every single day they face both high barriers to entry into the defense sector.

Dr. Karlin, there is a wide divide between the agility of offices like the DIU and service innovation labs. What recommendations do you have to export those innovations to the conventional acquisition frameworks?

Dr. KARLIN. Thank you, Congressman.

Absolutely there are these barriers to entry and we see that not least because of this massive consolidation that happened with our defense industry base.

So a couple companies got really, really good at figuring out how to crack the code of the Department of Defense. A whole bunch of others, as you know, have not been able to.

I think we have started to see some good change over the last few years. In particular, you highlight DIU [Defense Innovation Unit] as one really good case study. We're starting to see players come into the defense business who wouldn't naturally be there and who are more comfortable being there as well.

I think one of the things really to look hard at is how to lower those barriers to entry through rapid acquisition systems, right--having these authorities where folks are able to participate in Department of Defense contracts but not have to throw all of their kind of focus towards it.

And, of course, on-time appropriations plays an important role for particularly the small businesses.

Mr. MILLS. And as we know, unfortunately, the State Department director of defense trade controls other, whether it's DSP-5 export approval, DSP-83s to actually engage in the activities of trying to work with other developing nations and also allies have been completely hamstrung and it's been a very delayed process to include we need real procurement reform when it comes to the overall process, updating the DFAR [Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation], but also just becoming more competitive in the market. And so I think that's really important as we look at our economic challenges.

General Keane, thank you so much for the decades and decades of service that you've given this nation. You know, one of my growing concerns right now when we look at our armed forces is the declining recruitment numbers.

When we talk of the 42,000 deficit, when we talk about the 8,600 who was, in my personal opinion, unconstitutionally purged, do you see that these recruitment challenges could pose greater threats for us from a national security perspective, moving forward?

General KEANE. No, I don't, to be quite frank about it. All the services have made their recruiting objectives this year. I think they figured out how to better communicate effectively to the American people and to young people who may consider a service opportunity and they've, you know, relooked themselves as well.

So the changes have been made and we did this about 20 years ago when we had a recruiting problem and within a couple of years we solved it.

Certainly, the economy always impacts it, but it was more internal than anything else, and the services are there. I know for a fact the Army will likely exceed rather significantly its recruiting objective coming in 2025. I don't--can't speak to the other services.

Mr. MILLS. Well, I agree with that.

General KEANE. I think we're overstating the recruiting problem. We did have it for two years plus. I think it's essentially--are we still going to have some challenges?

Of course. We got to work hard at it. But I think all the services have learned the lesson the Marine Corps taught us. They put their best people in it.

Mr. MILLS. Well, I would just add to that--I would just add to that, General Keane, that while I respect what you're having to

say, I disagree that recruitment deficits are not a potential national security threat as we move forward if our retention levels do not maintain, and especially when you think about quality of life improvements in MILCON-VA [military construction-veterans affairs] that needs to be guaranteed for our soldiers and for their spouses, to say things like not just giving you childcare twice a week but five times a week so that the spouse can have another career, a pathway to transition, but also the idea that you shouldn't work at Chick-Fil-A full time 40 hours a week and make more than a service member risking his life.

I think that those are also the recruitment challenges but also the things like DEI which was actually causing people to be more concerned because it wasn't about diversity, equity and inclusion.

It needs to be about increased lethality, readiness, and being properly equipped, the way it was when I was in the Army when it was be all you can be--when it was when I was in the military and looking at the service groups when it was years in Iraq, years in Afghanistan that I served, in Kosovo, in other locations.

That, in my opinion--while I agree with you on one thing that you definitely said which is that the 2025 recruitment numbers I believe will be very strong but that's because of the incoming administration and because of the Secretary of Defense who's prioritizing the war fighter.

With that, I yield.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now actually recognizes Mr. Davis, my friend from North Carolina.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To the witnesses, thank you so much for being with us today as we're kicking off the 119th.

Dr. Karlin and General Keane, we really appreciate it. And to the chair, thank you. You made it to the finish line, obviously, with some amazing staff.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Well, thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

I too would like to thank you very much for your very thoughtful testimony. I think we agree on a lot and we disagree on some, and that's okay as long as we continue to understand that the priority of the Department of Defense must remain lethality and readiness, we can move on from there.

So, again, with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:12 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Testimony

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services**

By

General John M. Keane, USA (Ret)

on

**Securing American Interests Against Global Threats
and the Growing Convergence of America's Adversaries**

1000 hours, 12 February 2025

2118 Rayburn House Office Building

Chairman Rogers, ranking member Smith, distinguished members of the committee thank you for inviting me back to share some thoughts with you today. I am very familiar with the work of this Committee and your dedication and tireless effort to provide for the National Defense and the sustained support you provide for the armed forces and their families. Am honored today to be with my colleague Dr Mara Karlin, a highly respected national security professional who has devoted much of her life to help protecting the American people.

I was honored to participate in the Congressional Commission that examined the NDS 2022. We collaborated without regard to political party or ideology and found common ground on the dangers we are facing and issued a bipartisan, unanimous report. Frankly, we were alarmed and called for change and urgent action. Your topic today; “Securing American Interests Against Global Threats and the Convergence of America’s Adversaries” was central to our report findings and recommendations.

The threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging since 1945 and include the potential for near term major war. The United States last fought a global conflict during World War II, which ended nearly 80 years ago. The nation last prepared for such a fight during the Cold War, which ended 35 years ago. It is not prepared today.

China and Russia's “no limits partnership” formed in February 2022 just days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine has only deepened and broadened to include a military and economic partnership with Iran and North Korea, each of

which presents its own significant threat to US interests. This new axis of nations opposed to US interests creates a real risk, if not likelihood, that conflict anywhere could become a multi theater or global war.

Clearly the dominant power in this group is China, which the NDS 2022 identified as the “pacing challenge”, based on the strength of its military and economy and its intent to exert dominance regionally and globally. However, the reality is China is outpacing the United States and has largely negated the US military advantage in the Western Pacific through 20 plus years of focused military investment. U.S. military capability eroded due to the 9/11 wars and underfunding conventional capabilities. Indeed, China outguns the US in every military category: surface ships, offensive and defensive missiles, anti-ship missiles, regional air power and ground forces. The only area is submarines where the US maintains an advantage. China is rapidly building up its strategic nuclear forces with what appears to be an objective to surpass the United States.

The convergence of the four powers led by China and Russia, while it is not a formal security alliance, their coordination, collaboration and cooperation has significantly increased by the war in Ukraine and their desire to tangibly help Russia to win. Their underlying common interests is to weaken US leadership and the global order the US and like-minded democracies have fostered for almost 80 years. This development cannot be taken lightly and it is fundamentally altering the geopolitical landscape. This group has assisted each other in overcoming international sanctions, have bolstered each other's military capability and fostered support for each country's sphere of influence.

We should be clear-eyed about this threat; to minimize or exaggerate it is misguided.

Each country claims a sphere of influence: China's "core interests" extend to Taiwan and the South China Sea to include regional domination; Iran's "axis of resistance", using its proxies to gain influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen in seeking regional domination, control of Persian Gulf oil and the destruction of Israel; North Korea abandoning reunification with South Korea and seeking claim to the entire Korean peninsula and Russia's "near abroad", Putin's determination to rebuild the Russian Empire with former Eastern European countries. All four powers see the US as the obstacle to achieving these spheres of influence and desire to weaken US presence in their region and if possible, drive the United States out.

It is not isolated that Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, that Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023 and Iran operationalized all its proxies in attacking U.S. troops in the region, attacking Israel on multiple fronts and inhibiting the flow of commerce through the Red Sea and Suez Canal, while China under President Xi threatens war in the Pacific and increased its intimidation and coercion of US allies and partners in the region.

The United States can ill afford to treat these 4 powers in isolation because they represent a center of gravity that has potential for expansion to other like-minded countries. If Russia wins in Ukraine so does China, Iran and North Korea, who will be emboldened to become more aggressive at the expense of the United States much as these 4 powers did after the Afghanistan

withdrawal. The next National Defense Strategy and the subsequent NDS must address the strategy and resources to effectively deter these adversaries with the primary focus on China. It will not be cheap.

The American people are largely ignorant of the harsh realities we are facing, that if war broke out in the Pacific with China, the West Coast of the United States would also be under kinetic attack while China would conduct comprehensive cyber attacks on US critical infrastructure in the homeland to shut down power, oil, gas and water distribution while also attacking financial / banking systems and pharmaceutical companies to deny Americans access to funds and much needed medications. Losses to military personnel and high capital assets in the Pacific would be on a scale not seen since World War II and the intent would be to break the will of the people's support for the war at home by causing catastrophic suffering. It is reasonable to conclude that Russia, Iran and North Korea could take some action in their sphere of influence to gain military and or geopolitical advantage.

While all the elements of national power is essential to meet these threats to include building on the strength of the previous 2 administrations in strengthening NATO, the Abraham Accords and AUKUS, repurposing the Quad and forming a historical alliance with South Korea, Japan and the US, much more will need to be done not only in the region but in Latin America and Africa. Allies and partners are essential to confronting and containing these threats. However, when U.S. military strength or hard power is not what it should be it weakens the US position significantly and inhibits the other elements of national power.

Recovering/ Rebuilding the US Military:

1. Readiness:

Despite the recruiting challenges over a year ago, all the services made their recruiting objectives in 2024. Indeed, the Army is planning to exceed significantly its recruiting objectives for 2025. Retention in all 4 services is almost at record levels with the troops finding meaning and purpose in providing service to the Nation. There are readiness issues associated with shortage of personnel, lower than normal operational readiness rates for tanks, ships and airplanes and training exercises canceled due to lack of funding.

2. Size of the Force:

The force is too small. The Army is at an all-time low not seen since prior to World War II at 450,000, the Air Force is at a 40 year low and the Navy is almost 70 ships short of its objective of 360 ships. However, given the growing nature of the threats and adversaries the military is facing, requirements keep going up which asks much more of a smaller force to do more. During 20 months as a member of the NDS Commission I became quite familiar with the demands and stress on our forces. If this continues it would not be surprising to see retention go down due to life-balance issues during peace-time.

3.

4. Funding:

The NDS 2018 Commission (I was a member) recommended a funding strategy of 3-5% above inflation annually of GDP and the NDS 2022 endorsed that recommendation as well. I believe it should be closer to 5% above inflation. Since the end of World War II, defense spending grew faster than inflation, but non-defense spending grew at an even faster rate, causing defense as a share of the overall budget to decline (currently 13%, 2024). This suggests that the United States could spend a much greater share of its budget on defense as it has in the past. The Nation spends a smaller share on defense because other forms of spending have taken priority. This is a policy choice not a fiscal constraint. During the Cold War funding peaked at 6.8% with an average around 6% for the period. During Iraq/Afghanistan it was 4.7%.

The Congress with the help of the President needs to move with a sense of urgency to restore deterrence. I agree with Chairman Rogers and Wicker's proposal to increase defense spending by \$200B over the next two years. It underscores the crisis the United States is facing to increase capabilities, fix the Defense Industrial Base and the Organic Industrial Base.

5. The Defense Industrial Base (DIB) / Organic Industrial Base (OIB)/ Defense Business Practices

The Defense Industrial Base(DIB):

The Reagan military buildup was able to move with a sense of urgency when capital was provided to the DIB because it consisted of 51 primes according to the Reagan Institute where today as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 there are only 5 primes. Approximately 40% of the general purpose active duty Cold War force was cut. A reality that history has revealed was much too steep (the 9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were fought sequentially rather than simultaneously because land forces were too small.)

Today the United States is challenged to meet peacetime demands to assist our partners in Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. When the US military plays war games simulating combat we run out of critical munitions much too soon adversely impacting the outcome. This must be fixed:

- Need consistent, reliable funding
- Need continuous demand to sustain workforce and supply chain flow
- Discipline the requirements process (it has been a major obstacle)
- Accept risk/avoid zero tolerance for error
- Stop overtesting

Organic Industrial Base(OIB):

(Ammunition plants, depots, maintenance)

-Many facilities are old, technology outdated and unsafe

-Beginning in the second-half of the Trump administration through the Biden administration, Presidents' budget

-From \$200M annually to \$800M to \$1B

-Congress (HASC) added \$200M

-Many of the facilities improved

-Supplemental funding \$4B for 155 ammunition

-Lake City Missouri Small Arms Plant

-First new plant since 1941

-50 caliber and below

-Must sustain funding

5.Returning Deterrence:

The US military remains the world's number one military superpower capable of projecting combat power worldwide. China nor Russia can do that on the scale of the US military. Not only project power but not be dependent on a host nation for any logistical needs to sustain the force.

However, when the US military is 1000 miles or so off China's mainland, the military advantage is decisively in China's favor. As mentioned, China outguns us in just about every platform except submarines which because of their stealth can approach China's missile batteries and airfields and put them at risk. But it is not enough because China can still target our first island chain bases in the region and put at risk US surface fleets with swarming anti-ship hypersonic missiles. Imaginative operational concepts that mitigate these advantages by using autonomous above the water and below the water submersibles can begin to close the gap. Ukraine's military without an Air Force destroyed 28 Russian naval ships and drove them out of the Black Sea. The United States proved during the Cold War that we did not have to go platform to platform with the Soviet Union who significantly outnumbered US military in everything: number of divisions, tanks, artillery, attack helicopters etc. US leaders experimented with new technologies to determine what worked best and produced those quickly: Abrams tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Apache Helicopter, Multiple Rocket Launcher, Air Defense. These systems could not by themselves defeat the Soviet Union but they could impose cost and discourage an invasion. Every 2 years the US/NATO forces exercised their capability right on the border of the Soviet Union so they could see it was real and we knew how to maximize it. This is deterrence, your adversaries know you have the capability, it will impose cost and there is no doubt about the intent to use it.

We need to continue to encourage our allies to upgun as well and assist them as needed. Taiwan is an obvious priority.

6. Congressional Assistance:

--Continuing Resolutions (CRs). We are now into a generation of CR's which continues to handicap the services every year. Money continues to be lost and new starts delayed.

--Legacy Systems. Services more than ever need to rid themselves of systems no longer relevant and need your support even though the system is manufactured in your district.

-- Services need Congressional relief to purchase large quantity of drones from the non-defense commercial sector that are outside of a program of record.

In conclusion while there is much to be done concerning the axis powers the US and allies are in a position to enable Ukraine to participate in a peace agreement that can end the war and guarantee Ukraine's future security while deterring Putin from further expansion. In the Middle East, Iran is in the most weakened position in its 44 year history with the opportunity to prevent it from having nuclear weapons either by voluntarily dismantling the program using coercive diplomacy with a date certain and comprehensive verification or a US supported Israeli strike to cause major setbacks in the program. Returning to the Abraham Accords looms on the horizon if and when a reasonable pathway forward can be found for

the Palestinians. If the US government commits to rebuilding the US military along with using all the instruments of national power in concert with allies and partners the US can deter China's aggression.

US democratic capitalism can outthink, outwit and out-innovate China's state capitalism.

Thank you, I look forward to your questions.

General John M. Keane, United States Army, Retired

General Jack Keane is a foreign policy and national security expert who provides nationwide analysis and commentary in speeches, articles, congressional testimony and through several hundred television and radio interviews annually. He serves as an advisor to presidents, cabinet officials, members of congress, international leaders, CEOs and business leaders. He is the Chairman of the Institute for the Study of War, a member of the prestigious Secretary of Defense Policy Board, having advised four Defense Secretaries and a member of the 2018 and 2022 Congressional Commission on the National Defense Strategy.

General Keane, a four-star general, completed 37 years of public service in December 2003, culminating in his appointment as acting Chief of Staff and Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. As the chief operating officer of the Army for over 4 years, he directed 1.5 million soldiers and civilians in 120 countries, with an annual operating budget of 110 billion dollars. General Keane was in the Pentagon on 9/11 and provided oversight and support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In late 2006 President Bush invited General Keane to the Oval Office among others to discuss Iraq. Alone among them, General Keane brought the president a concrete strategic concept, later to be known as the troop "surge" which he helped develop, to change American strategy for the war and improve its execution. During the surge period General Keane conducted frequent trips to Iraq and Afghanistan for senior defense officials. General Keane is a career infantry paratrooper, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War decorated for valor, who spent much of his military life in operational commands, including command of the famed 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the legendary 18th Airborne Corps, the Army's largest warfighting organization.

General Keane is the son of an immigrant mother, a WWII Marine father, a born and raised New Yorker and lifelong NY Yankee fan. He was commissioned an infantry 2nd Lieutenant from Army ROTC as a Distinguished Military Graduate at Fordham University receiving a Bachelor of Science degree and received a Master of Arts degree from Western Kentucky University. He is a graduate of the Army War College and the Army Command and General Staff College.

Among his awards, General Keane was the first military leader to be honored with the Ronald Reagan Peace Through Strength Award and the prestigious Bradley Prize. In March of 2020 General Keane was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom at the White House. General Keane's numerous military service medals and citations include two Defense and two Army Distinguished Service Medals, five Legions of Merit, the Silver Star, Bronze Star, three Vietnam Service medals, Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and Ranger Tab, to list a few.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Hearing Date: 2/12/25

Hearing Subject:

Securing American Interests Against Global Threats and the Growing Convergence of America's Adversaries

Witness name: GEN(R) Jack Keane

Position/Title: Chairman, Institute for the Study of War

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☒ Individual ☐ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:

N/A

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2025

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2024

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2023

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2022

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2025

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2024

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2023

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2022

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

Fiduciary Relationships: If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship
Institute for the Study of War	Chairman of Board of Directors
Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments	Member Board of Directors
I am senior strategic analyst for FOX News as well as making other media and print appearances. I am not appearing or speaking on their behalf or representing any entity.	

Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2025

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2024

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2023

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2022

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

Statement of Mara Karlin, PhD
Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee
“Protecting American Interests in a Convergent Global Threat Environment”¹
February 12, 2025

Today’s threats are complex and interconnected. Only through serious, thoughtful, and regular assessment can the United States effectively understand and influence this security environment. The plasticity of this period, wherein major regions and conflicts are being fundamentally reshaped, contains challenges and opportunities for U.S. national security interests.

Understanding Global Threats

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, American strategic planners faced a fairly static challenge: a Cold War in which superpower conflict was kept on ice by nuclear deterrence, turning hot only in proxy fights that were costly but containable. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought that era to an end. In Washington during the 1990s, war became a matter of assembling coalitions to intervene in discrete conflicts when bad actors invaded their neighbors, stoked civil or ethnic violence, or massacred civilians. After the shock of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, U.S. strategy shifted to terrorist organizations, insurgents, and other nonstate groups. The resulting “war on terror” pushed thinking about state-on-state conflict to the sidelines. For most of this century, the prospect of a major war among states was a lower priority for American military thinkers and planners, and whenever it took center stage, the context was usually a potential conflict with China that would materialize only in the far-off future, if ever.

Now, the relatively narrow scope that defined war during the post-9/11 era has dramatically widened. An era of limited war has ended; an age of comprehensive conflict has begun. What the world is witnessing today is akin to what theorists in the past called “total war,” in which combatants draw on vast arrays of resources, mobilize their societies, attack a broad variety of targets, and reshape their economies to prioritize warfare over all other state activities.

The character of war is changing in three fundamental ways:

1) The Continuum of Conflict has Collapsed

In an earlier era, one might have seen the terrorism and insurgency of Hamas, Hizballah, and the Houthis as inhabiting the low end of a spectrum of conflict intensity, the armies waging conventional warfare in Ukraine as residing in the middle, and the nuclear threats shaping Russia’s war and China’s growing arsenal as sitting at the high end. Today, however, there is no sense of mutual exclusivity between these domains; the continuum of conflict has collapsed. To put it in cinematic terms, when it comes to war, we see “everything, everywhere, all at once.” In Ukraine, “robot dogs” patrol the ground and autonomous drones launch missiles from the sky amid trench warfare that looks like World War I—all under the specter of nuclear weapons. In the Middle East, combatants combined sophisticated air and missile defense systems with individual shooting attacks by armed men riding motorcycles. In the Indo-Pacific, Chinese and

¹ Sources include Mara Karlin, “The Return of Total War: Understanding—and Preparing for—a New Era of Comprehensive Conflict,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2024; Mara E. Karlin, *The Inheritance: America’s Military After Two Decades of War*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2021); Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press: 2018).

demonstrated that it can move so quickly that materiel support for Ukraine has at times been delivered within days. The system has surged in ways that many thought impossible. In particular, the technical aspect of equipping militaries has improved. For example, the U.S. Army's use of artificial intelligence has made it much easier for Ukraine's military to be able to see and understand the battlefield, and to make decisions and act accordingly. Lessons from the rapid delivery of assistance to Ukraine have also been applied to the Israel-Hamas war; within days of the October 7 attacks, U.S.-supplied air defense capabilities and munitions were in Israel to protect its skies and help it respond.

But even though Washington has demonstrated that it can build a foreign military with alacrity, the question will always remain as to whether it should. The cost of transferring valuable equipment to a partner involves considerations of the U.S. military's own readiness levels and combat credibility. Moreover, such assistance is not merely a technical effort but a political exercise, as well, and the system has occasionally slowed down as it wrestles with dilemmas regarding the full implications of U.S. security aid. For example, to avoid tripping Russia's redlines, Washington has spent enormous time debating where, when, and under what circumstances Ukraine should use U.S. military assistance. This puzzle is not new, but given the destructive abilities of the rivals that Washington is now facing or preparing to confront, the stakes of solving it correctly are much higher than during the post-9/11 era.

The role of defense industrial bases in rival countries has also shaped the new contours of war-making. In the dozens of countries supporting Ukraine, domestic defense industries have not been able to keep up with the demand. Meanwhile, Russia's defense industrial base has been revived after speculations about its demise proved to be greatly exaggerated. Although China's support to Russia appears to exclude lethal assistance, it has nevertheless involved Beijing providing Moscow with critical technologies, representing a stronger partnership. And both Iran and North Korea support their defense industries by selling munitions and other wares to Moscow. The United States is not the only power to recognize the value (both on the battlefield and back home) of supplying partner forces and building up their capacities; its adversaries have, as well.

3) The Return of Deterrence

During the two decades of the post-9/11 era, the concept of deterrence was rarely invoked in Washington since the idea seemed largely irrelevant to conflicts against nihilistic nonstate actors such as al Qaeda and ISIS. What a difference a few years make: today, almost every debate about U.S. foreign policy and national security boils down to the challenge of deterrence. This change in conversation is because the global threat environment has evolved such that states like China now pose the biggest threat to U.S. national security interests.

In this new environment, traditional approaches to deterrence are regaining relevance. One is deterrence by denial—the act of making it difficult for an enemy to achieve its intended objective. Denial can quell escalation even if it fails to prevent an initial act of aggression. In the Middle East, Israel was unable to stop Iran's major conventional attacks on Israeli territory, but it largely denied Iran the benefits it hoped to gain. Israel's military repulsed almost all of the Iranian missiles and drones thanks to its sophisticated air and missile defense systems and the collaboration of the United States and countries across the Middle East and Europe. (Shoddy Iranian equipment also played a role.) The limited repercussions of the attack enabled Israel to wait to respond and to do so in more limited ways than would have been likely had Iran's

Philippine forces face off over a sole dilapidated ship while the skies and seas surrounding Taiwan get squeezed by threatening maneuvers from China's air force and navy.

The prominence of sea-based struggles, in particular, marks a major departure from the post-9/11 era, when conflict was largely fought on land. Back then, most maritime attacks were sea-to-ground, and most air attacks were air-to-ground. Today, the maritime domain has become a major site of direct conflict. Ukraine has taken out more than 20 Russian ships in the Black Sea, and control of that critical waterway remains contested. Meanwhile, Houthi attacks largely closed the Red Sea to commercial shipping.

The multidimensional character of conflict also underscores the risk of being tempted by today's weapon of choice, which might turn out to be a flash in the pan. Compared with the post-9/11 era, more countries now have greater access to cheaper materials and more R&D capacity, allowing them to respond more quickly and adeptly to new weapons and technologies by developing countermeasures. This exacerbates a familiar dynamic that the military scholar J. F. C. Fuller described as "the constant tactical factor"—the reality that "every improvement in weapons has eventually been met by a counter-improvement which has rendered the improvement obsolete."²

2) The Demography of War has Expanded

The cast of characters shaping war has become increasingly diverse. The post-9/11 wars were defined by the outsize impact of terrorist groups, proxies, and militias. As those conflicts ground on, many policymakers wished they could go back to the traditional focus on state militaries—particularly given the enormous investments some states were making in their defenses. They should have been careful what they wished for: state militaries are back, but nonstate groups hardly left the stage. The current security environment offers the misfortune of dealing with both.

In the Middle East, multiple state militaries are increasingly fighting or enmeshed with surprisingly influential nonstate actors. The Houthis are responsible for the most intense set of sea engagements the U.S. Navy has faced since World War II and their attacks have negatively impacted the global economy. With help from Iran, the Houthis are also punching above their weight in the air by manufacturing and deploying their own drones. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, Kyiv's regular forces are fighting alongside cadres of international volunteers in numbers likely not seen since the Spanish Civil War. And to augment Russia's traditional forces, the Kremlin has incorporated mercenaries from the Wagner paramilitary company and sent tens of thousands of convicts to war—a practice Ukraine's military copied.

In this environment, the task of building partner forces becomes even more complex than during the post-9/11 wars. U.S. programs to build the Afghan and Iraqi militaries focused on countering terrorist and insurgent threats with the aim of enabling friendly regimes to exert sovereignty over their territories. To help build up Ukraine's forces for their fight against another state military, however, the United States and its allies have had to relearn how to teach. DoD built a new kind of coalition, convening more than 50 countries from across the world to coordinate materiel donations to Ukraine through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group—the most complex and most rapid effort ever undertaken to stand up a single country's military.

Although the United States had been building militaries in fragile states since World War II, its record was lackluster. That is no longer the case. The Pentagon's new system has

² JFC Fuller, *Armament and History*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945) p. 20.

operations been more successful. But the wins were costly: the United States and Israel may have spent ten times more in responding to Iran's April 2024 attack than Iran did in launching it.

Another traditional means of deterrence that resurfaced is punishment, which requires credibly threatening an adversary with severe consequences if it takes certain actions. At a few key junctures, Putin's saber rattling brought the risk for nuclear weapons use to its highest point since the Cold War. During one fraught period in October 2022, experts worried there was a 50% chance that Putin would employ his nuclear arsenal. In calls with Russian counterparts, senior American leaders made stern and timely warnings of "catastrophic" consequences if Moscow made good on its threats. Those warnings worked, as did a broader effort to persuade key Indo-Pacific and European countries, most notably China and India, to publicly and prospectively condemn any role for nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Tugging Putin down the escalation ladder required a baseline understanding of how he viewed threats, serious attention to the signals and noise being sent across the entire U.S. government, and active feedback loops to ensure those assessments were accurate—all paired with robust diplomatic engagements.

A third approach to deterrence is by resilience, which the 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS) described as "the ability to withstand, fight through, and recover quickly from disruption." Resilience is the rationale behind the historic and ongoing dispersal of U.S. military bases in the Indo-Pacific, which will allow American forces to absorb an attack and continue fighting. The presence of increasingly capable dispersed U.S. military assets (alongside those of allied and partner militaries) complicates Chinese planning by creating potential pathways to preclude Chinese efforts to overturn the status quo, increases the complexity of those contingencies, and induces uncertainty about which may be the most relevant. It's true that it will be difficult to know whether any particular U.S. ally or partner will prove willing to use or allow the use of military assets from its territory in a conflict. But that uncertainty is a feature, not a bug, of this approach. Simply put, although the United States may not have full clarity about what role specific allies and partners will play should a conflict erupt, neither does China.

Tackling Global Threats

To best protect U.S. national security interests amidst the most turbulent global security environment in decades, the United States should focus on:

1) Prioritizing China. . . But Not Ignoring Other Threats

No other country has the will, and increasingly the capability, to fundamentally reshape the global security order—a global security order that has benefited U.S. national security interests for 80 years. The tricky strategic question isn't whether the United States should prioritize the threat posed by China—the answer to that is undoubtedly yes—but instead, how and in what ways to best address other major threats, including Russia, North Korea, Iran, and terrorism. Increasingly, this presents less of a binary choice than previously given the increasing cooperation between and among adversaries. That offers opportunities—such as both Russia and Iran losing strategic ground with the fall of Syrian President Assad—but also challenges, as demonstrated by Iranian and North Korean military support to Russia. The United States has finite resources, including time, attention, and capabilities, and must take that into account when juggling security challenges; but, ignoring threats is shortsighted and a-strategic. Put simply, the United States cannot do it all nor is it some middling power who can only focus on one issue.

The United States should smartly apply its resources to those other threats in a sustainable manner. For example, 2024 was the most dynamic year for the Middle East since 1979, which thrust Iran into its most vulnerable position in nearly 50 years. This weakness provides a crucial opportunity to establish criteria for serious negotiations on its nuclear program. Outside of the Middle East, the terrorist threat has metastasized, particularly across the Horn of Africa and broader West Africa. Tackling it requires continuing to work with partner militaries and civilian institutions. And in Europe, where Russia's military has suffered 700,000 casualties without any American servicemembers engaged in direct fighting, support to Ukraine's institutions has had a massive impact on a rogue actor seeking to upend the security environment. In these examples, and in many more, the United States should work with other countries and use all its tools of statecraft to press advantages so that it can focus on China.

2) Strengthening America's Military. . . and Other Tools of Statecraft

The United States must be able to deter threats and, if that fails, to prevail in war. That requires a lethal, resilient, sustainable, and agile military; one that can effectively balance between responding to today's threats while maintaining the capability to counter tomorrow's threats. It must take a strategy driven and resource informed approach when doing so.

Today, the defense budget is both at the highest level in U.S. history and a historically low level as percentage of GDP (approximately 3%, which is around the same as the mid-1990s). However, it is more important to focus on what should and should not be funded rather than a single topline number. Overall, the military must continue modernizing, and more quickly integrating and fielding capabilities, particularly by incentivizing innovation to increase in pace and scale. Investments should include nuclear modernization (particularly given the unprecedented nuclear threat environment), undersea platforms, uncrewed systems across domains, resilient space architecture, cyber, artificial intelligence, munitions (a traditionally orphan issue where Congressional leadership has been particularly crucial), the submarine industrial base, and R&D. Creating a focused "deterrence fund" to support operations, posture, readiness, and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, for example, would make it easier to target resources related to the pacing challenge of China. Big bet investments strengthen the U.S. defense industrial base, invest in the American workforce, and ensure American technological competitive edge in critical areas to hopefully deter conflict and prevail in war if it erupts.

Even with more funding, the military requires cuts to maintain its strategic focus and evolve in line with the security environment. Those include relooking excess infrastructure—particularly since it has been almost two decades since the last serious effort to close bases—older ships and aircraft (including A-10s and littoral combat ships), and compensation costs, including personnel and benefits. And as this Committee knows well, DoD has gone nearly a decade and a half without on time appropriations. Continuing resolutions make it very difficult to realize strategy; they are an "own goal" that weaken the U.S. military.

Beyond resources and platforms, there are two key areas of DoD to reexamine. First, talent management. It is often said that the people who serve are our military's greatest asset. That is indeed true; at its core, our military prowess is an extension of its servicemembers' capabilities. As the security environment grows more complex, having a force whose members have varied backgrounds and experiences is a strategic and warfighting advantage vis-à-vis adversaries like China and Russia. Second, organizational structures in DoD are unwieldy.

Relooking the increasingly sprawling structures, including consolidating combatant commands and military department components, can better align DoD's objectives and resources.

This Committee has a crucial role to play in ensuring DoD is tracking, assessing, and enabling the United States to navigate and thrive in this dynamic security environment. Indeed, the Secretary of Defense is required to give Congress an update this month assessing the National Defense Strategy.³ Having led the last NDS and contributed to many others, I recommend the Committee ask hard questions about risk—including risk to strategy and risk to force—and seek mitigation; push for assessments on the wars in Europe and the Middle East; request an update on threats to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific; and seek details regarding the use of U.S. troops on the border, the impact on the military's ability to prioritize China, and broader Administration plans to empower the Department of Homeland Security to fulfill its statutory obligations rather than relying on the U.S. military to do so.

But relying solely on the U.S. military to address global threats is a recipe for disaster. The United States has historically had several tools in its statecraft toolkit, including diplomacy, development, and economic carrots and sticks. Dismissing, under-funding, or degrading U.S. soft power means the United States will rely on hard power. Ultimately, that approach is not only inefficient, but it will cost more—in American treasure and American lives. The military is often not the most appropriate tool or fit for purpose. Indeed, during the post-9/11 wars, the military was at times used in ways that did not play to its competitive advantage. Moreover, there is an opportunity cost inherent in using the military in a strategic ways; it is unable to focus, prioritize, and can lose readiness. That means the military takes its eyes off the most serious threats and at a minimum, cedes the playing field to adversaries like China and Russia. . . and at a maximum, means the military does not have the capabilities or the readiness to address those threats.

3) Collaborating with Allies and Partners

America's unparalleled network of allies and partners sets it apart from every other great power in history. When international challenges or opportunities arise, many countries turn to the United States to share their assessments and to collaboratively plan the way forward. Today, many U.S. allies and partners across Europe and the Indo-Pacific are turbocharging their defense budgets. Sustaining these investments will be critical given the multiple and varied threats ahead. U.S. diplomacy has brought countries within the Indo-Pacific together and created connections between regions. The former is illustrated by the historic U.S.-brokered progress between Japan and South Korea and by the Quad (composed of the United States, India, Australia, and Japan). The latter is represented by the creation of AUKUS (a major military partnership joining Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and by the inclusion of four of America's Indo-Pacific allies in the last three NATO summits. These tighter relationships are a net positive, and increasing the size, scope, and scale of collaboration are a crucial deterrent and an asset. More broadly, working by, with, and through allies and partners to tackle global threats—those of today and tomorrow—is ultimately more effective and less pricey.

In conclusion, for the United States to prevail in an era of comprehensive conflict requires a sense of urgency and vigilance and, above all, a wide aperture about how threats are evolving—and what we must do to effectively respond to them.

³ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, Section 941, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ328/PLAW-114publ328.pdf>

MARA E. KARLIN, PHD

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Nominated by President Biden and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities and then led the component through multiple transitions, serving as the Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
- Led the development and implementation of the National Defense Strategy designed to guide \$850 billion defense budget
- Managed 700+ personnel with near daily briefings to the secretary of defense; in total, advised 6 secretaries of defense over the last 20 years in both Democratic and Republican administrations
- Top scholar in the field of security studies with two acclaimed books

CURRENT POSITIONS

Johns Hopkins University-School of Advanced International Studies: *Professor of Practice; Co-Lead, Security, Strategy, and Statecraft; Agora Institute Faculty Affiliate*

The Brookings Institution: *Visiting Fellow, Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology*

The American Academy of Berlin: *2024 James N. Mattis Distinguished Visitor*

The University of Pennsylvania-Perry World House: *Visiting Fellow*

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD)

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (Aug 2021-February 2022; January 2023-April 2023; June 2023-December 2023)

Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (DUSD)

- Dual-hatted role responsible for managing Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy composed of 700 people. Led two reorganizations, including establishing emerging capabilities policy office.
- Advised and assisted the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on national security policy, military strategy, and defense policy. Represented DoD in Deputies-level national security deliberations, including on Indo-Pacific, European, and Middle East.

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (Aug 2021-December 2023)

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities (Senate-confirmed)

- Principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on national security and defense strategy; the forces, contingency plans, and associated posture necessary to implement the defense strategy; emerging capabilities policy; and security cooperation plans and policies, to include strategy and policy for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.
- Led first integrated strategic review of the National Defense Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review, and the Missile Defense Review in Department of Defense history. Organized robust implementation across the entire Department of Defense, including shaping multiple 850B+ defense budgets and overseeing the earliest Defense Planning Guidance in Department of Defense history.
- Enabled historic Department of Defense initiatives with allies and partners, including AUKUS: U.S. support to Ukraine's military; meaningful collaboration with allies on deterrence, escalation, and defense strategy; and major reforms to security cooperation (including establishing the Defense Security Cooperation Service).

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (February 2021-August 2021)

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

- Principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on international security strategy and policy toward 147 countries, including 5 offices covering Europe/NATO; the Middle East; African Affairs; the Western Hemisphere; and Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia. Regularly participated in Deputies-level national security deliberations.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense-Strategy and Force Development (October 2014-December 2016)

- Senior policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy responsible for leading office of 30+ people focused on assessing future global security environment, crafting defense strategy and policy in alignment with it, and implementing a resource-informed and executable plan to guide development of a capable U.S. military.
- Served as a key architect of several strategies, including 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), 2015 National Security Strategy, Counter-ISIL strategy, and two ground-breaking Secretary of Defense-signed strategies on global challenges. Established analytic agenda for Departmental analysis of future U.S. military, including revising criteria for building and evaluating military's size and shape in alignment with changing character of warfare.
- Developed and executed overarching policy and strategy to shape \$600B+ Defense Department budget. Oversaw two Defense Planning Guidance documents and three Departmental reviews on strategic portfolios focused on power projection in Asia and Europe, guiding more than \$20B in investments. Inaugurated effort to formally assess defense strategy and to shape allies' defense strategies/budgets.

Principal Director-Strategy and Force Development/Strategy (October 2012-October 2014)

- Supervised policy analysis on strategic planning and developing future force, including strategic framing and Middle East analysis for 2014 QDR and attendant guidance, Asia-Pacific rebalance, global and internal policy planning, force planning scenarios, allied collaboration, and resource allocation.
- Managed successful and complex merger of two distinct offices, comprising 30+ personnel, into single effective office focused on defense strategy development and analysis for senior leadership.

Multiple Positions as Career Civil Servant (Summer 2004; 2005-2009)

Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

- Advised Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on a wide range of sensitive foreign policy and national security issues, and on internal management of OUSDP affairs. Liaised across OUSDP on regional and functional affairs, including managing preparations for National Security Council decision-making, conveying guidance, recommending appropriate action, and facilitating policy initiatives.

Levant Director

- Advised Secretary of Defense on policy toward Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestinian affairs with a focus on building militaries, strengthening partners, and countering destabilizing actors.
- Guided efforts to deepen U.S.-Jordan military cooperation, expand Palestinian security sector reform, and numerous sensitive efforts involving Syria, Gulf affairs, and Iran. Led effort to rebuild Lebanese military, including designing a substantial security assistance program, organizing nearly \$400M in funding, and coordinating most senior U.S.-Lebanon defense dialogue in over two decades. Managed Department's response to 2006 Israel-Hizballah war, including evacuation of nearly 15,000 Americans.

South Asia Desk Officer

- Advised Secretary of Defense on strategic policy toward India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh with a focus on terrorism, governability, security sector reform, and nonproliferation.

- Coordinated senior Defense Department bilateral dialogues with India and Pakistan, respectively, facilitated significant expansion in U.S.-India defense relations, managed robust security cooperation efforts with Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and ran assessment of U.S.-Nepal defense relations.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: ACADEMIA

Semester at Sea (Colorado State University) (Spring 2024; Spring 2017)

- Twice taught U.S. Foreign Policy, International Security, and International Relations to undergraduates on unique study abroad program sailing around the world and exploring 10-11 countries through experiential learning. Selected by students as 2017 Convocation speaker and as “Most Inspirational” faculty member.

Johns Hopkins University-School of Advanced International Studies (JHU-SAIS)

Director of Strategic Studies (Jan 2019-Jan 2021. Associate Director 2017-18 and Acting Director 2018)

Associate Professor of Practice (June 2017-Jan 2021)

Executive Director of The Phillip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies (June 2017-Jan 2021)

- Directed and taught in top graduate program in Strategic Studies. Managed 160+ students, approximately 20 faculty and staff, and budget for both the Department and the Center. Taught foundational courses on Strategy & Policy with consistently high reviews. Organized numerous experiential domestic and international workshops on historical conflicts, including the American War in Vietnam; the American war in South Korea; the French resistance in World War II; the American Civil War; and the American Revolutionary War. Launched series on ethics in national security; tutorial on military basics; exchange on bipartisan national security collaboration; and mid-career professional development program for national security scholars, practitioners, and journalists. Served on diversity, degree, curriculum and standards, instructional planning, and COVID committees.

Johns Hopkins University, JHU-SAIS, University of Delaware (among others) (2007-2016)

- Courses taught include Crisis Simulation Seminar, Middle East Political and Security Issues, Contemporary Issues, U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: THINK TANKS AND CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSIONS

The Brookings Institution

Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy (August 2017-Jan 2021)

- Published/spoke on defense strategy, budget, future of war, civil-military relations, Middle East and Asian security. Wrote book: *The Inheritance: America's Military After Two Decades of War* (2021).

Syria Study Group Congressional Commission (January 2019-October 2019)

- Served on bipartisan Congressional commission examining U.S. policy options toward Syria.

National Defense Strategy Congressional Commission (January 2018-December 2018)

- Staffed bipartisan Congressional commission on National Defense Strategy and its implementation.

The RAND Corporation (February 2010-August 2012)

Adjunct Fellow

EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University-Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Ph.D., Strategic Studies

M.A., Strategic Studies, Middle East Studies, and International Economics *with distinction*

Newcomb College, Tulane University

B.A., Political Science and Jewish Studies, *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa

Study abroad programs: Semester at Sea and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Select Awards and Fellowships:** Secretary of Defense Distinguished Public Service Medal, Secretary of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Award, Newcomb College Outstanding Alumna Award, Newcomb College Young Alumni Award, Secretary of Defense Outstanding Public Service Award, Secretary of Defense Group Award for Russia Strategic Work, Special Under Secretary Award for Strategic Choices & Management Review, OUSDP Award for Excellence, OUSDP Group Award for Defense Planning Guidance, OUSDP Group Award for Quadrennial Defense Review, Center for a New American Security (CNAS) Next Generation National Security Leader, among others.
- **Select Political Activities:** Defense Policy Lead for Biden-Harris Transition Team; Defense Policy Team for Biden for President Campaign; Defense Policy Lead for National Security Action; Middle East Team for Obama for President Campaign
- **Memberships:** Council on Foreign Relations Life Member.
- **Nonprofit Board Leadership:** Camp Interlaken JCC Board Member (Milwaukee, WI). Semester at Sea (Fort Collins, CO). FP4America (Washington, DC). Previously on board for Leadership Council for Women in National Security (LCWINS).
- **Books:** Mara E. Karlin, *The Inheritance: America's Military After Two Decades of War*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2021). Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2018).

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

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- Mara Karlin, “Developments in Syria and What Lies Ahead,” *University of Pennsylvania Perry World House*, December 9, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “The Assad Regime Falls. What Happens Now?” *The Brookings Institution*, December 9, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “How is Trump’s Reelection Likely to Affect U.S. Foreign Policy?” *The Brookings Institution*, November 14, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “What will Nasrallah’s Death Mean for the Middle East?” *The Brookings Institution*, September 30, 2024.
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- Mara E. Karlin and Jim Mitre, “Three Urgent Questions for the Air Force’s New Chief of Staff,” *Defense One*, July 28, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin and Leah Dreyfuss, “Military Posture: China and the United States,” chapter in edited volume (*The Brookings Institution*, 2021).
- Mara Karlin and James Golby, “The Case for Rethinking the Politicization of the Military,” *Task and Purpose*, June 12, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin and Alice Friend “Toward a Concept of Good Civilian Guidance” *War on the Rocks*, May 29, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “If the U.S. Navy Sinks Iranian Gunboats in the Persian Gulf, What Might the Outcome Be?” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace-Middle East Center*, April 30, 2020.
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- Mara Karlin, “Three Key Insights for U.S. Policy in Light of Recent Escalation with Iran,” *The Brookings Institution*, January 29, 2020.
- Mara Karlin, “Civilian Oversight Inside the Pentagon: Who Does It and How?”, edited volume (*Oxford University Press*, 2020).
- Mara Karlin, “On Syria, Washington Cannot Simply Throw Up Its Hands,” *The Brookings Institution*, September 24, 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin and Leah Dreyfuss, “All that Xi Wants: China Attempts to Ace Bases Overseas,” *The Brookings Institution*, September 2019.
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- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Empowered Decentralization: A City-based Strategy For Rebuilding Libya,” *The Brookings Institution*, February 11, 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Implications Of Artificial Intelligence For National Security Strategy,” *The Brookings Institution*, November 1, 2018.
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- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Policy Roundtable: The Pursuit of Military Superiority,” *Texas National Security Review*, June 26, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Before You Help a Fragile State’s Military, Ask These Uncomfortable Questions,” *Defense One*, June 21, 2018.
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- Mara E. Karlin, “Syria’s Civil War Is Far From Over,” *The Brookings Institution*, March 23, 2018.
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**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 119th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

Hearing Date: 2/12/25

Hearing Subject:

Securing American Interests Against Global Threats and the Growing Convergence of America's Adversaries

Witness name: Mara Karlin

Position/Title: Professor, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☒ Individual ☐ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2025

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

2024

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

2023

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

2022

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2025

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2024

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2023

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2022

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

Fiduciary Relationships: If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship

Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2025

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2024

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2023

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2022

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Opinion

America must continue to arm Ukraine — without U.S. taxpayer dollars

It's time to transition Kyiv from aid recipient to defense consumer.

January 23, 2025

By Jack Keane and [Marc A. Thiessen](#)

Jack Keane, a retired general, is chairman of the Institute for the Study of War and was vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army. Marc A. Thiessen is a Post columnist and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

As he prepares to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, President Donald Trump says he will continue to send U.S. weapons to Kyiv. “I want to reach an agreement, and the only way you’re going to reach an agreement is not to abandon” Ukraine, he [told Time magazine](#) in his Person of the Year interview in late November.

He is right. To secure a lasting peace, we must continue to arm Ukraine — but without asking U.S. taxpayers to foot the bill.

The time has come for a just and lasting peace, and Trump is right to seek an end to the fighting. He also understands who the intransigent party is. As he [put it on his first day back in the Oval Office](#), Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky “wants to make a deal. I don’t know if [Vladimir] Putin does. He might not. ... I think he’s destroying Russia by not making a deal. I think Russia’s going to be in big trouble.”

But regardless of what happens at the negotiating table, the United States will need to provide Ukraine with weapons for many years to come. If Putin resists Trump’s peace efforts, the president has [promised](#) to increase U.S. military support for Ukraine to force the Russian leader to the negotiating table. And after peace is achieved, Kyiv will need U.S. weapons to deter Russia from resuming hostilities when Trump leaves office.

Trump can deliver those weapons without further burdening U.S. taxpayers. Since Russia's full-scale invasion began nearly three years ago, the American people have provided about \$183 billion in aid to Ukraine. This assistance was not charity. Stopping Putin from subjugating Ukraine was, and remains, in the United States' vital national security interest. And most of the military aid money has been spent right here at home — reinvigorating our dangerously atrophied defense industrial base, creating good manufacturing jobs and modernizing our military as we send Ukraine older weapons and replace our stockpiles with more advanced versions.

But U.S. taxpayers cannot, and should not, subsidize Ukraine's defense indefinitely. The time has come to transition Ukraine from an aid recipient to a defense consumer — just like many other U.S. friends and allies across Europe, Asia and the Middle East who purchase U.S. defense materiel. This is the only sustainable way to build a lasting defense cooperation between Washington and Kyiv.

Ukraine critics say they oppose an endless war funded by American taxpayers. What we propose is a strategy for lasting peace backed by U.S. arms sales. Here is our plan:

1. Let Ukraine use frozen Russian assets to buy U.S. weapons.

Washington and our European allies currently control about \$300 billion in frozen Russian assets — including about \$5 billion held in the United States; almost \$200 billion held by Euroclear, a Belgian financial services company; and the rest held frozen in Britain, France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Canada, Japan and other countries.

Do we want Putin to get those funds? Or do we want the lion's share to go to the United States to purchase arms for Ukraine while further rebuilding our defense industrial base?

Using frozen Russian assets to arm Ukraine gives the United States all the benefits of Ukraine aid in terms of jobs and revitalized defense manufacturing — but with Putin footing the bill instead of U.S. taxpayers. Let Russia pay to create jobs for American workers building Abrams tanks and Stryker combat vehicles in Ohio; Ground Launched Small Diameter Bombs, Bradley fire-support team vehicles and Hercules recovery vehicles in Pennsylvania; extended-range Joint Direct Attack Munition glide bombs in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma; and 155mm artillery shells in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Iowa, California and Texas, among countless other American communities producing weapons systems for Ukraine.

Using frozen Russian assets to produce those armaments is a win-win solution: Ukraine gets the weapons and the United States gets the money, while Russia bears the cost of Putin's aggression.

Why has this not been done already? Answer: A lack of imagination in the Biden White House coupled with European intransigence. For years, Belgium was keeping the interest produced by those Russian assets, effectively profiting from Ukraine's misery. Only last year did our European allies finally agree to use the interest to buy weapons for Ukraine. But, led by Germany and France, they have balked at using the underlying assets themselves.

This is absurd. Why are U.S. (and European) taxpayers being asked to spend their hard-earned money to arm Ukraine when there is a massive pool of Russian funds available for that purpose? Putin should never have invaded Ukraine (and would not have, in our view, if Trump had been president). He — not the American people — should have to pay for the weapons to defend Ukraine from his unlawful aggression.

Twisting the arms of our European allies to release these funds is a challenge tailor-made for Trump. The president who got NATO allies to spend \$400 billion more of their own money on defense should have no trouble persuading them to use frozen Russian assets to allow Ukraine to purchase weapons from U.S. defense manufacturers.

How would it work? Congress should create a "defense cooperation account" for Ukraine using the Russian assets. The model would be the similar account established by Congress in the 1990s to collect more than \$50 billion in allied payments for expenses related to Operation Desert Shield. There is no need for legislation; current law already authorizes the defense secretary to create such an account to accept donations of funds, services or defense articles "from any person, foreign government, or international organization ... for use by the Department of Defense."

A defense cooperation account for Ukraine could use not just frozen Russian assets but also contributions from any sovereign party wishing to contribute to the defense of Ukraine with U.S. defense materiel and services. Such weaponry could be purchased, or drawn down from existing U.S. stockpiles, with reimbursement provided from funds deposited to the account.

Trump should tell European allies reluctant to use frozen Russian assets for this purpose that he does not care where the money comes from — that if they don't want to use Russian money, they can replace the funds with their money from their own taxpayers.

Congress should also amend the Repo Act — the law passed in 2023 that allowed the confiscation of frozen Russian assets in the United States to be used to aid Ukraine. The Biden administration designed the law to put seized assets into a fund administered by the secretary of state. The law should be amended to transfer the money to the Pentagon so it can be used for weapons drawdowns or purchases.

Once a defense cooperation account is established, we can also encourage our allies in the Asia-Pacific to support it, because their security is increasingly tied to Ukraine's and Europe's as the Russia-North Korea-China axis strengthens.

This international fund will deliver weapons to Ukraine to either force Russia to the negotiating table or to secure the peace that Trump negotiates. At the same time, it will serve as a way to modernize the U.S. armed forces, create American jobs and supplement Trump's planned defense buildup.

2. Loans guaranteed by Ukraine's natural resources.

During the 2024 campaign, Trump proposed the idea of lending Ukraine the money to purchase U.S. weapons. As he put it during a South Carolina rally: "Do it this way: Loan them the money. If they can make it, they pay us back. If they can't make it, they don't have to pay us back."

In fact, Ukraine *can* pay us back. Though the war has devastated its economy, the country is sitting on an estimated \$26 trillion in untapped natural resources — oil, gas, critical minerals and rare earth metals. Ukraine possesses some of the largest reserves of 22 of the 50 strategic minerals identified as critical to the U.S. economy and national security, including the largest reserves of uranium in Europe; the second-largest reserves of iron ore, titanium and manganese; and the third-largest reserves of shale gas, as well as massive deposits of lithium, graphite and rare earth metals, according to the Canadian geopolitical risk-analysis firm SecDev.

Ukraine's mineral and hydrocarbon resources can be used as collateral for loans to buy U.S. defense materiel, allowing Kyiv to provide for its own defense.

There are two mechanisms we can use to provide such loans. We can provide weapons to Ukraine using a lend-lease program modeled on the one the United States used to arm Britain during World War II. There is no need for legislation to do this; the authority already exists in current law.

Ukraine can also buy U.S. weapons using another existing program: Foreign Military Financing (FMF) direct loans, like those we provide to U.S. allies and partners around the world. Since the war in Ukraine began, Poland has undertaken a massive defense buildup, financed in part by \$11 billion in FMF direct loans, which come with interest that must be paid to the U.S. government. Warsaw is using those loans to purchase advanced U.S. defense systems, including M1A2 Abrams tanks that will be produced in Ohio, Apache helicopters built in Arizona, Airspace and Surface Radar Reconnaissance Systems produced in California, Maryland and Virginia; High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) produced in Florida, North Carolina, Alabama, Illinois, Nebraska, Texas, New Jersey and West Virginia; and Patriot air and missile defense systems produced in Missouri, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Pennsylvania.

Similarly, last year, Romania took out a \$920 million FMF direct loan to carry out a major military modernization program, including purchases of U.S. defense equipment such as Abrams tanks and co-production of Abrams tank ammunition. Congress also approved \$2 billion in FMF loans for Taiwan, which it will have to repay over a 12-year period.

Ukraine can do the same. So as not to transfer costs to the U.S. taxpayer, the structure of such an agreement can be negotiated so that Ukraine guarantees these loans with its substantial natural resources.

Ukraine should be more than willing to enter into a loan agreement to purchase U.S. weapons, because it creates a sustainable model for long-term defense cooperation and creates a lasting U.S. interest in Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. American taxpayers get repaid only if Ukraine survives as a free, stable and prosperous nation.

Its resources can be developed for the benefit of both countries only if Trump succeeds in negotiating a resolution to the conflict. It is hard to mine for minerals or develop offshore oil and natural gas under enemy fire.

The time has come to end the war in Ukraine and secure a just and lasting peace. The only way to do so is to make sure that Ukraine is armed with weapons made by American workers — without requiring U.S. taxpayers to bear the cost.

What readers are saying

The comments on the article reflect a strong debate over the use of frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine's defense needs. Many commenters support the idea, arguing that it would relieve U.S. taxpayers and weaken Russia economically. However, others criticize the proposal,... [Show more](#)

This summary is AI-generated. AI can make mistakes and this summary is not a replacement for reading the comments.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

FEBRUARY 12, 2024

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WILSON

Mr. WILSON. In 2012, the U.S. and Japan made an agreement to move 9,000 Marines from Okinawa, 4,000 of whom which will probably end up being stationed in Guam. In December of last year, the first batch of one hundred Marines began the move to Camp Blaz. Last month, the Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric Smith stated this move is moving us in the wrong direction.

With the current environment in the region, do you share the same assessment that the move from Okinawa to Guam impacts our readiness to combat a threat in the Indo-Pacific?

General KEANE. I most certainly do agree with Gen Smith that with the growing PRC threat in the Pacific this movement of Marines no longer serves U.S. security interests.

Mr. WILSON. In your testimony you stated the importance for investment in critical areas such as nuclear modernization. I'm happy to represent the Savannah River Site where they're working around the clock to bring the Savannah River Plutonium Production Facility online as close to 2030 as possible.

If the United States fails to invest in its nuclear arsenal, can you explain the impact this would have on our national security?

Dr. KARLIN. America's nuclear weapons capability is vital to its national security and defense. Modernizing these weapons is crucial for safety reasons and for maintaining a credible deterrent.

Mr. WILSON. In recent years we have seen Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran have built closer ties. Iran and China are assisting. Do you believe that if China were to attempt an invasion of Taiwan, other members of the "Axis of Evil" would provide support? Ex. Military, economical, technological.

Dr. KARLIN. The relationship between and among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea has shapeshifted in recent years. All three countries have supported Russia to some extent in its war on Ukraine. The limits and ceilings of these relationships are not clear, although notably, only North Korean troops have been sent to fight on the battlefield in support of Russia. Given these increasingly tight relationships, it is indeed conceivable that one or more of these countries could support China in a potential invasion of Taiwan. The next National Defense Strategy should explore this question by examining what each country might have to offer China and that capital's willingness to provide that support.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. TOKUDA

Ms. TOKUDA. For years, China has been making major inroads in this region, peeling away Taiwan's diplomatic allies and deepening security relationships that pose major risks to our posture and operations. Last year, China regained its place as the second-largest bilateral donor to the Pacific Islands, surpassing the United States yet again. Just this week, the Cook Islands is expected to sign a partnership agreement with China. What are some of the military risks of suspending and possibly even shutting down our foreign assistance programs in the Pacific Islands that help drive our relationships in this region? Do you see similar problems playing out in other parts of the world?

General KEANE. Outreach to allies and partners in the Pacific is key to deterring the PRC's aggression. Reducing this outreach to the Pacific Islands due to a lack of funding is a strategic mistake that must be corrected.

Ms. TOKUDA. For years, China has been making major inroads in this region, peeling away Taiwan's diplomatic allies and deepening security relationships that pose major risks to our posture and operations. Last year, China regained its place as the second-largest bilateral donor to the Pacific Islands, surpassing the United States yet again. Just this week, the Cook Islands is expected to sign a partnership agreement with China. What are some of the military risks of suspending and possibly even shutting down our foreign assistance programs in the Pacific Islands that help drive our relationships in this region? Do you see similar problems playing out in other parts of the world?

Dr. KARLIN. If the United States does not fill vacuums in strategic locations like the Pacific Islands, then China very much may choose to do so. These relationships could begin with development or economic assistance and increase to military basing rights, which would present an increasingly dangerous and threatening operating environment in the Indo-Pacific for the U.S. military.

