

**UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Roger Wicker (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Sullivan, Scott, Tuberville, Budd, Banks, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, and Kelly.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

Chairman WICKER. This hearing will come to order and I thank our witnesses for being here today. We're joined by General Gregory Guillot. Thank you for being here from Northern Command and Admiral Alvin Holsey from Southern Command.

The United States faces the most dangerous security environment it has entered since World War II. We know about the threats in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, but we must not lose sight of threats in our own hemisphere. Both of these commanders face an increasingly complex set of actors who seek to harm Americans and undermine our interests.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has exploited our poorest southern border to facilitate the trafficking of fentanyl and other deadly drugs. Beijing has brazenly violated United States airspace; it has burrowed its cyber payloads into core United States telecommunications infrastructure and spread its predatory economic practices to South America. China, Russia, and North Korea pose an increasing nuclear and conventional threat to key United States cities. Not to be outdone, Iran continues to try to kill Americans on our own soil.

General Guillot, I would like to hear your updates in three key areas: first, border security is a priority for the President, and I agree with his decision to declare a national emergency at the southern border. President Trump has asked you to deliver an updated plan to ensure border security. He's also directed you to assist law enforcement in its security and deportation operations. Department of Defense (DOD) has a lot to offer to support law enforcement.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy published by President Biden, listed Homeland Defense as the military's first priority, so

this is bipartisan. It is clear that the American people do believe that border security is national security. I look forward to hearing from you on your work in this area.

Second, President Trump has asked you to contribute to a new plan for Homeland Air and Missile Defense. I would welcome your insights in this effort. Please tell us where in your opinion, new investments should be targeted. Do they involve updating our ground-based radars and building out new missile warning satellites? Perhaps they involve developing the most cost-effective methods of intercepting incoming cruise and ballistic missiles.

Third, you have led on the development of a new strategy for countering drones here in the Homeland. My friend and Ranking Member, Jack Reed, held a great classified briefing on the Langley Incursions. There have been numerous similar incidents since, all of them troubling. Senators Cotton and Gillibrand are working together on ways to counter drones. I would appreciate your comments on how we can be more effective in this space. Tell us what new authorities you need.

Admiral Holsey, I would appreciate an update from you on how your adversaries are using economic coercion against key Latin American partners. The CCP aims to drive a wedge between the United States and our neighbors. China hopes to reverse long-standing policy recognizing Taiwan's independence, and it wants our allies to look the other way as it builds so-called "Gray Zone" dual use civil—military infrastructure.

Beijing is also trying to force our friends to rely on Huawei for telecommunications. Even as numerous Latin American leaders have adopted this CCP controlled TikTok app. We need look no further than the Panama Canal. President Trump has rightly expressed concern about the People's Republic of China (PRC) state-owned port infrastructure on either end of this vital maritime artery.

Those PRC facilities pose a risk to the free flow of United States flag merchant ships and U.S. naval vessels. This issue must be addressed. There are additional troubling PRC developments in the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) region. The PRC has leased a space port in the remote Patagonia region of Argentina. That perch provides the Communist Chinese with unprecedented surveillance capabilities in our own hemisphere.

Since at least 2019, Beijing has operated a spy base out of Cuba and has done so with impunity. Just last year in Lima, Peru, a PRC State owned power company purchased the city's entire power grid. Meanwhile, Xi Jinping presided over the opening of a Chinese funded deep water port just north of Lima, which is capable of holding PRC warships.

So, Admiral Holsey, I would like for you to update this Committee on how you are integrating military and non-military tools to fight against these predatory techniques. Despite the significant and growing security threats in the region, SOUTHCOM is consistently under-resourced to fulfill its many critical national security missions.

I look forward to hearing from you about how these resource constraints are affecting SOUTHCOM. I would also like to learn how

innovative solutions like the Office of Strategic Capital, can be leveraged to close this resource gap.

Again, I thank our witnesses for being here and for their earlier meetings with Members of this Committee, and I now recognize my friend and the distinguished Ranking Member of the Committee, Senator Reed.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and let me join you in welcoming General Gregory Guillot, the Commander of United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and Admiral Holsey to today's posture hearing—the Commander of the U.S. SOUTHCOM.

Gentlemen, over the past month, both of your commands have been ordered to conduct new missions in support of U.S. border of security and immigration enforcement. President Trump has deployed over 2,000 Active Duty soldiers and marines to supplement the 2,500 guard members and Reservists already deployed to the southern border and has directed NORTHCOM to seal the southern border.

Additionally, last week, President Trump ordered the Defense Department to expand the Department of Homeland Securities Migrant Operations Center at Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to accommodate up to 30,000 migrants and to begin transporting migrants via military aircraft to that facility.

Thus, I understand that around 100 migrants have been transported to Guantanamo, at least half of whom are being detained, not at the Migrant Operation Center, but at the detention center where alleged and convicted international war criminals are also housed.

Border security and immigration enforcement is critical to our National Security, but Guantanamo Bay is a dubious location to detain immigrants. The detention center has only been used for war detainees, and it is unfortunate to equate immigrants with international war criminals. Further, the facilities at Guantanamo are in poor condition and are extremely understaffed.

The U.S. military, which is already stretched for resources, is now spending millions of dollars to use military aircraft and burning thousands of dollars of military personnel time for these operations. While a naval station in Guantanamo does prepare for mass migration operations, these operations are for saving people, leaving dire situations in Cuba or Haiti on unsafe craft, not moving individuals already in the United States to a place where the status of their rights is ambiguous.

I have questions about the legality of this operation, and I'm concerned that this is part of a broader effort by President Trump to militarize immigration enforcement. I hope the President and Secretary Hegseth will use common sense to follow the law and stop spending significant amounts of taxpayers' dollars on performative deportation activities.

General Guillot, Admiral Holsey, I would like to know how these Immigration Force submissions are impacting the readiness of your forces. Physically, I would ask for your estimates of the course personnel and resources required thus far, and any concerns you have

about the limitations you have to continue conducting such operations, particularly in light of your other critical missions.

Indeed, U.S. Northern Command is key to our national security as the principal command for protecting the American Homeland. As we consider threats from China and other competitors, our very concept of Homeland defense must evolve. General Guillot, NORTHCOM publishes its Homeland defense policy guidance to address this challenge, and we're going to ask for an update on the status of its implementation and how it will transform the Homeland defense plans of the Department.

The urgency of this mission has been made clear with the recent incursion of drones and unidentified aerial phenomenon in our airspace. America's skies and seas must be secured to protect our citizens, and the Department must pursue technologies that provide adequate detection.

The Trump administration has proposed an Iron Dome program for North America and issued an executive order to develop additional defenses against cruise, ballistic and hypersonic missiles. I would note that many of these efforts have already been underway by the Missile Defense Agency for years, and that the concept of space-based interceptive that President Trump is interested in, has been debated, and tested at enormous financial cost without significant promise.

General Guillot, I would ask for an update on how the Homeland Missile Defense mission is proceeding and your view on how a space-based interceptive system could affect Russia's pursuit of a nuclear weapon in space.

Turning to Southern Command, Admiral Holsey, your command faces growing challenges from China and Russia in Latin America. The political and economic instability in the region presents a situation that our adversaries are seeking to exploit, to increase their own influence.

China in particular, is expanding its presence in the region, including through investments in strategic infrastructure, 5G telecommunications, and an expanding network of space tracking installations.

Admiral, you testified last year that the PRC and Russia are strategic competitors who seek to undermine democracy while gaining power and influence in the region, and that partnerships are our best deterrent to countering shared security and economic concern. But that for now, the U.S. remains a trusted partner or the trusted partner.

U.S. International Development Programs strengthen U.S. partnership in the region, which advance U.S. national security objectives. Now that USAID [United States Agency for International Development] has been dismantled, I'm interested in your assessment of whether the United States will remain the partner of choice in your AOR [area of responsibility] or whether China and Russia will use this as an opportunity to gain further inroads with our partners.

I'm also interested in your assessment of how we might work strategically with our partners in the region to build resilience against these activities. SOUTHCOM, like NORTHCOM, continues

to work closely with U.S. interagency to support counter-narcotics and counter transnational criminal organizations, or TCOs.

I'm concerned about the threats from TCOs and synthetic opioid trafficking, including fentanyl, which are contributing to more than 100,000 overdose deaths each year in the United States.

Admiral, I would ask for an update on SOUTHCOM's work with partner nations and other U.S. Government agencies to counter narcotic and counter TCO efforts given SOUTHCOM's limited force posture and resources.

Finally, we know that insecurity throughout SOUTHCOM area is contributing to the flow of migrant North to the U.S. border. Economic instability, violence and corruption continue to be a major source of insecurity in much of the region, especially in the northern triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Admiral Holsey, I would like to know your views on what more can be done to help improve the situation and strengthen our broader securities throughout the region.

Thank you, again, to our witnesses. I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, and we're now ready for testimony from our witnesses. Before we begin, as members know, there are votes, two votes beginning at 10:30 a.m., and we'll keep the hearing going. When the vote begins, I'll try to run over very quickly and come right back. In the meantime, a member of our committee will preside and we'll keep going.

So, we are ready to begin testimony. General Guillot, you are recognized with the thanks of the Committee.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL GREGORY M. GUILLOT, USAF COMMANDER, UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND

General GUILLOT. Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It's my honor to command the men and women of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command. I'm also pleased to appear alongside my U.S. SOUTHCOM shipmate, Admiral Alvin "Bull" Holsey.

I'd like to highlight three trends of particular that NORAD and NORTHCOM face with direct implications for Homeland Defense. First, is the growing cooperation between China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran to challenge the United States. While their cooperation does not approach the level of complete integration demonstrated by the United States and Canada, their transfer of weapons, military technology and basing access has cause for significant concern.

The associated risks to North America have also grown, as the number of Russian bomber incursions into the Alaska and Canadian Air Defense Identification Zones has returned to levels not seen since before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Russian Navy surface and subsurface vessels conducted out of area deployments off both U.S. coasts, including in the vicinity of Alaska.

Second, evolving technologies demand that NORAD and NORTHCOM rapidly adjust our defense posture. Small uncrewed aircraft systems or UAS [unmanned aerial system], proliferate the

open market and in the hands of malign actors pose a growing threat to safety and security. Likewise, as competitors continue to target U.S. networks and critical infrastructure in cyberspace, a whole-of-government effort is increasingly necessary to mitigate potential harm.

Finally, non-State actors continue to target our Homeland. Radical Islamic terrorist groups have rejuvenated attack planning and anti-American rhetoric, intended to inspire lone wolf attacks. Like the daily New Year's Day attack in New Orleans, and transnational criminal cartels based in Mexico threatened United States territorial integrity and the safety of our citizens.

With that strategic backdrop, Homeland defense is our command's top priority and essential task, and in mindset and action, nobody waits on NORAD or NORTHCOM. The mantra proved true over the last year as the command's planning and preparation generated swift and effective responses to competitor actions, major disasters, and emerging requirements.

Over the past 12 months, NORAD and NORTHCOM: intercepted joint Russian and Chinese bombers off the Alaska coast, tracked Russian surface vessels off both coasts, detected and assessed numerous North Korean missile launches, tracked multiple Chinese dual use military and research vessels in the bearing sea and Arctic Ocean, supported Americans in need following hurricane Helene and wildfires in California, postured to support a hurricane Milton response.

Deployed troops and unique military capabilities such as airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) along the U.S. southern border, illuminated transnational criminal networks, deployed military personnel to assist U.S. Secret Service in securing 195 Presidential campaign events and improved defensive capabilities against all threats ranging from Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) to small drones.

Looking forward, NORAD and NORTHCOM modernization is crucial to outpacing our competitors. Establishing a layered domain awareness network from seabed to space to detect and track threats approaching North America, is critical to immediate and future mission requirements because you can't defeat what you can't see.

To that end, I appreciate the department and congressional support for fielding all domain capabilities such as Airborne Moving Target Indicator satellites, Over-The-Horizon Radars, the E-7 Wedgetail, and an Integrated Undersea Surveillance System.

Defending our borders, establishing a continental missile shield, protecting critical infrastructure and force projection capability, and safeguarding our citizens will require the best our nations have to offer.

I'm grateful to the committee for your ongoing support of NORAD and NORTHCOM's vital Missions. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today, and I look forward to your questions. We have the watch.

[The prepared statement of General Guillot follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL GREGORY M. GUILLOT

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee: I am honored to appear today and to represent the men and women of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Both commands continue to defend North America through what is arguably the most complicated and rapidly evolving operational environment we have seen. The USNORTHCOM and NORAD operational environment remains diverse and dynamic, ranging from persistent competitor activity in the vicinity of North America to major natural disasters that have impacted millions of Americans. I am proud to report that the service members and civilian Federal employees at the heart of every USNORTHCOM and NORAD endeavor have risen to each challenge as they stand their unending watch over our Homelands.

USNORTHCOM and NORAD are distinct commands linked by history, collaboration, and a shared commitment to defending North America. USNORTHCOM was established in 2002 as the U.S. geographic combatant command responsible for homeland defense, security cooperation with allies and partners in the command's area of responsibility, and Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) in the continental United States and Alaska. USNORTHCOM is responsible for defending the United States—to include Hawaii and Alaska—from ballistic missile attacks, while the Commander of USNORTHCOM is also designated by the Unified Command Plan as the Department of Defense Advocate for Arctic Capabilities. Finally, in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders issued on 20 January, 2025, USNORTHCOM is rapidly integrating additional requested military personnel and assets to work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Customs & Border Protection (USCBP) along the southern border, employing unique military capabilities in all domains, and developing plans for establishing territorial integrity along the southern border. USNORTHCOM's current mission is to seal the borders and repel all forms of invasion including illegal migration, narcotics trafficking, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, and other criminal activities.

Established in 1958 to counter the threat of Soviet long-range bombers, NORAD is the bi-national United States and Canadian command responsible for aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning for North America. For nearly 67 years, the United States and Canadian personnel assigned to NORAD have worked side-by-side in a shared commitment to continental defense. Forged through operational experience and a common vision, NORAD consistently demonstrates world-class professional standards while executing its critical defense mission 24 hours a day. Today, NORAD remains the world's only bi-national command, safeguarding the United States and Canada while routinely demonstrating seamless interoperability and operational excellence that our competitors can only hope to match.

Together, USNORTHCOM and NORAD's experience, expertise, and dedication to homeland defense are more critical today than ever. Following years of steady investment, our strategic competitors have the means to overcome U.S. advantages provided by our favorable geography and advanced technology. Today, our competitors have the capability and capacity to threaten all of North America with a range of advanced nuclear, conventional, and non-kinetic systems while employing disruptive grey-zone, cyber, and information operations against the United States and our international partners. As part of that effort, competitors have formed strategic relationships that increase their collective ability to challenge U.S. and allied interests around the world with growing disregard of international norms or the sovereignty of nations that challenge their expansionist ambitions. Meanwhile, unprecedented flows of illicit drugs and migrant smuggling across the U.S. southern border have created a crisis that undermines national security and the safety of citizens and communities across the country.

The dynamic operational environment and evolving threats to North America require USNORTHCOM and NORAD to execute new missions on a moment's notice without sacrificing ongoing operations and future planning. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are fortunate to draw upon decades of shared history and lessons learned to shape the commands' plans and operations, and defending the Homelands in the coming years will require forward thinking, advanced capabilities, and a professional workforce with the experience and technical knowledge necessary to plan, resource, and execute the commands' crucial missions in tremendously demanding conditions.

The homeland defense enterprise will continue to rely on realistic planning, targeted investment, and forward-looking policies that ensure the Commands' ability to detect, track, and defeat potential threats in all domains. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are working in close synchronization with each of the commands' inter-

agency, international, and DOD partners to improve shared all-domain awareness, interoperability, and the defeat mechanisms required for a layered all-domain defense capable of deterring and defeating a wide range of threats to critical infrastructure, force projection capability, and our citizens.

As competitor ambitions and capabilities grow, USNORTHCOM and NORAD remain committed to improving all-domain awareness, reinforcing our vital network of allies and partners, and fostering a workforce of skilled and dedicated civilian and military professionals. Each of these focus areas are critical to ensuring the homeland defense enterprise remains ready to deter and defeat any threat to our nations today and well into the future, and both commands have made significant strides in building the capabilities, networks, and people needed to execute their vital missions.

THREATS TO NORTH AMERICA

The global security environment is growing increasingly volatile, characterized by intensifying competition among major powers and mounting threats to the U.S. national interests. Among the myriad developments that are reshaping the strategic environment, three trends are of particular concern to NORAD and USNORTHCOM due to their immediate implications for our Homeland Defense mission.

First, the likelihood of a direct conflict between the United States and one of its four principal adversaries is increasing. While the PRC, Russia, North Korea, and Iran each seek to avoid armed conflict with the United States, their misperception of a Western decline fosters a growing willingness to challenge the United States on the global stage and increases the risk of miscalculation in a crisis. As Russia's brutal and misguided invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth year, there remain several plausible pathways by which the war could escalate into a direct military conflict with the United States. Similarly, the conflict ignited by Hamas' October 2023 attack on Israel has expanded to encompass much of the Middle East and threatens to embroil the United States in a direct military conflict with Iran and its proxies.

Meanwhile, simmering tensions in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea carry a persistent risk of escalation into armed conflict between China and the United States, with consequences that could span a generation. Finally, Kim Jong Un's public abandonment of peaceful reunification as a national goal and growing assertiveness on the global stage risks sparking renewed conflict on the Korean Peninsula after more than seven decades of uneasy Armistice.

Second, strategic cooperation between and among our four principal adversaries has grown substantially since the beginning of the Ukraine War, increasing the risk that war with one adversary could quickly expand into war with an enemy coalition. To date, each of these relationships has remained mostly transactional, and none has advanced to the level of a formal military alliance. Nonetheless, these countries' shared perceptions of the West as a global destabilizing force could form the foundation of a wartime partnership. At the center of this concerning dynamic is a rapidly evolving relationship between the United States' two most capable adversaries.

Despite decades of mutual mistrust, Beijing and Moscow seem determined to advance their strategic partnership and military cooperation to counter what they perceive as a persistent U.S. threat to their core security interests. Catalyzed by the onset of a major war, this nascent military cooperation could quickly expand into coordinated military operations that complicate U.S. and allied planning and advance each adversary's ability to threaten North America. We saw glimpses of this enhanced military cooperation last summer when Chinese bomber aircraft deployed to a Russian Arctic airbase and flew a combined patrol with Russian heavy bombers over the Bering Sea.

Such "access transfer" accelerates and extends China's ability to threaten North America in the air domain and raises the specter of coordinated military operations in the event of a strategic conflict. Separately, North Korea's willingness to risk its own troops in support of Russia's war in Ukraine demonstrates the lengths to which these partners are willing to go to advance their strategic positions. It also raises concerning questions about the quid pro quo that Moscow may offer in return, potentially including expertise that could accelerate Pyongyang's development of advanced strategic weapons.

Third, each of our adversaries is advancing its ability—and, in some cases, rehearsing its plans—to threaten North America in multiple domains and from multiple vectors, increasing the likelihood that an armed conflict would include direct strikes on the Homeland. The PRC is expanding its ability to hold portions of North America at risk with conventionally armed weapons, providing Beijing a strike option against our Homeland that is above its demonstrated robust cyberattack capabilities but below its threshold for nuclear use. Last July, Chinese surface combat-

ants deployed to the Bering Sea for the fourth straight year and operated within cruise missile range of critical infrastructure throughout Alaska. Since 2023, China has launched two hulls of its new Shang III class of nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines (SSGN), which in the coming years could provide Beijing a clandestine land-attack option against critical infrastructure in Alaska and the U.S. West Coast.

In November, China incorporated air-refuellable H-6N medium bombers into a Sino-Russian combined bomber patrol, marking the first long-range use of a platform that will extend the PLA Air Force's strike range to include portions of Alaska even without basing or overflight permissions from the Russians. Finally, China may be exploring the development of conventionally armed ICBMs that could allow Beijing to strike targets in Alaska and the continental United States without crossing the nuclear threshold.

Meanwhile, China is advancing the quantity and sophistication of its North America-threatening nuclear delivery platforms. Chinese missile developers are probably developing nuclear-armed ICBMs equipped with hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs) or the ability to fly a fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) trajectory that approaches North America from the south rather than the traditional northerly vector for which our legacy early warning radars were designed. Such systems, if fielded, would erode strategic stability by degrading our ability to provide granular and actionable warning of an inbound attack.

Despite the degradation of its warfighting capabilities in Ukraine, Russia has enhanced its already formidable capability to threaten North America with conventionally armed air- and sea-based cruise missiles. Three years of strike operations into Ukraine have provided valuable operational experience to Russian aircrews and naval forces. In the last year, Russia's heavy bomber fleet has resumed its pre-war pace of strategic deterrence patrols—including multiple flights along the North American coastline—while simultaneously intensifying its strike operations into Ukraine. In the maritime domain, the Russian submarine force conducted its first port call in Cuba since the cold war and further integrated advanced Severodvinsk-class SSGNs into the Russian Pacific Fleet, portending regular—and potentially concurrent—patrols by cruise missile-capable submarines off North America's Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

In the nuclear domain, Russia fielded the world's first HGV-equipped ICBM over 5 years ago and continues to develop and test other novel nuclear delivery systems, like the FOBS-capable Sarmat heavy ICBM, the Poseidon transoceanic torpedo, and the Burevestnik nuclear-propelled cruise missile. If fielded, these advanced weapons will severely challenge our ability to detect and characterize an inbound attack and determine an appropriate response during a conflict.

North Korea continues to defy the international nonproliferation regime and advance its strategic weapons program. Kim Jong Un's newest ICBM—the Hwasong-19 he first tested last October—probably can deliver a nuclear payload to targets throughout North America while minimizing our ability to provide pre-launch warning due to the shortened launch preparation timelines afforded by its solid-propellant design. Regime rhetoric surrounding the new ICBM suggests Kim is eager to transition his strategic weapons program from research and development to serial production and fielding, a process that could rapidly expand North Korea's inventory and narrow my confidence in USNORTHCOM's existing ballistic missile defense capacity in the coming years.

Finally, Iran retains the capability to strike the United States in the cyber domain and through its asymmetric and proxy operations. Meanwhile, Iran's burgeoning nuclear and space launch programs provide a viable pathway for developing a North America-threatening ICBM should its leaders determine that they need a more forceful means of challenging the United States.

Separately, we face a variety of non-traditional threats that could disrupt critical services in the Homeland and degrade NORAD and USNORTHCOM's ability to carry out our no-fail missions. Key among these is a spate of activity over the past year involving small uncrewed aircraft systems (sUAS) operating over sensitive DOD installations and other Defense Critical Infrastructure. While much of this activity may be attributable to hobbyists, peer adversaries clearly have incentive to collect intelligence on these installations, and our law enforcement partners have uncovered evidence of a foreign intelligence nexus in some of these incidents.

Meanwhile, our principal adversaries are concentrating their increasingly sophisticated offensive cyberoperations on U.S. defense and civilian infrastructure. Over the last year, Russian-affiliated cyber actors have conducted attacks on water supply, wastewater, hydroelectric, and energy facilities in the United States, while PRC-sponsored cyber actors have positioned themselves on IT networks in multiple U.S. sectors, potentially enabling them to rapidly transition to disruptive attacks in the event of a crisis or conflict.

DEFENDING THE HOMELAND

Over the course of the last year, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have expanded on already robust efforts to improve the capability of the Joint Force and the inter-agency community to defend key sites—from military installations to civilian transportation and energy nodes—from attack. That effort is making significant progress thanks in large part to the expertise, cooperation, and commitment of our DOD and interagency partners. As this critical effort moves forward, success will depend on collaboration across the interagency community, as well as on developing the forward-looking capabilities and policies necessary to ensure a seamless and well-coordinated defensive enterprise that accounts for the unique requirements of conducting defensive operations inside the United States and Canada.

Protecting Territorial Integrity

Defending Against Air and Missile Threats

The DPRK continues to test increasingly capable ICBMs, while Russia and the PRC have steadily expanded their stockpiles of highly capable long-range land-attack cruise missiles and the fleets of the delivery platforms that launch them. The risks to the Homeland posed by nuclear-armed ICBMs are clear, while advanced PRC and Russian cruise missiles are difficult to detect and can carry both nuclear

and conventional payloads. All of these weapons can be launched against the United States and Canada in an effort to degrade the infrastructure enabling U.S. military force projection, inflict economic harm, and weaken public support for U.S. intervention in overseas conflicts.

As air and missile threats to the Homeland will continue to mount, USNORTHCOM and NORAD are actively engaged in ongoing DOD efforts to implement the January 27, 2025 Executive Order directing the building of a next-generation Missile Defense Shield for North America. Until the Secretary presents the Department's integrated plan forward to the White House, I would like to focus on some of USNORTHCOM's current activities that help protect the Homeland from air and missile threats.

Domain awareness is a particularly important part of protection the Nation from air and missile threats. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are working closely with the U.S. Air Force, which has been tasked as the executive agent for air-and cruise-missile defense of the Homeland to identify potential solutions to domain awareness challenges. It is vital that the domain awareness network provide the ability to detect, discriminate, and deliver crucial real-time information and a single common operational picture to leaders at all appropriate levels. Command modernization initiatives, including the establishment of a layered system of sensors such as space-based Airborne Moving Target Indicator (AMTI), Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR), the E-7 Wedgetail, and Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS), remain critical to continental defense in order to detect, track, and prosecute adversary submarines, aircraft and surface vessels, as well as inbound missiles.

Beyond domain awareness, USNORTHCOM continues to defend the United States—to include Alaska and Hawaii—from attacks from ballistic missiles as well as emerging threat systems. The U.S. ground-based midcourse defense system has a long record of success and remains fully capable of defending against a potential DPRK missile attack. Additionally, the on-time fielding of the Next-Generation Interceptor (NGI) remains a major USNORTHCOM priority, and I am working closely with the Missile Defense Agency and the Department to ensure that program remains on track.

NORAD and USNORTHCOM will also defend against air-breathing threats, to include unmanned aerial systems, threat aircraft, advanced land-attack cruise missiles, and hypersonic cruise missiles designed to challenge U.S. Homeland defense systems from lower altitudes. The commands will continue working with the Department to prioritize these efforts in the context of all of NORAD and USNORTHCOM missions.

OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE (ONE)

While some of the capabilities required for comprehensive air and missile defense of the Homeland remain in development, Operation NOBLE Eagle (ONE) and NORAD's aerospace control mission have secured North American airspace for decades, adapting constantly to ever-evolving threats including Russian—and now PRC—bombers, violent extremist threats to civilian aviation, and advanced cruise missiles launched from the air and sea. NORAD's ability to adapt to and outpace emerging challenges is a cornerstone of the command's longstanding reputation as a pillar of continental defense.

The threats to North American airspace have steadily grown more complex, and now include a spectrum of competitor capabilities that range from modernized long-range bombers and hypersonic cruise missiles down to small unmanned systems that can fit into a backpack. While two decades of whole-of-government response have reduced the threat of terrorist threats to civil aircraft, NORAD maintains the ability to deter and defeat nation-state threats from every avenue of approach to North America while safeguarding national leaders from aerial threats, both in the National Capital Region and around the country.

NORAD will optimize protection of prioritized Defense Critical Infrastructure while maintaining adequate national response capability in support of civilian air traffic, and cooperate with the Air Force and the Air National Guard to generate greater readiness against high-end threats through enhanced campaigning and training while remaining available to NORAD when indications and warning triggers are met.

I am grateful to the Committee for your support for these key USNORTHCOM and NORAD priorities, as we work to identify effective and affordable capabilities that will meet this important challenge now and well into the future. The same can be said of our Canadian partners, as the Government of Canada has committed to fielding long-range sensors and weapons system to deter and defeat potential air, sea, and missile threats in the approaches to North America. Integration and col-

laboration with Canada—through NORAD and in broader continental defense initiatives—will grow even more necessary as our competitor field greater numbers of increasingly advanced long-range cruise missiles.

Countering Unmanned Aerial Systems

There is perhaps no better example of the rapidly evolving strategic environment than the emergence of small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) as a threat to infrastructure and personnel in the Homeland. The availability and utility of small drones has grown exponentially over the last decade, and some have repeatedly employed these systems for illicit purposes. While U.S. and coalition forces overseas have faced the threat of weaponized unmanned systems for years, small drones have emerged as a significant risk to infrastructure and safety in the United States in a relatively short period of time. The widespread availability of small drones, coupled with a complicated regulatory structure and limitations on UAS countermeasures based on concerns for flight safety and privacy, has created significant vulnerabilities that have been exploited by known and unknown actors.

There have been multiple incursions by UAS over military installations in the United States over the past year. To mitigate the potential threats to safety and security presented by UAS overflight of DOD facilities, USNORTHCOM and NORAD, in close coordination with the military Services and DOD, resourced equipment and analytic tools to installation commanders to assist with detection, tracking, and mitigation of potential UAS threats. In November 2024, then-Secretary of Defense Austin directed USNORTHCOM to serve as the synchronizer, integrator, and/or coordinator of domestic counter-small UAS (C-sUAS) activities within the continental United States and Alaska for DOD and, when requested and approved, for the interagency. USNORTHCOM will play a critical role in an enduring whole-of-government effort to protect people, infrastructure, aircraft, and facilities from malign sUAS incursions. This effort will require investment in robust and evolving mitigation technologies suitable for use in the United States, alignment with interagency and industry partners, and policy and statutory changes that balance safety, privacy, and defensive requirements.

In October 2024, USNORTHCOM and NORAD were proud to host Demonstration FALCON PEAK 25.1, which brought together DOD, interagency, and industry partners seeking to demonstrate counter-sUAS sensors and defeat mechanisms. Thanks to extraordinary support from the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Colorado National Guard, and many others, demonstration participants tracked and engaged live sUAS targets in complex, realistic scenarios over a number of days and nights within military Special Use Airspace. The demonstration provided important insights that the Commands and our partners will continue to build on, including during Falcon Peak 25.2, which will include a larger slate of vendors, participants, and systems in August 2025, meeting Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act direction.

In recognition of the sUAS threat and the Commands' increased responsibilities, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have shifted resources and personnel to establish a C-UAS operations branch within our headquarters. This Committee has long been aware of the potential threat presented by sUAS, and I would like to extend my appreciation for your ongoing support for C-UAS research and acquisitions. That support will remain critical as success in the Homeland C-sUAS mission will depend on improved C-UAS technology, interagency collaboration, and corresponding authorities and resourcing for the mission to defend against this significant risk to safety and security.

Cyber Domain Roles and Responses

Threats to civil and military infrastructure are a direct and constant concern for USNORTHCOM and NORAD. While not directly responsible for the defense of non-USNORTHCOM networks, cyberattacks against U.S. and Canadian infrastructure carry the potential to negatively impact DOD force projection and could require significant defense support to civil authorities to mitigate the consequences of a damaging cyberattack against transportation, energy, or economic networks.

Any direct action against the United States by a major competitor would almost certainly involve cyberattacks against strategic North American infrastructure, and USNORTHCOM collaborates daily with U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and any number of other intergovernmental partners to deter, defend, and—if necessary—respond to cyberattacks.

Defense Operations in the Arctic

Defending North America is inherently linked to the ability of the Joint Force to operate effectively across the entire USNORTHCOM area of responsibility—to include the Arctic. Russia is expanding its capability and capacity to conduct military operations in the Arctic, seeking to control access to northern sea lanes and threaten North America from the northern approaches. In 2024, Russian and PRC aircraft and surface vessels conducted joint patrols in the Bering Sea, while the PRC repeatedly deployed dual-purpose vessels into the Arctic as part of a longstanding effort to expand the ability of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to conduct multi-domain operations in the high north.

Arctic responsibilities are shared across multiple geographic and functional combatant commands, and as competition in the region increases, safeguarding Arctic access and freedom of maneuver will depend on Joint Force Arctic operational capabilities and build on the already strong ties between Arctic partners. USNORTHCOM places enormous value on the ability to conduct operations and exercises in the high north and to execute assigned missions in coordination with fellow combatant commands.

The annual ARCTIC EDGE exercise is a key example of a USNORTHCOM event that evaluates combatant command planning, communications, and operational oversight while simultaneously providing warfighters and enablers with valuable operational experience as they test the people, equipment, and logistics trains needed to execute their missions in remote and austere locations. Regular exercises and real-world operations in the Arctic remain critically important and generate valuable lessons learned for participants from the combatant command and components headquarters down to the operational and tactical levels. Effective operations in the Arctic require specialized training and equipment under the best of conditions, and there is no substitute for real-world experience in the region. USNORTHCOM and NORAD will continue to advocate for designated Arctic units that are specifically trained and equipped to execute their assigned missions in all conditions.

As inter-reliance between allies and partners grows increasingly vital to ensuring a secure and open Arctic, USNORTHCOM and NORAD gain strength and capability from our military partnerships. In particular, the Canadian Armed Forces' expertise in Arctic operations and the government of Canada's longstanding commitment to Arctic security are of enormous value to continental defense. Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy (CAFP), announced in December 2024, clearly recognizes the significance of Russia-PRC collaboration in the Arctic as well as the vast importance of the North American Arctic to both the United States and Canada.

This policy will directly support NORAD through international diplomatic engagement and a series of important Canadian defense investments that will strengthen shared continental defense capabilities. The extraordinary value of the U.S.-Canadian defense relationship has proven itself time and again over the course of six decades, and I have every confidence that the strategic vision and commitment to North American defense articulated in the CAFPP, when resourced, will pay dividends for the defense of North America for many years to come.

SECURITY COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

USNORTHCOM's regional security cooperation relationships remain a critical element of the command's missions. USNORTHCOM's military partnerships with Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas enhance our own Homeland defense while building the capacity of those partners to operate and communicate with U.S. forces. Those relationships are vital to countering competitor influence and presence in the Western Hemisphere while improving intelligence sharing, border security, and domain awareness.

Decades of information sharing, combined exercises, and routine direct engagement between USNORTHCOM senior leaders and our Canadian, Mexican, and Bahamian military counterparts has brought North American defense cooperation to a historic high point. The bilateral and multilateral ties between our militaries will be of critical importance over the next 18 months as the United States, Mexico, and Canada prepare to host the FIFA World Cup in the summer of 2026. USNORTHCOM's capacity to synchronize interagency and international partners will be crucial to ensuring the safety and security of this quadrennial global tournament. That work—which will involve dozens of military, intelligence community, and law-enforcement partners from all three host nations—is already well underway and will grow in scope and scale through the end of the competition.

In the meantime, USNORTHCOM's routine engagements and exercises with our regional partners have produced operational capability with direct benefits for the defense of North America. In 2024, as a Russian Navy surface action group (SAG)

transited the Atlantic Ocean, USNORTHCOM, NORAD, the Canadian Armed Forces, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Southern Command maintained constant common situational awareness of the SAG's location, while executing seamless operations across multiple international and combatant command boundaries. The execution of this mission was the direct result of the close ties between USNORTHCOM and our international and cross-command partners and demonstrated a degree of commonality and interoperability that our competitors are years from being able to match.

Building our partners' ability to operate with U.S. forces has led directly to improved regional domain awareness, information sharing, and cooperation against shared security challenges, especially given the efforts of peer competitors to gain influence with the United States' nearest neighbors. USNORTHCOM's dedicated efforts to support our partners' defense requirements over the years have played an important role in maintaining the United States as the clear partner of choice while simultaneously improving our partners' capability and capacity for addressing internal security challenges. USNORTHCOM remains committed to these essential relationships.

DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES (DSCA)

USNORTHCOM's support to civilian Federal agencies in times of need stands as the command's most visible mission to American citizens. USNORTHCOM provides support by leveraging the command's expertise in planning, synchronization, and operations to prepare for, assess, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents. In 2024, USNORTHCOM provided air assets and ground forces to fight major wildfires in the western United States, to include the recent fires in Los Angeles; delivered relief to Americans in need following major hurricanes and flooding along the Atlantic coast; supported Federal law enforcement in securing National Special Security Events (NSSE); reinforced Federal counter-drug efforts; and augmented USCBP border operations.

USNORTHCOM is proud to support each Federal partner, and delivering relief to American citizens exercises the same planning, operations, and communications mechanisms required to conduct homeland defense operations during periods of crisis and conflict. Drawing on the Command's expertise, specialized capabilities, and robust interagency networks, USNORTHCOM will lead and work alongside U.S. Federal law enforcement partners to safeguard U.S. borders and citizens by leveraging the command's specialized intelligence collection capabilities abroad.

Those capabilities also allow USNORTHCOM to play an increasing role in illuminating the illicit networks used by criminal cartels to launder money, smuggle migrants, and traffic illicit drugs. The narcotics smuggled into the United States by transnational criminal organizations are directly responsible for tens of thousands of deaths each year, and USNORTHCOM will continue to work with partners in reducing the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.

In the aftermath of the catastrophic flooding that struck eastern North Carolina in October 2024, USNORTHCOM supported the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with ground forces and aviation assets for search and rescue, delivery of relief supplies, route clearance, and other key missions that directly assisted residents of the affected areas. I want to specifically recognize the extraordinary response of leaders and Soldiers from the U.S. Army's XVIII Airborne Corps, to include units from the 101st Airborne Division and the 82d Airborne Division. Thanks to their readiness, skill, and devotion to their mission, every USNORTHCOM request for forces was executed well ahead of required timelines and enabled an extraordinary response to a historic disaster. While there were certainly lessons learned for an even more effective response in future contingencies, I am extremely proud of the work done by USNORTHCOM, U.S. Army North, and the deployed U.S. Army units whose incredible efforts helped so many Americans in need.

A similar level of support from across the Department enabled USNORTHCOM to augment U.S. Secret Service (USSS) protection of the major Presidential and vice-Presidential candidates during the last several months of the 2024 Presidential campaign. In response to a USSS request for assistance following the attempted assassination of President Trump, USNORTHCOM, in concert with the Joint Staff and the military Services, provided explosive ordinance technicians, military working dog teams, and rotary-wing assets to ensure the safety and security of the candidates at nearly 200 locations. Successfully deploying dozens of highly specialized security teams to hundreds of event sites was a testament to the professional planners and operators involved with the mission, and I am proud of USNORTHCOM's support for this critical effort.

CONCLUSION

I am honored and privileged to lead the men and women of USNORTHCOM and NORAD. I thank our service members and civilian employees for their efforts while executing our noble mission of defending the United States and Canada as both commands continue to expand our bi-national, whole-of-government, continental approach to homeland defense. I appreciate the critical role Congress plays in ensuring our service members remain ready to defend our Homeland now and in the future, and I look forward to continued collaboration with all of our critical partners in defending our great nations.

We Have the Watch

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, General. Admiral Holsey, you're recognized.

**STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL ALVIN HOLSEY, USN COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND**

Admiral HOLSEY. Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished Members of the Committee, I'm humbled to appear before today as the 33d Commander of United States Southern Command.

We're a war fighting organization, and I've moved forward to lead this command, servicemembers, surveillance contractors and their families, as we've foster democracy, security, shared prosperity throughout the Western hemisphere. I'm honored to testify alongside General Guillot as a relationship between NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM is vital to the safety and security of our Homeland.

The United States and our partners in Latin America and the Korean are linked together, not simply by history and geography, but by family bonds, cultural traditions, security and economic cooperation, and a steadfast devotion to democratic values. This enduring commitment to these values is a cornerstone of our collective partnership. Together we seek to achieve lasting security, stability, and prosperity throughout the Americas.

Today, this vision is imperiled by a host of threats. These threats include strategic competition from China and Russia, the impact of transnational criminal organizations and the complex transboundary challenges such as irregular migration, natural disasters, eroded democracies, food, and water insecurity. China is outpacing threat and continues its methodical encouragement into our shared neighborhood, welding diplomatic informational, military, and economic influence to export its authoritarian model to the region,

Most focused to the east and west when they think of great power competition. A look to our south reveals that China has already established a strong presence. It's predatory and opaque investment practices, resource extraction, and potential dual use projects from ports to space, threaten the security and sovereignty of our partners while jeopardizing the United States National Security.

Simultaneously, Russia supports like-minded regimes like Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, using disinformation military engagements, arms sales, force protection. Moscow is now attempting to undermine the United States leadership interest and influence in the region.

Meanwhile, TCOs continue to fuel instability throughout the region. They exploit the permissive environment and engage in bru-

tal violence, illicit trafficking, and other criminal activities to undermine the rule of law and disrupt the legitimate government functions. They're having devastating effects, which has spilled over into our Homeland, destroying lives.

Border security is a concern for us all. SOUTHCOM recently stood up Joint Task force—guard in at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), in support of Department of Homeland Security to provide safe and humane care of illegal aliens until they're returned to their countries of origin. Our time is now. Deliberate and meaningful action to address these threats is required or this region, our neighborhood will continue to change.

Partnerships are our most effective approach to countering shared security and economic concerns to enable our enduring trust in the region. However, we cannot take this for granted. To be a trusted partner, we must be credible, present, and engaged.

During my tenure at SOUTHCOM, I've witnessed how enduring presence builds trust. As a result, partners prefer to work with us over China, Russia, and other nations to overcome their most pressing challenges. SOUTHCOM continue to stand shoulders to shoulder with our partners. We have and will continue to respond rapidly to crises in any form.

Together with our partners, we're building their capability, capacity to mitigate, respond, and recover from our collective threats. Sustained investment and security operation, joint exercises, disaster assistance among other initiatives enable us to innovate and deliver at the point of need.

As this Department sharpens its war fighting edge, I'm grateful for the continued support of Congress. Today, this vital support to defending the democratic principles and interests that underpins the stability of prosperity and the region and ultimately the security of our Nation.

Thank you again, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and Members of the Committee for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Alvin Holsey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ADMIRAL ALVIN HOLSEY

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Committee Members, it is a distinct honor and privilege to serve as United States Southern Command's (USSOUTHCOM) 33d Combatant Commander. In assuming this role, I have leveraged 22 months of insight as the USSOUTHCOM Military Deputy Commander and have moved forward to lead this command's servicemembers, civilians, contractors, and their families, as we strengthen democracy, security, and stability throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The United States of America and the many nations and territories that comprise Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are bound together by rich cultural traditions, family bonds, economic endeavors, and an enduring commitment to democratic principles. Upon this foundation, USSOUTHCOM builds lasting trust across the region through engaged and credible presence. Together, with our Allies and Partners, we seek to engender security, capability, democratic norms, and resilience that fuel regional peace, prosperity, and sovereignty.

There are several threats to this vision. I assess the most concerning to be the actions of nations such as China and Russia. These authoritarian regimes continue their methodical incursion into the region using varying tools toward separate end states. While China's long-term global campaign to become the world's dominant geostrategic power is evident in the Western Hemisphere, "Russia continues to support anti-American authoritarian regimes militarily and spread disinformation throughout the region to undermine [U.S.] interests." The consequences not only run

counter to U.S. national interests, but also threaten sovereignty, and advance our Strategic Competitors' economic, political, and military objectives. Their malign actions here in the Western Hemisphere have "ramifications that stretch far beyond the region, posing a global risk."¹

Simultaneously, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and violent gangs, as well as Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), use enormous revenue from drug trafficking and other illicit activity to corrupt and co-opt portions of regional governments, degrading the region's democratic institutions. Criminal violence drives drugs, illegal migration, and lawlessness to our border and imperils citizen security. TCOs are linked to the deaths of thousands of Americans every year. Both threaten the safety, stability, security, and sovereignty of all nations in our shared neighborhood. Time is not on our side. The Western Hemisphere is suffering from an "erosion of democratic capitalism, which in too many countries is being replaced by ... authoritarianism."²

We can stem this tide by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our Allies and Partners. Our Partners want to work with us, but to maintain their trust and confidence they must feel and see our presence and commitment before it is too late. USSOUTHCOM will continue to campaign along its three lines of effort: *Strengthening Partnerships, Countering Threats, and Building our Team*. Under this framework, we are taking swift action, rising to the occasion to bolster like-minded democracies, outmaneuver our Strategic Competitors, and thwart our adversaries.

Success relies on taking a holistic approach to our operations, activities, and investments. To be effective, each must be nested with the contributions and capabilities of our Allies, Partners, U.S. Interagency, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector. To this end, we have redoubled our efforts to nest military engagement with diplomatic, informational and economic initiatives across the whole-of-government. Together, we will build a safer and stronger Western Hemisphere while ensuring the national security of our Homeland.

CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China

The United States and China are locked in a fierce strategic competition, pitting democracy against authoritarianism. Over the course of the last decade, the United States has focused predominantly on the Indo-Pacific, while the China has taken a global approach. The LAC region is on the front lines of a decisive and urgent contest to define the future of our world. China is assailing United States interests from all directions, in all domains, and increasingly in the Caribbean archipelago—a potential offensive island chain. Failure to adequately compete here and now "will leave the region under the influence of America's chief authoritarian rivals,"³ which directly threatens the "U.S. shift to the Indo-Pacific ... jeopardizing freedom of maneuver, access, and influence in our near-abroad."⁴

While the United States is looking to the Far East, China is plowing fertile ground to our south. The region is home to abundant natural resources, including 20 percent of the world's oil reserves, 25 percent of its strategic metals, 30 percent of its forest area, 31 percent of its fishing areas and 32 percent of its renewable freshwater resources.⁵ Economics plays a central role in China's interest in the region. Understanding this, China has used its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to become South America's largest trading partner and second largest in Central America

¹Pettus, E. L. (2023). The Expanding Leverage of the People's Republic of China in Latin America: Implications for the Region. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3540614/the-expanding-leverage-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-in-latin-america-implic/>.

²O'Grady, M. A. (2024). Brazil and Latin America's Decline. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from https://www.wsj.com/opinion/brazil-and-latin-americas-decline-president-lula-economy-policy-04585c64?mod=hp_opin_pos_3#ixrecs_s.

³Cimmino, J., Kroenig, M., & Marczak, J. (2024). A strategy to counter malign Chinese and Russian influence in Latin America and the Caribbean. Atlantic Council. Retrieved from <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/atlantic-council-strategy-paper-series/a-strategy-to-counter-malign-chinese-and-russian-influence-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>.

⁴(Pettus, 2023, p. 3).

⁵United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). Natural resources outlook in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.cepal.org/entities/publication/d42a8514-9145-4f2a-b46b-b0187bb913e0>.

and the Caribbean.^{6 7} A bold strategy governs its trade “beyond raw materials and commodities to include traditional infrastructure (road, bridges, ports) and ‘new infrastructure’: electric vehicles, telecommunication, and renewable energy.”⁸

China has not broadened its reach into this hemisphere as a benevolent gesture. Rather, through the BRI, it is engaged in a “global campaign to monopolize strategic natural resources” and use them for political control.⁹ Under the guise of investment, China continues to displace Taiwan’s recognition in the region. Seven of the 12 countries that still maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan, are found in LAC, four in the Caribbean. Having already successfully courted 21 of the 31 countries in USSOUTHCOM’s area of responsibility (AOR) to join the BRI, Beijing has gained ground by offering our Partners short-term gains that leave them vulnerable to unsustainable debt, environmental degradation, and informational security risks.¹⁰

China claims to have “always been a member of the Global South”¹¹ and is using the BRI to set the theater and expand its access to rare earth metals and control of ports, space facilities, and telecommunications infrastructure for a potential dual civilian-military purpose.¹² Fifty percent of the world’s lithium reserves are found in Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile.¹³ Chinese State-Owned Entities (SOEs) have monopoly on rare earth mining and refining in the region.¹⁴ Between 2000 and 2018, China invested \$73 billion in Latin American and Caribbean markets, leaving supply chains for advanced technology and everyday items in its control, and garnering influence that makes the United States and our Partners vulnerable to Beijing’s malign agenda.^{15 16}

Chinese telecommunications SOEs continue to proliferate, with Huawei, “expanding its presence as one of the main information and communications technology (ICT) enterprises in the region.”¹⁷ Eight of our Partner Nations have installed Chinese 5G equipment to date, and 24 others use Chinese 3G/4G infrastructure, perhaps making future 5G upgrades with Western companies cost-prohibitive.^{18 19} Multiple governments, organizations, and companies have accused Chinese SOEs, most notably, Huawei, of assisting in Chinese espionage campaigns, jeopardizing United States and Partner Nation security and sovereignty.^{20 21}

Winning the strategic competition with China in the Western Hemisphere is essential to securing the defense of our Homeland, maintaining regional stability, and advancing United States national interests. Increasing Chinese presence creates

⁶ Foreign Affairs Committee. (2022). China regional snapshot: South America. Retrieved from [https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/china-regional-snapshot-south-america/#:~:text=China's % 20 Influence%20in%20South%20America,South%20America's%20top%20trading%20partner](https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/china-regional-snapshot-south-america/#:~:text=China's%20Influence%20in%20South%20America,South%20America's%20top%20trading%20partner).

⁷ Carr, E., & Lazarus, L. (2024). China’s BRI and the U.S. response: Contest in the Caribbean. Hinrich Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.hinrichfoundation.com/research/wp/us-china/contest-in-the-caribbean/>.

⁸ Ellis, E., Lazarus, L., Piccone, T., & Wirtschafter, V. (2024). How are the United States and China Intersecting in Latin America? Brookings Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-are-the-united-states-and-china-intersecting-in-latin-america/>.

⁹ Gallagher, M. (2023). American Influence is Needed in Latin America Now Like Never Before—to Combat China. Newsweek. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/american-influence-needed-latin-america-now-like-never-before-combat-china-opinion-1830950>.

¹⁰ (Ellis, Lazarus, Piccone, Wirtschafter, 2024).

¹¹ Baptista, E. (2024). China’s Xi announces steps to support ‘global south’ at G20 summit. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/chinas-xi-announces-steps-support-global-south-g20-summit-2024-11-18/>.

¹² (Gallagher, M., 2024).

¹³ Vander Molen, I. (2022). Bolivia: Pursuing Sustainable Lithium Mining. Center for Strategic & International Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/blogs/development-dispatch/bolivia-pursuing-sustainable-lithium-mining>.

¹⁴ (Pettus, 2023, p. 4).

¹⁵ (Cimmino, Kroenig, & Marczak, 2024).

¹⁶ (Pettus, 2023, p. 4).

¹⁷ Alvarado, P. D. (2024). Huawei’s Expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean: Views from the Region. United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/04/huaweis-expansion-latin-america-and-caribbean-views-region>.

¹⁸ Duarte, L. (2021). Latin America: China’s Huawei Maintains its Foothold. AULA Blog. Retrieved from <https://aulablog.net/2021/11/19/latin-america-chinas-huawei-maintains-its-foothold/>.

¹⁹ Roy, D. (2023). China’s Growing Influence in Latin America. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri>.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Justice. (2019). Huawei Charged with Conspiring to Steal Trade Secrets from T-Mobile United States. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-telecommunications-device-manufacturer-and-its-us-affiliate-indicted-theft-trade>.

²¹ Barnes, J. E. (2023). Allied Spy Chiefs Warn of Chinese Espionage Targeting Tech Firms. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/18/us/politics/china-spying-technology.html>.

vulnerabilities and a potential ability to exploit global chokepoints—such as the Panama Canal, sea lines of communication, space, and supply chains—in future conflicts.²² Moreover, the malign activities, harmful influence, and autocratic philosophy of China are a direct threat to the democratic will of this region's people. The United States offers economic prosperity, sustainable development, and true partnership in our shared hemisphere. Broadening innovation efforts and attracting transparent foreign investment will assist in meeting the needs of our Partners, while reducing poverty and improving living standards. By amplifying these benefits and doubling down on our strategy of strengthening partnerships with engaged and credible presence, we will do more than manage this strategic competition, we will “win it.”²³

Russia's Strategy in the West

Russia's malign activities in the Western Hemisphere have global security consequences as it seeks to “position itself at the heart of a new world order.”²⁴ Moscow views strategic competition in the region as analogous to that in Europe and is engaged in a campaign to challenge United States leadership and influence.²⁵ Consequently, Russia seeks to undermine the United States regional interests, support like-minded authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and foster stronger relations with other potentially receptive nations. To do so, Moscow leverages malign propaganda, military engagements, arms sales, and force projection, along with diplomatic and economically coercive practices to demonstrate its global reach.

Russia uses state-controlled media to disseminate disinformation and propaganda widely through outlets such as RT and Sputnik Mundo in an attempt to destabilize Partner Nation governments,²⁶ spread biased and false narratives that criticize the United States, and downplay Russian global malfeasance, especially as it relates to its war with Ukraine.²⁷ These messages are communicated across other forms of traditional and social media, and with the assistance of Russian embassies, are now incorporated into regional academia through educational exchanges—creating conditions for the indoctrination of future regional leaders.^{28 29}

Although Russia does not enjoy the same level of economic and military power as China, it continues to make its presence felt. Since 2008, 15 of the 41 visits by the Russian Navy to the region have included warships. Last June, a Russian Surface Action Group, led by the frigate Admiral Gorshkov and cruise missile submarine *Kazan* docked in Havana, Cuba, passing within 30 miles of the Florida Keys.³⁰ This follows visits by the Admiral Gorshkov to the western Atlantic Ocean in 2023 and the Russian training ship *Perekop* to Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela later that year.

“The Russian state and para-state cyber penetration of much of Latin America is far broader, deeper, and more successful than is general understood.”³¹ The region also hosts Russian military/security infrastructure and personnel. In Nicaragua, Russia maintains its GLONASS navigation system—Russia's alternative to the United States global positioning system, as well as “a multimillion-dollar vaccination plant that produces no vaccines, a police academy that does little of what it advertises, a cyber warfare and training center in the State telecommunications

²² (Pettus, 2023, p. 4).

²³ Gallagher, M., & Pottinger, M. (2024). No Substitute for Victory: America's Competition with China Must Be Won, Not Managed. Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/no-substitute-victory-pottinger-gallagher>.

²⁴ Russia's Strategy for Latin America: Strengthening Ties in the Light of the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan (Russia). (2024). European Parliament Think Tank. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)762473](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)762473).

²⁵ Levaggi, A. G., & Rouvinski, V. (2024). The Kremlin's Caribbean Gambit: A Great Power Competition Spillover? Center for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/kremlins-caribbean-gambit-great-power-competition-spillover>.

²⁶ United States Department of State. (2024). Alerting the World to RT's Global Covert Activities. Retrieved from <https://www.State.gov/alerting-the-world-to-rts-global-covert-activities/>.

²⁷ (European Parliament Think Tank, 2024).

²⁸ Douglas, F., & Roman D. Ortiz, R. (2024). Russian Influence Campaigns in Latin America. United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/10/russian-influence-campaigns-latin-america>.

²⁹ Chaguaceda, A., & Rouvinski, V. (2024). Russia's Capture of Intellectual Elites in Latin America. Wilson Center. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russias-capture-intellectual-elites-latin-america>.

³⁰ Wilner, M., & Torres, N. G. (2024). Russia's Nuclear Submarine Tracks Back Up Florida's Coast as Warships Head to Caribbean. The Miami Herald. Retrieved from <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article289380600.html>.

³¹ Farah, D. (2024). How Russian Surveillance Tech is Reshaping Latin America. Digital Commons. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/jgi_research/67.

building, and a Russian Ministry of Interior building that enjoys the diplomatic status of an embassy.”³²

On the economic front, last year Russia sharply wielded its trade policy to suspend banana imports from five Ecuadorian companies, preventing the country from exchanging aging Russian military equipment for \$200 million in reliable United States alternatives.³³ Although Russia maintains a small trade presence and has no trade agreements in Latin America, this is a powerful example of the economic leverage and influence it deploys against our Partners to further its interests.³⁴

Russia continues its attempts to solidify and strengthen diplomatic relationships across the region. In 2023, Moscow hosted more than 200 delegates from Latin America at its Russia-Latin America International Parliamentary Conference. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has traveled to LAC three times since 2023 to advance Russia’s malign agenda with leaders from ideological acolytes in Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Diplomatic visits as well as participation in the BRICS and G20 Summits appear to be paying dividends, as official communiques from these gatherings diminish or fail to condemn Russia’s culpability in Ukraine.³⁵ ³⁶

Transnational Criminal Organizations

TCOs create and exploit regional instability throughout LAC. Their illicit actions threaten good governance and the economic, environmental, and citizen security of every society in the Western Hemisphere. There are 35 TCOs sanctioned by the United States based in the region. In 2023, they amassed an assessed revenue of \$358 billion by engaging in the trafficking of humans, drugs, weapons, and wildlife, as well as the counterfeiting of goods and illegal logging, mining, and fishing. This staggering number is six times higher than the defense budgets of all countries in the region combined, including Mexico. TCO-driven corruption and instability open space for China, Russia, and other malign actors to achieve strategic ends and further their agendas.

Meanwhile, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), cocaine production is reaching record highs, with markets and TCO operations expanding in Europe, Africa, and Asia.³⁷ The global revolution in illicit synthetic drugs has direct implications in the region, with fentanyl increasingly trafficked throughout the Western Hemisphere. As Congress recognizes, China “strategically and economically benefits” from our Nation’s fentanyl crisis, and we remain concerned that criminal actors will exploit the region’s vulnerabilities to expand precursor smuggling or fentanyl production into other countries.³⁸

According to the UNODC, the Americas have the highest regional homicide rates in the world, with high rates of violence related to organized crime.³⁹ Illegal smuggling of weapons contributes to increasing violence and instability while providing TCOs or regional terrorist groups with an arsenal that often exceeds that of the legitimate state. Gang violence is becoming deadlier, especially in Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.⁴⁰ One-third of the world’s homicides occur in the Caribbean, with firearms used in more than half of these crimes.⁴¹ ⁴²

³² Farah, D., & Richardson, M. (2022). *Dangerous Alliances: Russia’s Strategic Inroads in Latin America*. National Defense University Press. Retrieved from <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/3252479/dangerous-alliances-russias-strategic-inroads-in-latin-america/>.

³³ Reuters. (2024). Russia Buys Bananas from India after Ecuador Military Hardware Spat. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-buys-bananas-india-after-ecuador-military-hardware-spat-2024-02-06/>.

³⁴ (European Parliament Think Tank, 2024).

³⁵ Elgot, J., & Leyland Cecco, L. (2024). Ukraine Allies Criticize G20 Statement for not Naming Russia’s Role in Conflict. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/19/ukraine-russia-g20-communiqué>.

³⁶ (European Parliament, 2024).

³⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2024). *World drug report 2024: Key Findings and Conclusions*. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2024/WDR24_Key_findings_and_conclusions.pdf.

³⁸ Select Committee Unveils Findings on CCP’s Role in American Fentanyl Epidemic—Report & Hearing. (2024). Select Committee on the CCP. Retrieved from <https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/press-releases/select-committee-unveils-findings-ccps-role-american-fentanyl-epidemic-report>.

³⁹ Global Study on Homicide 2023. (2024). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/Global_study_on_homicide_2023_web.pdf.

⁴⁰ Small Arms Survey. (2023). *New Joint Report with CARICOM IMPACS—the Caribbean Firearms Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/highlight/new-joint-report-caricom-impacs-caribbean-firearms-study>.

⁴¹ Pistolesi, A., & Sacchi, M. (2024). *Narcos, Gangs and Crisis in the Caribbean*. *Atlas of Wars*. Retrieved from <https://www.atlasofwars.com/narcos-gangs-and-crisis-in-the-caribbean/>.

⁴² (Small Arms Survey, 2023).

Additionally, both regional and foreign terrorist actors are equally active in the region. Four United States-designated regional terrorist organizations (Regional Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army, Segunda Marquetalia, the National Liberation Army, and Shining Path) routinely collaborate with TCOs to further destabilize the region. Over 10,000 members of these groups are found in Colombia and Peru undermining state sovereignty while waging war with security forces. Colombian terrorist groups are leveraging emerging technology, and in 2024, they conducted more than 140 Unmanned Systems aerial attacks. Members and supporters of four United States-designated foreign terrorist organizations (Lebanese Hizballah, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—Qods Force, ISIS, and al Qaeda) continue to operate in the Western Hemisphere.

Iran

Iran seeks to build political, military, and economic clout in Latin America with the assistance of sympathetic authoritarian regimes and states where it believes cooperation is achievable. Tehran views United States engagement in the region as a “foreign occupation” and parallels it to its own strife with the West as a commonality and avenue for shared opposition to the United States influence.⁴³ Iran has also increasingly developed criminal networks in Latin America in an attempt to kill or kidnap enemies of the regime, including Israeli citizens.

Although the theocratic regime works primarily with Venezuela on the diplomatic and military front to provide drones and warships to Caracas, it also has expanded security cooperation with Bolivia. Iran has provided drones and river boats to Bolivia, and it has assisted Bolivia with cybersecurity matters and participated in combined military training exercises.⁴⁴ Iran has expanded overtures to Brazil, and in January 2024 joined BRICS. In 2023, Brazil was the only country in the region to permit Iran’s 86th Surface Action Group to make a port call, allowing the vessels to stay for a week before continuing its 8-month mission to circumnavigate the globe.

Iranian partner Lebanese Hizballah (LH) has had a presence in Latin America since the 1980’s. The group has plotted attacks against targets in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, and Peru. LH launders money, extorts local populations, and profits from drug trafficking, primarily in the tri-border area between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. These illicit activities threaten regional stability and raise millions of dollars for the terrorist organization to plan attacks worldwide.

Regional Humanitarian Crises

Irregular Migration. Regional instability has fueled unprecedented levels of irregular migration throughout LAC and placed significant political, economic, and social burdens on our Partners throughout the region. This humanitarian crisis is the result of numerous factors including TCO violence, lack of economic opportunity, extreme weather events, and food shortages. TCOs are taking advantage of migrants, engaging in migrant smuggling, human trafficking, extortion, and other criminal activities. The Venezuela-based *Tren de Aragua* organization is one such group and its abhorrent operations pose a significant threat to the region and have expanded its reach beyond the treacherous routes taken by migrants and into the United States.

During fiscal year 2024, 374,409 migrants trekked through Panama’s dangerous Darien region enroute to the United States in the same year, with over 247,000 originating from Venezuela.⁴⁵ The large numbers of migrants transiting the region strains our Partner Nations’ resources and creates new challenges for countries already grappling with economic development and security issues.

Haiti. Security underlies governance and is the foundation for the broad investment in the youth, education, and strategic economic development that Haiti desperately needs to achieve its potential.⁴⁶ Endemic corruption and violent criminal gangs have left the country at a “dire crossroads.”⁴⁷ More than 700,000 Haitians

⁴³ Citrinowicz, D. (2024). Iran in Latin America. Institute for National Strategic Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/iran-south-america/>.

⁴⁴ (Citrinowicz, 2024).

⁴⁵ Online Data base; Panama National Migration Service; 2023; TRÁNSITO IRREGULAR POR DARIEN; <https://www.migracion.gob.pa/estadisticas/>.

⁴⁶ Michon, X. (2024). Despite a Grim Today, Prosperity Is Still Possible in Haiti. Americas Quarterly. Retrieved from <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/despite-a-grim-today-prosperity-is-still-possible-in-haiti/>.

⁴⁷ Amid Rising Violence in Haiti, Security Council Urges States to Bolster Funding for Security Support Mission. (2024). United Nations. Retrieved from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15908.doc.htm>.

have been displaced since at least 2021.⁴⁸ Gangs control nearly 85 percent of Port-au-Prince, and their presence and influence is growing, as they are “spreading terror and fear, committing murders, kidnappings and sexual violence of unprecedented brutality in the affected regions.”⁴⁹ Children “account for 30 to 50 percent of armed group members ... [and are being] used as informants, cooks, and sex slaves ... [in addition to being] forced to perpetrate armed violence themselves.”⁵⁰

The United Nations (UN) authorized Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission, and a potential future UN Peacekeeping Operation (PKO), represent options for a continued role for the international community in seeking to bring stability to the island nation. While USSOUTHCOM is providing logistical support to the MSS, as of January, our Partner Nations in Kenya, the Bahamas, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Jamaica have sourced a ground force of approximately 1,000 personnel to assist the Haitian National Police (HNP) in countering the pervasive gang violence. But more must be done. The HNP is “outgunned and outnumbered.”⁵¹ A transition to a UN PKO or UN support office are options that could enable the operation of a multinational force in a size and scale necessary to bring stability.⁵² Nevertheless, China and Russia have disregarded support from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of American States, and Haiti for the transition of the MSS into a UN PKO.^{53 54}

Our Strategic Competitors are capitalizing on instability in the Western Hemisphere and are using all tools at their disposal to do so. Security on the island must be restored to set conditions for vital governance and economic reforms, thus incentivizing educational, technological, and infrastructure investment. USSOUTHCOM continues to work with allies, partners, and the Department of State on related initiatives that aim to alleviate suffering, create sustainable development, and build toward a more resilient, democratic, and prosperous future.

Venezuela. Venezuela exemplifies the devastating effects and consequences of authoritarian rule. The authoritarian Nicolas Maduro and his regime are engaged in narcoterrorism, corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering, human rights abuses, and other nefarious activities, which have contributed to the destabilization of Venezuela.⁵⁵ Ruthless repression and widespread inability to access life-sustaining necessities have resulted in an exodus of more than 7.7 million Venezuelan citizens.⁵⁶ TCOs and gangs have taken advantage of this crisis to expand their operations, while Maduro’s representatives increasingly embraces drug trafficking and other illicit activity for personal enrichment while the Venezuelan people suffer. Under Maduro, Venezuela has become a major cocaine and arms trafficking hub, “transform[ing] the country into a destabilizing force in the Western Hemisphere.”⁵⁷

Maduro’s fraudulent election in July 2024 and the subsequent detentions, disappearances, and reprisals against the Venezuelan population have been met with international condemnation.⁵⁸ Anti-democratic practices and authoritarian ideology

⁴⁸ International Organization for Migration. (2024). Over 700,000 Displaced in Haiti, Half Are Children, as Humanitarian Crisis Worsens. Retrieved from <https://www.iom.int/news/over-700000-displaced-haiti-half-are-children-humanitarian-crisis-worsens>.

⁴⁹ United Nations. Press Release. (2024). Rising Displacement, Criminal Gangs and Corruption Continue to Plague Haitian Life, Slowing Democratic Reform, Speakers Tell Security Council. Retrieved from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15859.doc.htm>.

⁵⁰ (United Nations, 2024).

⁵¹ Lederer, E. M. (2024). U.N. to Send Kenya Police Force to Haiti to Fight Gangs. AP News. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/article/un-haiti-gangs-kenya-force-peacekeeping-violence-d9ebd4a6a809d080511009b39b1b1ac>.

⁵² (Lederer, 2024).

⁵³ (Lederer, 2024).

⁵⁴ United Nations. Press Release. (2024). Amid Rising Violence in Haiti, Security Council Urges States to Bolster Funding for Security Support Mission, Transfer to U.N. Peacekeeping Mission, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” November 20, 2024. <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15908.doc.htm>.

⁵⁵ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2020). 15 Current, Former Venezuelan Officials Charged with Narco-terrorism, Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Criminal Charges. Retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/15-current-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism-corruption-drug>.

⁵⁶ Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela. (2024). Refugee and Migrant Response. Retrieved from <https://www.r4v.info/en/refugeeandmigrants>.

⁵⁷ Young, B.R. (2024). It’s Time to Designate Venezuela as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. Rand Corporation. Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/08/its-time-to-designate-venezuela-as-a-state-sponsor.html>.

⁵⁸ United States Department of State. (2025). Condemning Nicolas Maduro’s Illegitimate Attempt to Seize Power in Venezuela and Announcing New Actions Against Maduro and his Representatives and to Support the Venezuelan People. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/of-fice-of-the-spokesperson/releases/2025/01/condemning-nicolas-maduros-illegitimate-attempt-to->

unite this illegitimate regime with our Strategic Competitors and like-minded states across the globe. The backing of malign State actors may embolden Maduro to escalate propaganda and saber rattling related to his claim to Guyana's Essequibo region. The United States, alongside our Allies and Partners in the region, remain vigilant. We maintain a united front in the face of these acts of unwarranted aggression and reject the oppressive and illegal tactics of the Maduro regime.

Cuba. Instead of addressing the ongoing humanitarian crises, the Diaz-Canel regime is strengthening ties with our Strategic Competitors and adversaries. Cuba's malign actions undercut democratic values, encourage irregular migration, and threaten the sovereignty and safety of our Allies, Partners, and the United States. By the Cuban regime's own statistics, more than one million Cubans fled the country between 2022 and 2023, creating a further strain at the United States Southwest border.⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ The long-suffering populace does not have sufficient access to medicine, food, and essential services such as fuel and electricity.⁶¹ While the Cuban military-owned companies invest in empty high-rise hotels and retain billions of dollars in bank accounts, its antiquated energy infrastructure struggles to meet even half of Cubans energy demands, resulting in frequent electrical blackouts, especially outside the capital.

China is poised to capitalize upon its diplomatic, economic, and military initiatives with Cuba's support. Cuba has advocated at the UN "in support of China's counter-terrorism and deradicalization measures in Xinjiang," served as an important trade partner by selling Cuban zinc and nickel to China, and signed on to the BRI, receiving Huawei, TP-Link, and ZTE-built telecommunications infrastructure used to spy on its population and discourage political dissent.⁶² Cuba also serves as a proximate location for intelligence gathering and force projection by our adversaries. USSOUTHCOM prioritizes monitoring and assessing the malign activities of this regime just 90 miles from our Homeland.

Nicaragua. Democratic, political, religious, and personal freedoms are all under attack from the repressive Ortega-Murillo regime. Human rights violations, crack downs on dissent, property seizure from, and incarceration of, political opponents are all hallmarks of President Daniel Ortega's and Co-President and First Lady Rosario Murillo's governance.⁶³ Initiated in November 2024 and ratified in January 2025, the Ortega-Murillo regime ushered in 100 constitutional amendments to hasten the demise of the Nicaraguan democratic republic, including naming the two leaders co-presidents and extending their term to 6 years.⁶⁴ Nicaragua is expanding ties with authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia, and Iran. A signatory to the BRI and a new free trade agreement, Nicaragua is developing plans with a Chinese SOE to build a massive solar power plant in El Hato, further cementing their "strategic partnership."⁶⁵ Nicaragua also hosts Russian troops and aims to strengthen military cooperation with Iran.

LEVERS: OVERCOMING THREATS AND CHALLENGES IN THE AOR

The threats and challenges within the Western Hemisphere have global implications. For instance, Chinese access, presence, and influence across the region and at strategic chokepoints such as the Panama Canal imperil the United States's ability to rapidly respond in the Indo-Pacific should a crisis unfold. The key to over-

seize-power-in-venezuela-and-announcing-new-actions-against-maduro-and-his-representatives-and-to-support-the-venezuelan-people.

⁵⁹Torres, N.G. (2022). Cuba Protests Point to Growing Discontent with Communist Government. The Miami Herald. Retrieved from <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article290249799.html>.

⁶⁰LeoGrande, W.M. (2024). Blackouts and Humanitarian Crisis in Cuba: Why the United States Should Help. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/10/22/cuba-united-states-electrical-grid-outage-humanitarian-crisis-migration/>.

⁶¹LeoGrande, W.M. (2024). Cuba's Humanitarian Crisis is a United States Problem Too. Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/10/22/cuba-united-states-electrical-grid-outage-humanitarian-crisis-migration/>.

⁶²MacDonald, Scott B. (2024). Cuba Emerges as Flashpoint Amid United States-China Rivalry. East Asia Forum. Retrieved from <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/08/24/cuba-emerges-as-flashpoint-amid-us-china-rivalry/>.

⁶³Selser, G. (2024). Nicaragua Strips Citizenship from 135 Prisoners Released to Guatemala. Associated Press. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/article/nicaragua-daniel-ortega-citizenship-political-prisoners-expropriation-c37c6e65cc4c6c97596d37d77709de68>.

⁶⁴United Nations. (2024). Nicaragua: U.N. Group of Experts Alarmed by Far-reaching Change to the Constitution. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/nicaragua-un-group-experts-alarmed-far-reaching-change-constitution>.

⁶⁵The Tico Times. (2024). China to Build Massive Solar Power Plant in Nicaragua. Retrieved from <https://ticotimes.net/2024/04/30/china-to-build-massive-solar-power-plant-in-nicaragua>.

coming the challenges of our Strategic Competitors and host of adversaries is *partnership*.

Partnership goes beyond traditional bilateral relations. It means leveraging the talents and equities of our broad coalition of allies, partners, and U.S. Interagency, as well as non-governmental, private sector, and academic organizations, to meet our Partner's needs and create the conditions for enduring prosperity in the Americas. SOUTHCOM will continue to collaborate across the whole-of-government in the use of all instruments of national power—diplomacy, information sharing, military engagement, and economic cooperation—in all domains, to maintain and strengthen the partnerships which form an advantage unmatched by our Strategic Competitors.

Each day USSOUTHCOM is taking action to strengthen partnerships and counter threats by being engaged, credible, and present in the region. We devote precious resources to Security Cooperation and Department of State Security Assistance to build interoperability and the capabilities of our Partners. Additionally, initiatives like the *Framework for Western Hemisphere Allied Collaboration* (F-WHAC) are synchronizing and coordinating Allied efforts to improve regional stability and align strategic goals. These initiatives, among many others, highlight USSOUTHCOM's relentless effort to forge trust, the foundation of partnership.

Strengthening Partnership and Countering Threats

Security Cooperation and Security Assistance. Security Cooperation and Department of State Security Assistance are USSOUTHCOM's main levers that enable us to strengthen partnerships. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our Partners to build their capacity and capability. Congress plays a vital role in providing the funding for Partner Nation military equipment, training, and professionalization efforts that cultivate interoperability and enhance combined operations to outcompete Strategic Competitors and defeat our common threats.

In fiscal year 2024, we executed 1,125 Security Cooperation activities and another 1,171 are planned for fiscal year 2025. Our commitment to hemispheric security is highlighted by fiscal year 2024 efforts to meet our partner nation equipping needs. Our \$35 million program to enhance Peru's maritime domain awareness is on track and we are currently building Peruvian capacity to receive the delivery of one of two maritime patrol aircraft in 2025. This investment will greatly enhance their maritime domain awareness to help protect the Global Commons in the region.

Additionally, we coordinated with the United States Interagency to train and equip the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Security with a critical shipping container scanner capability to counter illicit trafficking. This \$16 million investment is projected to be operational by early 2025. Additionally, we have invested \$13 million in the modernization of Ecuadorian Air Force surveillance radars to enhance their air domain awareness and expand their capacity to feed raw data to our regional operational picture through Joint Interagency Task Force—South (JIATF-S).

Likewise, Security Assistance is imperative to meet the needs of our Partners at the speed of relevance. Through Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, and Excess Defense Articles programs we are better posturing our Partners to combat the malign activities of those who seek to destabilize region, while also providing United States and western alternatives to China. This past year, Security Assistance played a vital role in Argentina's acquisition of 24 F-16s from Denmark, with the approval of a \$941 million sustainment package from the United States. This investment not only ensures the procurement is properly maintained and equipped, but also proved essential in preventing China from further embedding itself in the military apparatus of a key Partner. Similarly, in November 2024, Brazil announced the acquisition of 12 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. This \$950 million deal provides our Brazilian partners with a proven system to counter TCOs and deliver disaster assistance to their people. Security Cooperation and Security Assistance funding provides ongoing opportunities for lasting United States' presence and demonstrates the benefits of western alignment. Ongoing congressional support for these programs is indispensable to creating conditions for long-term stability in the Western Hemisphere that makes the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Additionally, USSOUTHCOM's International Military Education and Training (IMET) program spans 27 countries and serves as a catalyst for fostering strategic relationships that promote U.S. security interests, enhance Partner Nations' self-defense capabilities, and facilitate seamless collaboration in multinational operations. Fiscal year 2024 saw investment in the professional development of 630 international military leaders and another 600 projected in fiscal year 2025. IMET enables the growth of a global network of like-minded partners, ultimately contributing to increased access and cooperation during peacetime and contingency operations. The outcomes of IMET also facilitate higher levels of interoperability with

U.S. forces, as evidenced by enhanced performance during joint training exercises, key leader engagements, and other collaborative activities. As a result, participating nations and the United States achieve a heightened state of strategic readiness, better equipping them to address shared security challenges and respond to emerging threats.

Joint Exercise Program. USSOUTHCOM is building robust interoperability, capacity, and readiness with Allies and Partners under our Joint Exercise Program. During fiscal year 2024, USSOUTHCOM successfully executed eight joint exercises in seven different countries touching the Southern Cone, Andean Ridge, Central America, and the Caribbean. With over 10,000 participants from 38 countries, these joint exercises enhanced our collective resolve to counter malign influence, protect the global commons, and promote stability across all domains.

The \$54 million that support our Joint Exercise Program are critical to building our readiness and strengthening the partnerships that enable USSOUTHCOM to achieve our Campaign Plan Objectives. Over the course of 2024 we executed four exercises in support of the United States European Command-led Large Scale Global Exercise. These events included CENTAM GUARDIAN in Honduras and Costa Rica, TRADEWINDS in Barbados, RESOLUTE SENTINEL in Peru, and FUERZAS COMANDO in Panama. These four exercises showcased our ability to work with 29 Partner Nations from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean and included the United States Interagency and Allies from North America and Europe. These opportunities to exercise as a team demonstrated a comprehensive approach to training that reinforced our unrivaled commitment to this region.

Our remaining exercises included FUSED RESPONSE in Colombia, PANAMAX at the USSOUTHCOM headquarters, PANAMAX ALPHA Phase II in Panama, and UNITAS hosted in Chile. These exercises were a combination of staff crisis response training and field training exercises that not only prepared the USSOUTHCOM Enterprise for contingency response, but also enabled U.S. access, presence, and influence across the entire region.

UNITAS enabled over 4,300 participants from 24 Allied and Partner Nations to train in a complex multi-domain environment and was a fitting culminating event for fiscal year 2024. The operations conducted in the Southern Cone demonstrated that the United States, our allies, and partners can rapidly deploy, integrate, and sustain combat operations against peer and near peer competitors.

Humanitarian Assistance. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HA/DR) operations, activities, and investments are a critical component of USSOUTHCOM's strategy to assist our partners during both steady-state and crisis. We meet the needs of civilian populations, increase governmental legitimacy, strengthen partnerships, and cultivate trust across a network of Allies, Partners, U.S. Interagency, and non-governmental and private organizations.

Since 2021, USSOUTHCOM has delivered \$985 million-worth of top-quality humanitarian assistance projects to address the basic needs of the civil populace while simultaneously building Partner Nation capacity. This includes an investment of \$4.8 million in building partner health through the donation of 27 containerized clinics with general practice, surgical, maternity, and dental capabilities to six countries in LAC. Last year, USSOUTHCOM enhanced Colombia's ability to meet humanitarian needs and responded in the aftermath of natural disasters by donating 10 mobile bridges representing a value of \$11.9 million—the largest humanitarian assistance project in USSOUTHCOM's history.

Additionally, our commitment to humanitarian assistance extends to planned and executed operations such as CONTINUING PROMISE and the Lesser Antilles Medical Assistance Team (LAMAT). During the 59-day Continuing Promise mission this past year, the USNS *Burlington* sailed to Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Jamaica, and Panama, where the team aboard supported the delivery of vital healthcare services to 21,222 medical patients, repaired \$1.6 million of medical equipment, and treated 1,925 animals. The mission also conducted numerous HA/DR seminars, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, delivered 35 pallets of medical and disaster supplies donated by non-Federal entities to the Jamaican Ministry of Health and Jamaica's Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management.

Likewise, LAMAT 2024 deployed to four locations in the Caribbean (Suriname, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts and Nevis) during the 43-day mission that brought \$3.57 million of health services support by treating 3,573 patients and conducting 6,126 procedures. Today, planning for Continuing Promise 2025 and LAMAT 2025 are underway.

Humanitarian Assistance is an essential soft power tool that engenders goodwill. In future conflict or crisis, the goodwill and trust of our Partners will be of paramount importance. We recognize that similar advances by our Strategic Competitors aim to displace our standing as the most trusted partner. Accordingly, we must con-

tinue to invest in building regional capability and capacity to reduce, mitigate, and overcome the inherent risks encountered in our shared neighborhood. Doing so will enhance the security, stability, and resiliency of us all.

Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative. USSOUTHCOM's Theater Maintenance Partnership Initiative (TMPI) has sustained momentum teaching and building a culture of maintenance readiness with our Partners. This 7-year program fortifies existing Partner Nation tactical and operational level maintenance programs through educational exchanges and the development of nine TMPI Centers of Excellence throughout the region. TMPI is a paradigm shift in maintenance culture and is significantly enhancing the readiness, interoperability, and professionalism of our Partners, while paving the way for future export of logistics maintenance capability. In fiscal year 2025, we are moving toward initial operating capability in both Colombia and Jamaica. Colombia will host a Rotary Aviation and Communications Electronics Center of Excellence as well as a Multinational Logistics Officers Course at its war college. Jamaica will host an all-domain Anglophone Center of Excellence with initial focus on air and maritime challenges common to Caribbean states. Jamaica will also hold a Multinational Logistics Officer Course. These Centers of Excellence are being outfitted with the tools, kits, training aids, and the formation of Technical Assistance Field Teams which will further their capability, readiness, and professionalization.

As we look forward to fiscal year 2026, Chile will focus on the air domain with C-130 cargo aircraft, Ecuador's attention on the ground domain, Paraguay with Riverine vessels, and Panama centering on maritime domain and surface patrol craft such as the Near Coastal Patrol Vessel and interceptor vessels that are critical to patrol and interdiction. Assessment and socialization visits have already been completed with our final two planned partners, Argentina and Peru.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The efforts of the dedicated men and women of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are facilitating partnership, building key infrastructure, and increasing the capacity of our Partners throughout the hemisphere. USACE activities remain constant in 17 of our Partner Nations. In addition to larger construction projects at Fort Tolemaida in Colombia and the Port of Callao in Peru, their agreement with the Panama Canal Authority is contributing to a tremendous effort that is developing the preliminary designs to ensure the canal operates openly and successfully for the next 50 years. Ongoing humanitarian assistance projects in Belize and Guatemala, military construction in Honduras, projects in support of exercises in Guyana, and the Corps' growing technical support in Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Dominica, all illustrate examples of their contributions to building the team and partner capacity. However, their efforts in water security may yield the largest effects long-term, as they contribute directly to community wellness and local economies. Overall, in a financially transparent manner, USACE is executing projects with partners having complex engineering challenges and providing an environmentally conscious and more technically sound alternative to China. Our projects regularly incorporate allies and the U.S. Interagency, while working to select contractors internal to that country or region. These efforts increase our regional competitiveness and actively increase the momentum of USSOUTHCOM's theater strategy.

National Guard State Partnership Program. USSOUTHCOM and our Partner Nations continue to succeed together through the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP). These 24 State Partnerships with 30 Partner Nations are critical to increasing Partner Nation security capacity and developing the resilient teams required to take on the threats and challenges in our shared neighborhood. Teamwork made the 316 events completed in fiscal year 2024 a reality with SPP delivering an engaged and credible presence throughout the region. Approximately 30 percent of USSOUTHCOM's fiscal year 2024 operations, activities, and investments were supported by the SPP. With another 311 engagements planned thus far for fiscal year 2025, SPP is building interoperability and serving as a vital link to the region's security forces and civil entities. Our continued investment and participation in the SPP sustain these long-term relationships and creates enduring opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with our Partners. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to meeting their needs and build the trust that is essential to outcompeting our adversaries.

Countering TCOs. Drug trafficking and the illicit activities of TCOs in the region remain a complex threat, not only to our Partners, but to our Homeland. In coordination with our Allies, Partners, and the U.S. Interagency, USSOUTHCOM is confronting this menace head-on. JIATF-S continues to lead the way in disrupting illicit drug flow with our Allies and Partners, who participated in 80 percent of interdiction efforts. Last year, they successfully disrupted 302 narcotics shipments, in-

cluding the interdiction of over 328 metric tons of cocaine and 67 metric tons of marijuana with a wholesale value at \$8.4 billion.

In the Caribbean, Operation BUFALO NK, a collaborative effort between USSOUTHCOM, JIATF-S, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Dominican Republic, exemplified the benefits of cooperation in combatting drug trafficking and money laundering. The operation, which targeted a criminal organization with extensive international connections to Colombia, Venezuela, the United States, and Europe, resulted in the seizure of over two metric tons of cocaine headed to the United States with 28 persons arrested, including TCO leadership.

While JIATF-S will continue to maximize the CN resources received, CN surge operations in 2020 demonstrated that with more, we can do more, and help secure our seas and borders, dismantle the drug cartels responsible for the death of thousands of Americans, and send a clear message to our adversaries and our partners. Fiscal year 2020 saw 3,584 U.S. Ship Days resulting in 572 persons detained for U.S. prosecution, while in fiscal year 2024, U.S. Ship Days reduced to 1,542 and only 252 persons were detained for U.S. prosecution. Increased resourcing directly increases our ability to advance investigations, support indictments, dismantle networks, and recharge the intelligence cycle. Should resources become available, we will seek to replicate the successes of 2020's CN operations. We are also examining the long-term sustainment of our Pale Ale aircraft and identifying non-traditional ISR capabilities that could help mitigate shortfalls in the D&M mission.

Thanks to the support from Congress, the Ship Special Mission (SSM) is a significant asset in the fight against TCOs. During Operation PULPO from 21 May to 9 June 2024, the SSM enabled Ecuadorian surface assets to conduct combined counter drug operations off their west coast and disrupt narco-traffickers transiting the area. Over 9.168 metric tons of cocaine was disrupted, along with the interdiction of four vessels, and detainment of 12 individuals.

Additionally, our Partners are taking a leading role in addressing the illicit synthetic drug threat. Argentina is working to establish a regional center for information sharing and cooperation to counter illicit synthetic drugs and to divert precursor chemicals. Likewise, the Dominican Republic has committed to leading the Caribbean in formulating coordinated strategies to counter the production and trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs, including fentanyl.

Counternarcotics (CN) assets are the principal way USSOUTHCOM projects force and maintains a visible presence to assure our Partners and deter our adversaries. Since 2020, we have seen a steady decline in available resources to support the CN mission because of competing global requirements. Thanks to support from Congress, assets like SSM and PALE ALE aircraft are essential detection and monitoring assets that keep illicit drugs far from our shores. However, the fact remains that JIATF-S suspects more than 3,200 maritime movements of illicit narcotics were bound for the United States last year but was only able to act on a fraction—9 percent—of that number.

USSOUTHCOM as an Innovation Hub. As strategic competition within our AOR creates global challenges, innovative solutions are essential to address these threats. USSOUTHCOM continues to position the region as a hub for innovation, supported by the favorable environment fostered through our partnerships with the nations and territories of LAC. The region's proximity to the United States, coupled with its geography, provides an ideal setting for demonstrating new technologies through experimentation, evaluation, operational adaptation, and the refinement of Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. Additionally, joint exercises and military utility assignments further enhance our capabilities in this dynamic landscape.

Following the initial success of integrating air, surface, and subsurface robotic systems into the international exercise UNITAS 24, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command (USNAVSOUTH/4th Fleet) has continued to explore these technologies through both short, targeted tests and extended operational trials. USNAVSOUTH/U.S. 4th Fleet is operationalizing robotic autonomous systems in support of the United States Navy. During 2024's Hybrid Fleet Campaign Event, USNAVSOUTH/U.S. 4th Fleet combined manned and unmanned systems and Artificial Intelligence tools to bolster maritime domain awareness, counter narcotics flow, and counter illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU Fishing), while demonstrating these capabilities to our Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Peruvian partners.

We are assessing the integration of robotic systems into JIATF-S' detection & monitoring (D&M) operations out of Cooperative Security Location Comalapa. As the Navy seeks to inform its hybrid fleet of the 2030's, USSOUTHCOM will seek "win-win" opportunities that support this effort while enabling D&M and interdiction operations.

Operationalizing Data to Enhance Decision-Making and Partnerships. Data is a strategic asset. Decisions should be augmented with rigorous analysis based on

high-quality data. USSOUTHCOM is working diligently to harness the power of our data to drive operations, planning, and engagements. Our ability to operationalize data is critical to our success, and we are committed to leveraging cutting-edge techniques to enable us, our allies and partners to rapidly respond to challenges and actively counter threats posed by our adversaries.

Our Enhanced Domain Awareness (EDA) initiative is a prime example of how we are applying data analytics and artificial intelligence to better understand our operating environment. By integrating data from various sources, we are able to gain a more complete picture of the situation and make more informed decisions. By leveraging our EDA system, we are facilitating coordination between partner nations on a common platform. This enables the secure sharing and collaboration of information in near real-time, which is critical to enabling multi-domain operations.⁶⁶

However, operationalizing data is not without its challenges. It requires a unique blend of talent, skills, and experience, as well as access to cutting-edge computing capabilities. It also requires support from our Allies and Partners, and a commitment to investing in the right people, processes, and technologies. As we move forward, we will continue to push the boundaries of what is possible with data. We will work to attract and retain the best talent, invest in the latest technologies, and build partnerships that will help us stay ahead of the curve. By operationalizing our data and enhancing our partnerships, we are not only enhancing our own operations, but also contributing to a broader effort to build a more secure, stable, and prosperous region.

Space Domain Awareness: A Critical Component of Global Security. Space domain awareness is critical to maintaining global security and advancing the capabilities of Partner Nations. The establishment of United States Space Forces—Southern at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, this year, is a testament to our commitment to this principle. Moreover, we continue to integrate the space domain throughout our Joint Exercise Program, exemplified by Exercise RESOLUTE SENTINEL 2024, where we gathered with our Allies to conduct space domain awareness training and collaborate on space operations.⁶⁷ The exercise demonstrated the importance of space domain awareness in providing essential near real-time information to troops on the ground.

Our teams worked tirelessly to track satellite launches, operations, and maneuvers, and to understand the overall space picture. This awareness is critical to responding to nefarious actions that may impact satellites and missions. By leveraging commercial capabilities and fostering open communication, we are enhancing interoperability and strengthening partnerships among emerging space powers.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing. IUU Fishing is a pervasive menace which poses a threat beyond simply destroying the diverse ecosystems of our Partners. Aside from threatening food security, harming legitimate commercial fishers, and undermining fisheries management, it contributes to migrant smuggling, labor exploitation, and facilitates the illegal proliferation of drugs, weapons, and wildlife.⁶⁸ Distant-water fishing fleets, primarily from China, travel to the pristine waters of LAC to extract precious resources. However, this practice is becoming more localized and constant.⁶⁹ Our Partner Nation Coast Guards and Navies are increasingly monitoring and interdicting domestic vessels engaged in IUU Fishing, as was the case in January 2024 when a Colombian vessel was stopped for its illegal taking of 1.2 tons of clams from the Magdalena River.⁷⁰ IUU Fishing results in the annual loss of approximately \$6 billion in the region and \$36 billion globally.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Reed-Cox, S. (2023). U.S. Army South, U.S. Southern Command Spearhead Intelligence Subject Matter Expert Exchange in El Salvador. DVIDS. Retrieved from <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/477097/us-army-south-us-southern-command-spearhead-intelligence-subject-matter-expert-exchange-el-salvador>.

⁶⁷ Sebastianelli, C. (2024). RS24 Enhances Global Space Domain Awareness with Partner Nations. SOUTHCOM Press Release. Retrieved from <https://www.southcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/Article/3802887/rs24-enhances-global-space-domain-awareness-with-partner-nations/>.

⁶⁸ Keating-Bitonti, C., & Marshak, A. R. (2024). Latin America and the Caribbean: Facts and Figures. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R48215>.

⁶⁹ Sanchez, W.A. (2024). How Latin America Navies Combat Illegal, Unreported, or Unregulated Fishing. Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-latin-american-navies-combat-illegal-unreported-or-unregulated-fishing>.

⁷⁰ (Sanchez, 2024).

⁷¹ The Economist. (2023). South American Governments Are Trying to Curb Illegal Fishing". Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2023/10/05/south-american-governments-are-trying-to-curb-illegal-fishing>.

IUU Fishing's lucrative nature and operational limitations to combat it means that it is likely to expand. This provides the United States with an opportunity to lead and demonstrate our commitment to democratic values and supporting the territorial sovereignty of our Partners. We can do so by assisting our Partners in the acquisition and maintenance of offshore patrol vessels and working side-by-side to develop and implement innovative technology such as unmanned aerial vessels, unmanned surface vessels, and the Enhanced Domain Awareness program to better understand the size and location of these fleets.⁷² Moreover, we can augment our Partner Nations' efforts by expanding "shiprider" agreements and supporting United States Coast Guard counter IUU Fishing operations in concert with Partners, as we successfully did off the coast of Peru during last year's Operation Southern Shield.⁷³

Competing in the Information Space: In the face of adversarial attacks that inundate the information domain with falsehoods and disinformation, USSOUTHCOM takes a proactive approach to disseminating and promoting facts. We are committed to expanding coordination with Allies, Partners, and the U.S. Interagency to showcase the positive impacts of U.S.-led initiatives in the region, while countering the malign narratives and exposing the nefarious activities of our Strategic Competitors and other adversaries. USSOUTHCOM's media platform, *Dialogo Americas*, exposes the predatory economic practices, environmental degradation, and political and military interference of China, Russia, and Iran, while promoting transparency and the benefits of regional cooperation to reinforce common interests and counter common threats.

Cyber. The cyber domain continues to grow in importance to modern life. It has reshaped how individuals, organizations, and governments interact with one another. Communication, economics, healthcare, technology, governance, and national security are just a few of the areas vulnerable to and being disrupted by malicious cyber activities. Its consequences endanger the democratic values and freedoms that form the foundation of our societies. In LAC, China, Russia, and Iran and their proxies deploy cyber espionage and information operations to gather intelligence and persuade audiences to support their interests. Cyber threat intelligence demonstrates that financially motivated actors are pursuing various schemes throughout the region, including the rising use of ransomware to incorporate data theft and extortion into their operations.

USSOUTHCOM is committed to assisting our Allies and Partners to counter the growing threat and build resiliency in the face of cybercrime. Our Joint Combatant Command Cyber Assistance Teams and Defend Forward Operations are making a difference by providing our Partners with the capability and equipment necessary to prepare, defend, mitigate, and recover from malicious cyberattacks. Another notable example is our joint cyber security review with the government of Paraguay, which identified a Chinese-based cyber espionage group, *Flax Typhoon*, infiltrating Paraguayan government systems. This successful collaboration demonstrates the importance of working together to strengthen our cyber defenses and protect critical infrastructure. We continue to invest in developing strategies and best practices with our Partners through successive engagements and symposiums, including last December's Caribbean Nations Security Conference in Trinidad and Tobago.

Economic Cooperation. Economic cooperation plays a crucial role in supporting state sovereignty and democracy in Latin America by creating opportunity for prosperity. To that end, we must double-down on a collaborative approach that improves the region's access to economic development, foreign direct investment, and access to international financing.⁷⁴ Our Partners are asking for our help and if we truly wish to compete, we must deliver. USSOUTHCOM is not the lead Federal agency for economic engagement, but by furthering our communication and collaboration with institutions and agencies like the International Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIM), and the Development Finance Corporation, we can attract Western-based private investment and provide financing solutions for our Partners' critical infrastructure projects and other initiatives that are untethered from expectations of *quid-pro-quo* support of anti-democratic measures or political fealty. One such example of this wider coordination is EXIM's recent memorandum of understanding to loan up to \$500 million

⁷²(Sanchez, 2024).

⁷³U.S. Coast Guard District 11. (2023). Coast Guard Cutter Crews Conduct First High Seas Boardings Off the Coast of Peru, Under New SPRFMO Measure. Retrieved from <https://www.southcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/Article/3562470/coast-guard-cutter-crews-conduct-first-high-seas-boardings-off-the-coast-of-per/>.

⁷⁴Alvarado, P. D. (2024). Huawei's Expansion in Latin America and the Caribbean: Views from the Region. United States Institute of Peace, 17. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/04/huaweis-expansion-latin-america-and-caribbean-views-region>.

to Trinidad and Tobago, financing priority projects, beginning with the enhancement of its maritime domain capability. This is the type of economic-based solution our Partners are looking for to enable economic opportunity, security, and stability in the region.

Moreover, it is incumbent upon us to better emphasize and advocate for the presence and investment of U.S. and western companies in LAC. These companies bring the benefits of transparency, fair labor practices, and the hiring and training of local residents, that our adversaries choose not to offer. By adhering to the rule of law and respect for human rights, U.S. and Western presence empower, rather than erode, our common democratic values.

BUILDING OUR TEAM

Every day is an opportunity to achieve greatness. At USSOUTHCOM, we achieve excellence in all we do through preparation and an ongoing investment to build our team. Alongside our Allies and Partners, each service member, civilian, and contractor is an integral link to our collective success. With empathy and compassion at the forefront, this command works tirelessly to develop talent, address challenges, and realize the promise of each team member. Together we are stronger and united in our common cause, to deliver upon our Enduring Promise to the Americas.

Housing and Cost of Living. Miami rose one spot since last year and is now the third most expensive place to live in the United States.⁷⁵ We appreciate the support of Congress for our privatized housing project, located across the street from the Headquarters, which will alleviate some of this stress by lodging more than 200 service members and their families. It remains on schedule, with completion anticipated between the summers of 2026 and 2027. Additionally, the increasingly high costs associated with local living negatively impacts USSOUTHCOM's ability to attract and retain top civilian talent. USSOUTHCOM continues collaboration with our local, State, and Federal leaders and agencies to address the difficult financial realities of working and residing in our South Florida community.

Total Force. USSOUTHCOM's investment in and utilization of Active Duty, Reserve, and the National Guard service members enables an enduring presence throughout the region that our competitors struggle to match. Reservists and National Guardsmen comprise 28 percent of the manpower at USSOUTHCOM's headquarters, making them integral to headquarters operations. In theater they are having an outsized impact, illustrated by USSOUTHCOM's Civil Affairs Persistent Engagement initiative. Composed of seven U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs elements and four Liaison Officers, they currently work hand-in-hand with United States Country Teams and our Partner Nations in Central America—with planned expansion in the Caribbean to build capacity and deliver Humanitarian Assistance at the point of need. Reserve and National Guard forces extend USSOUTHCOM's operational reach through its robust SPP and significant integration in the command's Joint Exercise Program. USSOUTHCOM's assigned Reservists also ensure critical surge capacity for largescale contingency operations should the need arise.

WHAT RESOURCES DOES USSOUTHCOM NEED?

USSOUTHCOM is on the frontlines of significant threats in our hemisphere that directly impact our safety at home. The Command leverages military capabilities and expertise in our region to provide the United States a strategic advantage in countering threats from wherever they arise, in whatever form they take. This region is one where a little goes a long way. This high return on investment presents an opportunity: while USSOUTHCOM has been executing the mission effectively in a resource-constrained environment for a number of years, with more we can do more. There are some key gaps that would help USSOUTHCOM be more effective in addressing these key threats in our hemisphere and in enabling like-minded partners to do the same.

Assets—Presence with Presence. TCOs create widespread instability and violence throughout the region that have forced millions to leave their home countries for the United States while costing American lives with their illicit drugs that flood our country. Over the past several years, USSOUTHCOM has seen a decline in available resources for the counterdrug mission due to competing global requirements. For example, there are zero Navy P-8 aircraft available due to being pulled to other theaters, and ships available in the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean are far below optimal presence to interdict most of the illicit drugs that endanger our citizens and enrich the TCOs. USSOUTHCOM has utilized innovative solutions to fill these

⁷⁵ U.S. News & World Report. (n.d.). Most Expensive Places to Live. Retrieved from <https://realestate.usnews.com/places/rankings/most-expensive-places-to-live>.

gaps, from contracting maritime patrol aircraft and vessels to utilizing U.S. Navy ships transiting the area to provide presence. Providing more assets toward the fight against TCOs will keep this threat further from our Homeland: preventing more illicit drugs from reaching our shores, targeting a major source of TCO revenue, and increasing gathered intelligence necessary to dismantle these organizations.

These efforts have produced results, but one thing is clear: with more we can do more. We must meet presence with presence. China, Russia, Iran, TCOs, and our Allies and Partners all recognize the value and power of presence. Simply put, we are better able to compete, foster diplomatic engagement, strengthen partnerships, and enable effective interdiction through robust and persistent presence.

Able Partners—Security Cooperation. Security Cooperation continues to be one of the primary means USSOUTHCOM uses to execute its mission. Through increasing our partner militaries' proficiency, we support our Partner Nations' efforts to provide for their own security, addressing potential threats further away from our borders. While Security Cooperation has been incredibly effective in building partner capacity, with more we can do more. Partner Nations have been participating in an increasing percentage of illicit drug interdictions—currently over 80 percent—serving as a key force multiplier. With more Security Cooperation resources, we can develop more lethal, more effective partners, build interoperability and provide for our collective regional security.

Advocacy—Sustained congressional Support. We appreciate Congress' continued support of USSOUTHCOM, our missions and our efforts. Congress' recognition of such requirements and support of our programs, particularly those that expand cooperation, share operational information, advance interoperability, and improve the capabilities of our Allies and Partners, has been a key ally to our efforts. Notably, the recent increase of congressional visits to the region has been an important signal to our partner nations. We welcome more delegation visits which provide important first-hand context to policy decisions while maintaining high-level American presence. With congressional delegations and support, USSOUTHCOM can more effectively execute the vital missions critical to keeping the United States safe.

CONCLUSION

The time is now. The decisions we make today will impact the future of the Western Hemisphere for generations. The current threats and challenges will not subside on their own; they demand collective attention and action. With our Allies and Partners by our side, USSOUTHCOM is ready to rise to the challenge. The Americas is a rich tapestry of opportunity, poised for growth and prosperity, but it is the power of partnership that will unlock the region's full potential. Bound by shared ground, shared values, and commitment to a shared purpose, we will achieve far more together than we could alone. United, we will achieve a freer and more secure future for all.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much for your testimony. Let's get restarted quickly. General Guillot, you can see from Senator Reed and me we're interested in the executive order to renew America's aging missile Defense architecture. So, I'll jump right in there.

So, how are we going to do this? What are the options? What are your top priorities with respect to upgrading our air and missile defenses? What role do you see space-based capabilities in this effort? And is our industrial base primed to execute this mission? So, what are your top priorities?

General GUILLOT. Chairman, the top priority in our efforts to meet the direction of the executive order is first and foremost, to establish increased domain awareness. As I mentioned in the opening comments, you can't defeat what you can't see, and the adversaries have an increasing capability of reaching us and threatening us from ranges beyond what some of our current systems can detect and track.

So, the first layer of any approach to defending the, the United States or North America from the NORAD perspective would be a sensor layer from seabed to space, of systems that can detect

threats from a further distance. Those are seabed, ground-based, air base, such as the E-7 and then space-based systems for detecting tracking and warning.

Inside of that, I think we build on our existing GBI [ground-based interceptors] and NGI [next generation interceptors] capabilities via ground-based interceptors and next generation interceptors to defeat intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Chairman WICKER. Let me interject on the sensor layer. How soon can we get there?

General GUILLOT. Chairman, some of those capabilities are right on the edge. Others are probably three to 5 years out, but I think within inside of a year, we could have a significant capability that could network those into a single sensor grid.

Chairman WICKER. All right, well then go ahead if you've got anything to say about space-based or our industrial base capabilities.

General GUILLOT. Chairman, cooperation with the industrial base is critical, so they can keep pace with not only our requirements, but those requirements are based on the capabilities of the adversaries, which are rapidly increasing. So, I can't emphasize enough the need to develop systems and move them left on the timeline to field them more quickly to achieve our goal.

Chairman WICKER. Okay, and again, the Ranking Member and I spoke about fentanyl deaths. The estimate I have is more than 225,000 Americans are estimated to have been killed because of fentanyl overdoses from 2021 to 2023. So, what progress are we making there? Who's to blame? I understand that we've been told in the past there are more Russian "Chief Intelligence Office" (GRU) spies operating in Mexico City than anywhere in the world. Is that true? What's NORTHCOM doing and needing to do?

General GUILLOT. Chairman, the fentanyl crisis is a significant concern to our command. We have a number of Intel analysts that work with the interagency and lead Federal agencies to provide intelligence that gets after the cartel networks that drive the production and distribution of fentanyl and pushes it across the border. Recently we've been permitted to increase our ISR, our intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) to——

Chairman WICKER. Permitted by Mexico?

General GUILLOT. No, by the Department, sir. But we do have intelligence sharing with Mexico to show them what we see. We have increased cooperation with Mexico to go address the cartel violence in terms of sending more troops——

Chairman WICKER. Because time is limited, we had 2022–2025 a 3-year space, are we making any progress now? Now it's 2025.

General GUILLOT. From our perspective——

Chairman WICKER. Has it gotten better?

General GUILLOT. No, I wouldn't say it's better, but I do think Chairman, that we have a better foundation now that we've increased the intelligence to make rapid progress against this threat.

Chairman WICKER. It definitely needs to get better. And so, tell us what you need and thank you for your efforts. You got 8 seconds.

[Laughter.]

General GUILLOT. More ISR is the first, and then expanded authorities would be required for more advise and assist types of operations between our forces and the tier one Mexican forces.

Chairman WICKER. We want to be your teammate there. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and General Guillot, following along in the questioning of the chairman with respect to the space-based systems and use, both for acquisition of targets and perhaps for contact with targets, you need to unfettered access to be expanded. Is that fair to say?

General GUILLOT. Senator, to properly employ all those systems, we would have to have uninterrupted and complete access to the entire spectrum.

Senator REED. As a result, the proposed spectrum options would complicate significantly your ability to carry out that mission?

General GUILLOT. Senator, compromising that part of the spectrum is a significant concern to me and the systems necessary for Homeland Defense.

Senator REED. Thank you, General, and General, also there's approximately 2,000 Active Duty personnel now down at the border, and there's always an opportunity cost, whatever you do. One of the opportunity costs obviously, is the readiness and training of these troops. Are you aware of what training is being missed, deferred or ignored because of this deployment?

General GUILLOT. Senator, first, all of the forces that come to us from the services are extremely well-trained, disciplined, and highly qualified. If they are conducting missions that are outside their normal specialty, we have a series of five work days, one training day, and then 1 day off each week.

In that training day we prescribe our leadership to make sure that the forces that are operating outside of their standard specialty have the opportunity to train and maintain some of those skills.

Some of the others, such as helicopter pilots, and some of the infantries are doing work that is already in line with theirs, and I think they maintain their readiness.

Senator REED. So, you know, in a rough metric, one out of 5 days, it's my math is terrible, I went to West Point. If so, now they're doing 20 percent of the training they would've done at home base.

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you. I didn't have the privilege of going to Navy or the Air Force, so I forgive my math. Admiral Holsey, can you give us a concise but detailed description of your role, SOUTHCOM's role at Guantanamo's Migrant Detention Center and the Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO)?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator. So, SOUTHCOM plans and postures has always over the years, to conduct migrant operations. In fact, one of our enduring missions is to plan for a mass migration scenario. Under the current situation, what we're doing is modifying our existing plan to be able to support the migrant ops at GTMO, the Naval station, and to provide safe and humane care in support of Department of Homeland Security.

Now, to be clear, there are two different sides of the base. One is the Naval station, both is Naval Station GTMO, but you have one which is the MOC, Migrant Operation Center where we're actually setting up tents and have JTF-GTMO on the other side of the island, which we have the war detainees.

Senator REED. Now have you estimated that you're going to incur DOD SOUTHCOM for your operations? You have to construct facilities for 30,000 individuals, which would include mess halls, which would include healthcare centers, sanitation provisions, et cetera. How much money is that going to cost us?

Admiral HOLSEY. So, right now, sir, we're in the initial phase of this process. It's a tailored approach to get to 30,000, if that is desired. Right now, where we stand, we're in initial phases, I guess some numbers to you, but right now we're still building out, we have forces on the ground and that process still in place, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you. Going back General Guillot to the concept of Iron Dome, unlike the Israelis, this is not a missile defense system. This is a system of systems and one of the most important aspects of the system; I think you've already alluded to is detection rather than interception. Is that fair?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I agree with you. The first and most critical part is the detection capability.

Senator REED. I met recently with the defense minister from Canada. They're very much interested in participating. They have legal obstacles, but they assume they can jump over them very much participating in the missile defense system, and their best contribution could come in what way, sir?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I welcome their participation. I think the first would be to buy into our domain awareness expansion, whether ground-based or space-based, and then further down the line, if they get defeat mechanisms, see how they would mesh with our existing defense mechanisms in a similar way that we employ fighter aircraft with NORAD. Perhaps we could do the same with missile defeat systems from the ground.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Ranking Member, perhaps that would be one way that Canada could begin to meet its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) requirement is as far as defense spending as a portion of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Let me ask both witnesses to move the microphones a little closer, and then I recognize Senator Fischer and then Senator Shaheen.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Admiral, thank you General for your service to this country. The work you do is extremely important. Thank you.

General, you're going to hear I think a lot about spectrum because here in the Senate we're discussing that and General, you were talking about, that many think that the Iron Dome for America is similar to what we see in Israel. It is not. What we're looking at, as you said, we can't defeat what we can't see, so we have to be able to increase domain awareness, and increasing domain awareness means that we need additional radars, terrestrial, airborne space base, underwater.

You hit that in your opening comments, I'm trying to hit it more here to make a point not just with the media, but with my colleagues as well. All of those systems depend on spectrum, the spectrum that the Department of Defense has. Is that true?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator. That's exactly correct.

Senator FISCHER. Can those systems function if there's a lot of noise, which means additional users close by in creating a lot of noise?

General GUILLOT. No, Senator, we have to have complete control of the spectrum to operate our systems effectively.

Senator FISCHER. Operating those systems effectively means protecting the Homeland. Correct?

General GUILLOT. Yes, ma'am. That's the purpose for, for all of our systems, it all centers on Homeland Defense.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. To move to a different topic General, you predicted during the posture hearing last year that Chinese and Russian aircraft, you said that they flew a mission into Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone. Do you assess that the United States will see more of this from China, whether it's aircraft or ships or submarines?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I do think that they'll increase their presence both independently as well as increase cooperation with the Russians in the air, in the maritime and under sea.

Senator FISCHER. In that cooperation with the Russians, what do you worry about the most?

General GUILLOT. What I worry about the most is that instead of just weapons and technology, that they will trade access, which would shorten our timelines to react to either country military capabilities.

Senator FISCHER. Are there any authorities or capabilities that NORTHCOM and NORAD would need in order to protect your AOR?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the most important capability we would need is the improved domain awareness to allow us to see at further ranges, as the military capabilities improve by the adversaries, we have to match that with our detection capability. At this time, I do not lack any authorities.

Senator FISCHER. Admiral, since you took over command late last year, what is your assessment of China's long-term strategic objectives in your AOR?

Admiral HOLSEY. Thank you, Senator. The PRC's has continued to do their, expanding their economic engagement to having more influence and diplomatic and political influence in the region. They're continuing with their Belt and Road initiative throughout. Currently, 22 countries are members of the Belt and Road Initiative, and so they continue to go down this path, they stayed on enterprises, the Huawei hold, the whole nine yards. So that's just one aspect of it.

The aspect that is more critical to me as a military officer is the military view, right? So, right now, when I think about deep water ports, dual use sites facilities, so deep water ports, like the port of Chancay in Peru. I think about the space enabling infrastructure throughout the AOR, at least 10 PRC's-linked space sites across five countries in the region.

Then you get into the 5G, the Huawei, right? You get into the safe city technology. So, they continue to do this, and when our partners use Huawei and Safe City Technology, now they're having threat of having Chinese technology on their critical infrastructure.

So, again, we have to continue to block them out and find ways to deliver for our partners. I do that by engaging security cooperation as well as trying to make sure, from an economic standpoint, working throughout the region and working with the Office of Security strategic Capital—Bank and others to find ways to block out the PRC.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. Thank you. Thank you both.

Chairman WICKER. Senator Shaheen and then Cotton.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you both for being here and for your service to the country. General Guillot, I'm not sure if any resources are coming from the operations in your area of responsibility to address some of the flights that have been transporting migrants out of the country, but I understand that last week, an Air Force C-17 transported 104 migrants from the United States to India.

That flight cost the American taxpayers \$2.5 million, and I understand that we're currently spending nearly \$30,000 an hour for every deportation flight that's being run by the military, when Homeland Security used to charter flights like these at less than one-third the cost or \$8,500 an hour.

Doesn't seem to me like a very effective use of our dollars, given the needs that you and Admiral Holsey talked about in terms of what you require for additional resources to address the threats facing the country.

So, can I ask, are you seeing any of the impacts of those costs yet on NORTHCOM's budget? Do you know how those costs are being paid?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I have not seen any impact at this point, but I'll remain transparent with the committee if I do feel strained in that area. As you alluded to at the beginning, those flights are flown by United States Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), so we coordinate with the border patrol to have the migrants available but we do not operate those flights.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you know if those flights are coming out of TRANSCOM's budget?

General GUILLOT. Ma'am, I can't say for sure, but I assume they are.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Chairman, I would hope that this committee would request information about the cost of those flights and why the military is doing them, as opposed to doing them the way we used to at one third, the cost.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that suggestion. Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Admiral Holsey, over the last year, we've actually seen an almost 15 percent decrease in drug overdose deaths. Illegal drugs, however, as you pointed out, and General Guillot pointed out, are still killing nearly 90,000 Americans every year.

Both of your commands rely on partnerships with governments and militaries in the region to help stop the flow of illegal drugs. So, can you talk, Admiral Holsey, in particular, about whether you're seeing any impact of the stop on our foreign assistance in

countries in Latin America on the willingness of those countries to cooperate?

Then are you seeing, or do you see the concern that China may move in some of those areas where our presence is being discontinued?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, thank you for that. China continues to look incredibly hard at every opportunity to come in and engage, so we can't take that for granted.

With regard to our partners in engaging in the counter drug piece, they're very resilient. Some of our training that do the security operation, the exercises specifically focus on the counter drug flight fight. If you look into the Eastern Pacific right now in the first 90 days, I'm sorry, since the 1st of January, we've already interdicted 50 metric tons of cocaine, right? And, and actually arrested 84 detainees.

Again, when you think about this piece, our partners are with us. Eighty percent of our interdiction last year was done by our partners using actually a ship special mission. We actually bring out interceptors from our partners along with us and get after the fight. So, they're all in with us.

I would like to continue to do that security operation. I haven't seen any impacts at this point, but we'll look and I'd be happy to let the committee know.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, and General Guillot, as you're looking at the challenges with our northern border, are you finding Canada willing to cooperate in all of the ways that are important as we're looking at the interdiction of drugs and other illegal activities across our border?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator, I am. I find that my counterparts in Canada are very open to planning potential partnering on the northern border to detect illegal crossings both ways in the future.

Senator SHAHEEN. Canada has developed a plan to address their commitments to NORTHCOM. Are you seeing that beginning to be built out at this point, or is all that still in the future? Did we participate in the development of that plan?

General GUILLOT. Senator, they were very collaborative on defining the NORAD requirements and their NORAD modernization is at the very, in beginning stages. We are seeing improved F-18 radars and missile capabilities already. The next step we'll see is the arrival of the F-35 in the next 2 years. So, they're well on the track, but we do have some immediate improvements with their F-18.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great. Thank you both.

Chairman WICKER. Again, I'm looking forward to our friends in Canada fulfilling their commitment to NATO. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. Thank you, gentlemen. General Guillot, as the chairman mentioned his opening statements, I have legislation with Senator Gillibrand to address the drone threat here in America. We seem to have drones just flying around everywhere and many times people don't know what's going on. Most notably in the public eye late last year in New Jersey.

This is also happening around our military bases a lot. You've had drone incursions over Joint Base Langley, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Vandenberg Space Force Base, Picatinny Arsenal,

Andersen Air Force Base. Could you explain to us briefly what is the threat that these drones pose to U.S. military operations facilities, and personnel?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the primary threat I see for them in the way they've been operating is detection and perhaps surveillance of sensitive capabilities on our installations.

Senator COTTON. That's all installation, not just super sensitive ones like nuclear sites. It could be our fighter bases or army bases or naval bases or what have you?

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir. There were 350 detections reported last year on military installations, and that was 350 over a total of hundred different installations of all types and levels of security.

Senator COTTON. Yes, but it's the case right now that only at certain sites, which you might call the supersensitive sites like nuclear bases, do commanders have the authority to protect their airspace from these drone incursions?

General GUILLOT. That's correct, Senator. We call those covered installations and not all the ins about half are covered.

Senator COTTON. Which sounds crazy to me, and I think most Americans would think it, it doesn't show a lot of common sense. I mean, base commanders at every base around America, they have the authority and they have the capability to protect their perimeters.

Say if some terrorist got a dump truck and drove it through the front gate or we're trying to breach the perimeter fence, we would expect base commanders to protect their base with force if necessary. Is that correct?

General GUILLOT. That's correct, sir, and I would propose and advocate for expansion of 130i to include all military installations, not just covered installations.

Senator COTTON. I'm glad to hear you say that because I have legislation to do just that, the counteract with Senator Gillibrand that, again, would give these commanders the legal authority they need, plus the capability required to protect their bases from these kinds of incursions and then hold them accountable for doing so. Is that exactly what you're advocating for?

General GUILLOT. That is, sir and if I could add, I'd also like to see the range expanded to slightly beyond the installation, so they don't have to wait for the threat to get over the installation before they can address it. Because many of these systems can use side looking or slant range, and so they could surveil the base from outside the perimeter and under the current authorities, we can't address that.

Senator COTTON. Even better. Now, last year, you also said there were thousands of drone incursions over the southern border, and just last week, Mexican cartel leaders were reportedly authorized used drones to equipment with explosives against U.S. border patrol agents. Now I know that this is primarily a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) responsibility at the southern border, but do you need authorization for DOD to share information with DHS and the border authorities about these incursions?

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator, I would like 130i to be expanded to allow a seamless exchange of data on drones.

Senator COTTON. Again, sounds like a great idea. I'm glad that Senator Gillibrand and I have legislation to do just that, and I hope that we can pass into law this year. Thank you, General.

Admiral, I know that the Navy is responsible for Guantanamo Bay, but Southern Command is responsible for some of the operations there to include the operations I gather of the violent illegal migrants who are recently transported. Could you give us a little bit of sense of the security measures in place that protects against any risk of violent criminals and terrorists being held at GTMO?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, the JTF-GTMO is the detention facility, we have a highly trained military police who come down on rotation with the guard's force. They're on a 1-year rotation, they're highly qualified, they've been trained to do their mission, they've been doing it for years throughout. So, again, I think they're very capable of force and they're ready to deal with any situation.

Senator COTTON. You're confident that your personnel are trained and ready to do that and are safe in doing so?

Admiral HOLSEY. One hundred percent, sir.

Senator COTTON. That's great because I'm also very confident that it's much safer to have depraved savage criminals from other countries waiting at Guantanamo Bay for deportation than it is to have them waiting at a base on the American mainland soil where we hope they'd never be able to cause any problems, but you never know there are American citizens on those bases and just outside those bases. Gentlemen, thank you again both for your appearance, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Excellent point Senator Cotton. Senator Hirono, and then Senator Sullivan.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Guillot, the President's recent missile defense executive order tasks you with providing "an updated assessment of the strategic missile threat to the Homeland" that is the President's direction to you.

I remain concerned about the viability of DOD'S strategy to defend Hawaii, specifically from missile threats. We're looking at China, North Korea examples. Will you commit to include the missile defense of Hawaii as part of your assessment?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I absolutely will. Hawaii and the defense from ballistic missiles for Hawaii is part of my responsibility.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you again. For you General, last year, the former National Guard Bureau chief testified that the border security mission provides no military training value to guardsmen and does not prepare troops for great power competition.

Additionally, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report from 2021 found that multiple units lost critical training opportunities due to deployments to the border. That of course impacts military and operational readiness. General, do you agree with the assessment that these missions provide no military training value to guardsmen?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I don't agree. I think that specifically in the helicopters and in our intel specialties that are conducting missions on the southern border, those are exactly in line with their training specialty. However, I certainly recognize there are areas where they're cross-trained and they are not getting immediate benefit to their primary specialty in about half of those roles.

Senator HIRONO. So, your testimony is that using military troops at the border, that is not going to have an impact on readiness. How many troops are do we have on the border right now and do you expect that number to grow?

General GUILLOT. Senator, we have 5,000 title 10 forces on the southern border right now, and I do expect that number to grow.

Senator HIRONO. As the Ranking Member on the Readiness Committee, I do have concerns about what these kinds of troop movements will do to readiness. What specific military training events and readiness exercises will NORTHCOM forego due to the resource demands of the Board of Mission?

General GUILLOT. Senator to this point none have been altered and we don't project that we would lose any of our exercises as the forces are provided by the services. We still have the capabilities to conduct all of our scheduled exercises.

Senator HIRONO. Well, the GAO report noted that there will be some critical training opportunities that will be lost and I am going to followup with you as to whether that is also what is happening.

For Admiral Holsey, in your confirmation hearing last September, you stated that SOUTHCOM's main campaigning tool is security cooperation utilizing a whole-of-government approach that includes USAID. How will President Trump's decision to freeze foreign assistance and dismantle USAID affect SOUTHCOM's security cooperation Mission?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator for right now, we're still assessing the impacts of USAID, I'll tell you from a military standpoint, I still can do my security cooperation at this time and so I look to Tradewinds exercise, right?

So, that's one we do yearly, and it's focuses on the humanitarian assistance just released in the Caribbean, right? So, we go out there, we do these missions, we're training our forces for earthquakes, hurricanes, and the like. So, those type of opportunities give our partners a chance to develop their skills for you know emergencies or contingencies.

Senator HIRONO. I really don't see how an action like closing USAID would not have a negative impact on part of your mission. Regarding Guantanamo Bay, this is again, for Admiral Holsey. SOUTHCOM is responsible for implementing the President's directive to expand the detention center in Guantanamo Bay to hold 30,000 migrants.

Admiral Holsey, who are these migrants and where will they be coming from and what is the estimated cost to lead the expansion and support of this development, Department of Homeland Security mission, including food, medical care, construction, and sustainment?

We're talking about a big, I would say, infrastructure that we're going to need to house 30,000 migrants. Can you explain how all this is happening? How much it will cost? How it will impact SOUTHCOM's mission? Briefly, I've run out time.

Admiral HOLSEY. So very, very briefly. From the standpoint of who decides, that's DHS who decide who comes to the base for the migrants, they decide at that point and we just support them. We're in support of DHS with regard to the pricing. We're still understanding it's a phase approach right now, and so we're going to

build it up and as we understand how large we'll get, we'll have a better focus on the price.

Senator HIRONO. So even if this is DHS, we're going to want to know how much this is actually going to cost. I know that you were asked about the amount of money that went to deporting 104 people to India, and whether or not that was an appropriate use of your funds.

Chairman WICKER. Perhaps witnesses can take that for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller has centralized cost estimating and reporting. I defer to OSD Comptroller for further details.

Chairman WICKER. Also, we'll have another round, if we need to, then we have Senator Sullivan and Senator King.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. I want to echo what the chairman's been saying, we do need Canada to step up, you know, when they don't meet their 2 percent GDP NATO commitments, it undermines the entire alliance. So I appreciate the chairman mentioning that.

General, it was good to meet with you. The other day we had a meeting with senior Trump administration officials just a couple days ago, a number of senators who were focused on the border, and they focused like your testimony, a lot on the northern border, which I really appreciate.

I have a chart here that depicts a lot of the air and sea incursions that we've seen in the last few years. It's been quite remarkable, particularly the Joint Chinese, Russian strategic bomber missions into our air and the joint Chinese Russian naval task force quite big, a 12-ship naval task force last summer.

President Trump himself commented recently, and we need to increase military investments in Alaska as Russian and China make more menacing moves in the region. That's just an example of all the different incursions air and sea just in the last 3 years, which is quite astounding.

General, I want to go into a little bit more detail. Your troops have done a great job of intercepting these strategic bombers by the way. They come with armed Mikoyan-Gurevich (MiGs), right? This is a serious incursion, not easy to do. Our navy's done a good job, although the first time we had that joint Russian Chinese task force, we didn't have any Navy response. Nothing, which was ridiculous in my view, 150-foot Coast Guard cutter.

But these are difficult missions made more difficult, for example, when you're intercepting strategic bombers, a lot of times our fighters are having to fly over a thousand miles just to get to the end of the—is to intercept them.

So, my question. Do you agree we need more infrastructure? You and I have talked about reopening the airfield in the navy base at Adak, this out here on the Aleutians Island chain, or—Ųtqiagvik and Barrow Alaska to help with the search and rescue (SAR) missions. Can you explain that in a little bit more detail?

Admiral Paparo is in agreement with you on this, where these incursions are going to increase. This is America, our northern border, and yet the infrastructure we have for the young men and women who are doing these dangerous intercept missions, both at

sea and in the air, they need more infrastructure for their safety and for our rapid response.

Do you agree with me that they do? Would you support reopening the Adak Naval base in the extension of the Barrow Runway, which is way up there, in the northern part of America.

General GUILLOT. Senator, I do agree with you, and as you mentioned, Admiral Paparo and I are very closely linked and aligned on all issues in the Pacific. I would support Adak for sure, for maritime and air access, and as you pointed out, dead horse or a point at the far north part of Alaska, because those missions aren't only long, a thousand miles or more with five or six or seven air fuelings usually at night.

But also, the harsh conditions if a pilot should have to eject having those forward points that you mentioned would allow us to preposition search and rescue aircraft or be able to land there in an emergency, which are capabilities that we just don't have right now.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great, thank you on that. Again, I want to thank the men and women under your command. They do these intercept missions all the time. They're very tough, they're dangerous. They don't make a lot of news down here in the lower 48, but they're doing a great job.

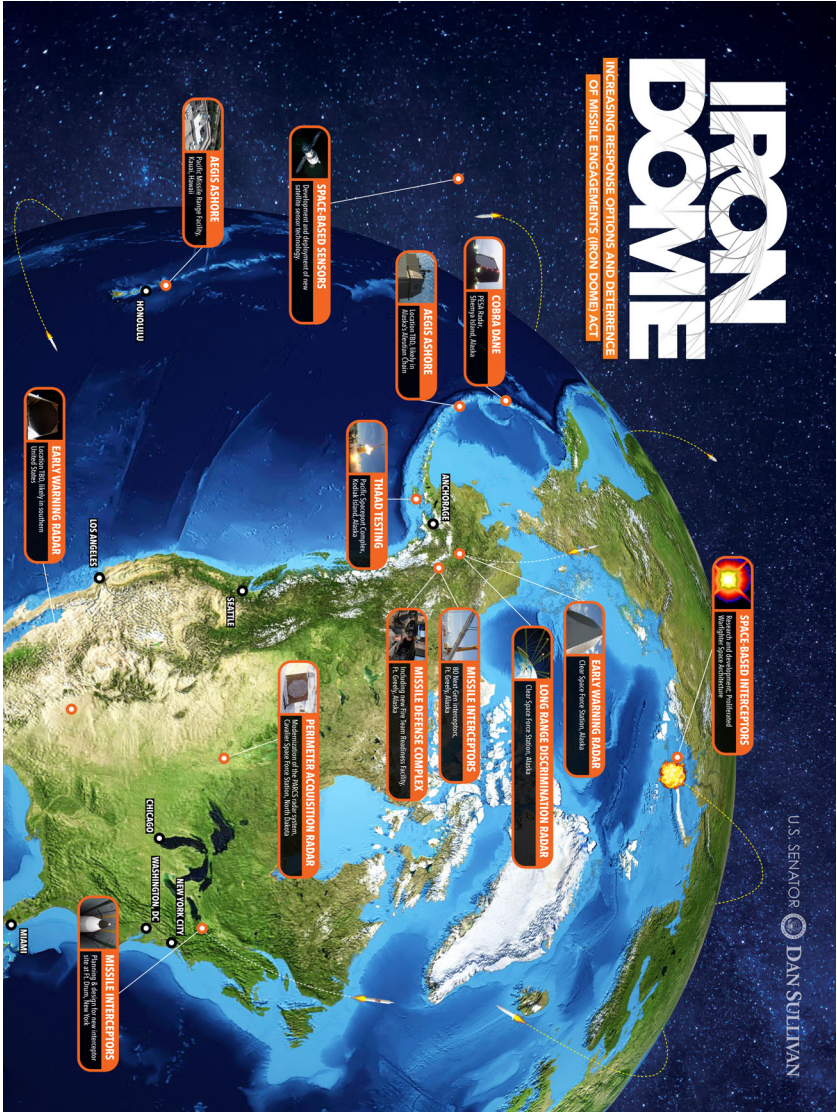
Let me turn to missile defense. Senator Cramer and I recently introduced our Iron Dome Act that reinforces what President Trump's executive order does. That's a depiction of that covering the whole United States with integrated missile defense systems to protect our Homeland. I'd love to get co-sponsorship from all my colleagues, my 2017 advancing America's Missile Defense Act, which pretty much became law in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), had 30 co-sponsors, 10 Democrats, 20 Republicans.

But can I get your sense to first a commitment to work with me and Senator Cramer on that? Then you mentioned the NGIs and the ground-based missile interceptors. Those are almost all based in Alaska. Why is it taking so long to fill those 20 silos that we just filled out that are needed? Can I get your commitment to work with me as part of this Iron Dome Act to accelerate that?






General GUILLOT. Senator, you have my full commitment to work with you on the Iron Dome, it's the core mission of NORAD and NORTHCOM is to defend just as you described there. You also have my full commitment to work to move all defense industrial based capabilities to the left, to bring these capabilities earlier as our adversaries are advancing their capability, and we must keep pace.

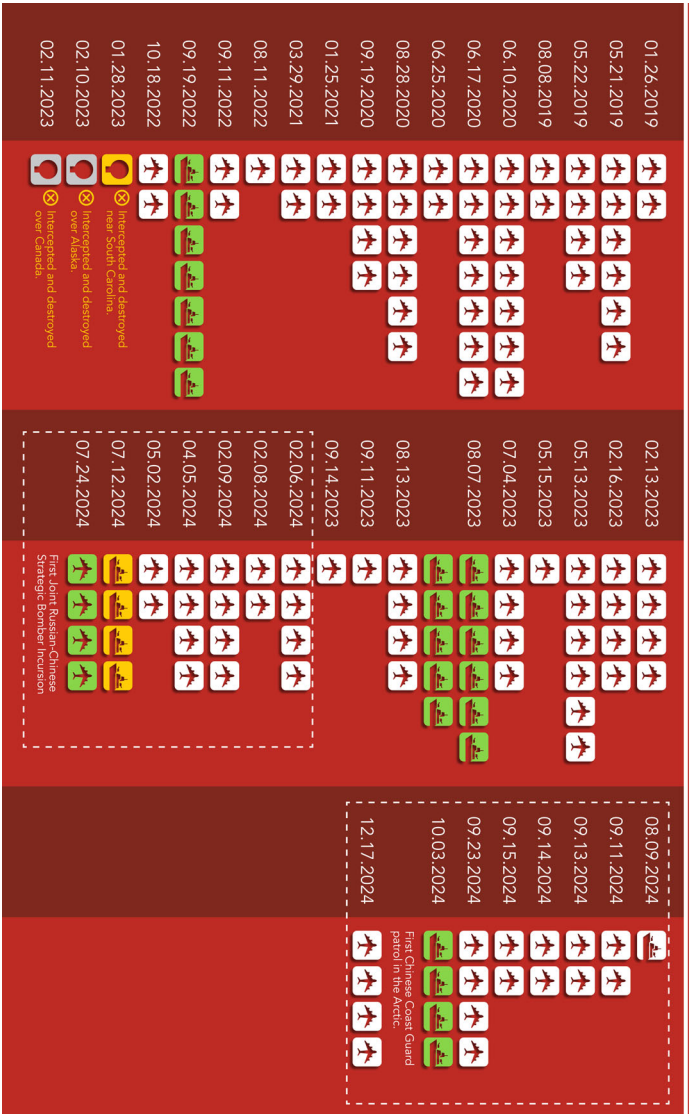
Chairman WICKER. Great. Thank you, General. I ask unanimous consent that the three charts that Senator Sullivan referred to be admitted to the record at this point. Without objection, it's so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]



Russian & Chinese Incursions into Alaska ADIZ/EEZ (2019-Present)

-  Military Aircraft
-  Balloon
-  Military Vessel
-  Russian Operation
-  Chinese Operation
-  Joint Operation





Chairman WICKER. Senator Kaine, and then Senator Scott.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to our witnesses for your service. This morning, I received an email from one of my long-standing staff members. Mark runs constituent services from me, and he did so when I was Governor as well. Mark graduated in Richmond from J.R. Tucker High School. Kind of looked in the mirror and decided he wasn't college material yet, and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

Mark served for 4 years as an enlistee in the United States Marine Corps, and it put him on a path. It's been an amazing path. He finished his marine service, and then went and got a social work degree at Virginia Commonwealth University, and advice to any of my colleagues, if you want somebody great in constituent services, pick a marine with a social work degree. The dogged persistence of the Marines, and the skill in working with organizations and listening to people of a social worker, Mark exemplifies that.

Mark sent me this morning, he reached out to send me this article that appeared on the 10th of January in military.com, "Military drops recruiting efforts at prestigious Black Engineering Awards event". I'd like it entered into the record, Mr. Chair.

Chairman WICKER. No objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Military Drops Recruiting Efforts at Prestigious Black Engineering Awards Event



Gen. Randy George, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, presents Maj. Gen. Robert Edmonson II, Communications Electronic Command commander, with the 2023 BEYA Stars and Stripes General Officer of the Year Award Feb. 10, 2023, at the 2023 BEYA Stars and Stripes Awards Ceremony in National Harbor, Maryland. (U.S. Army photo by Lillian Putnam)

Military.com | By [Steve Beynon](#)

The [Army](#) and other service branches are abandoning [recruiting](#) efforts at a prestigious Black engineering event this week, turning down access to a key pool of highly qualified potential applicants amid President Donald Trump's purge of diversity initiatives in the military.

Until this week, Army Recruiting Command had a long-standing public partnership with the Black Engineer of the Year Awards, or BEYA, an annual conference that draws students, academics and professionals in science, technology, engineering and math, also known as STEM.

The event, which takes place in Baltimore, has historically been a key venue for the Pentagon to recruit talent, including awarding Reserve Officers' Training Corps scholarships and pitching military service to rising engineers. Past BEYA events have included the Army chief of staff and the defense secretary.

"This is one of the most talent-dense events we do," one Army recruiter told Military.com on the condition that their name not be used. "Our footprint there has always been significant. We need the talent."

The services cited concerns that participation in the predominantly Black event could run afoul of Trump's orders and the Pentagon's intensifying push to erase diversity efforts in the military, according to multiple sources familiar with the decision. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Jan. 31 ordered that Black History Month, Women's History Month and others were officially "dead" and that the military would no longer mark them.

"In compliance with Department of Defense and Headquarters Department of the Army guidance, U.S. Army Recruiting Command will not participate in the upcoming BEYA event," Madison Bonzo, a service spokesperson, said in a statement to Military.com. "Service members and civilians are permitted to attend this event in an unofficial/personal capacity if they choose to do so."

Officials for BEYA did not return a request for comment.

The Navy, [Air Force](#) and [Space Force](#) are also pulling out of the event and forbidding officials from attending in an official capacity or in uniform. It was unclear Monday whether the Marines were still participating.

Additional recruiting events tied to specific racial or gender groups are also likely to be scrapped, two defense officials told Military.com. That includes other conferences and career fairs with thousands of participants.

The decision to abandon the Black engineering event marks a significant shift in military recruiting strategy -- and sparked calls of discrimination.

"It's f---ing racist," one active-duty Army general told Military.com on the condition of anonymity to avoid retaliation. "For the Army now, it's 'Blacks need not apply' and it breaks my heart."

While the services are pulling out of BEYA, a well-established pipeline for high-caliber STEM talent, they remain engaged with other events. Last week, the same Army recruiting unit that would have attended BEYA instead

participated in a National Rifle Association-sponsored event in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a predominantly white gathering that recruiters acknowledge is less likely to yield high-quality applicants.

The BEYA conference has long been intertwined with the Pentagon and the defense industry amid an ongoing competition with Silicon Valley for top-shelf talent as military jobs become increasingly technical. It regularly features panels with senior military leaders and hosts various recruiting initiatives. Top sponsors include Lockheed Martin and Google.

"The U.S. military is one of the largest STEM employers in the nation, yet its critical role in driving technological innovation often goes overlooked and misunderstood by the civilian sector," a note on BEYA's website says. "BEYA works to bridge this gap by highlighting the vast STEM opportunities available within the [armed forces](#) and showcasing military leadership in science, technology, engineering and mathematics."

Beyond being a recruiting event, the services also had a significant relationship with BEYA that included its own awards ceremonies. In 2023, Gen. Randy George, the top officer in the Army, awarded now-retired Maj. Gen. Robert Edmonson II the Stars and Stripes General Officer of the Year Award, a prestigious accolade for achievements in national security.

"It's our mission to keep the United States safe from a range of 21st-century threats," former Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a keynote address at the BEYA ceremony in 2023. "We're determined to continue innovating to make America more secure; that means drawing on the strengths of all people."

Army officials interviewed by Military.com, which included five recruiters, saw the move as a significant and problematic escalation in the Pentagon's rejection of diversity initiatives, which have been widely interpreted as programs that recognize women and troops with minority backgrounds, as well as gay and lesbian troops. Trump has initiated a separate effort to eliminate transgender troops from the ranks.

Hegseth, who was confirmed last month, has made rooting out diversity his top priority at the Pentagon, with the services scrambling to scrub programs, policies and even words from documents and websites. Trump, Hegseth and supporters claim that so-called "diversity, equity and inclusion," or DEI, programs have made the military weak.

Hegseth has falsely suggested the military has race- and gender-based quotas in promotions and assignments. No such policies exist, though there are [loose aspirational goals](#) in some efforts to have segments of the military ranks better resemble the general population.

Much of Hegseth's diversity rollback had centered on bureaucratic changes, such as replacing references to "gender" with "sex" in policy language and scrapping the heritage month observances, including Black History Month.

But some officials now see the move away from recruiting events as a deliberate step to reduce outreach to Black applicants.

The move also comes after the Army Band canceled a concert at George Mason University in Virginia, where it was set to play music by Janelle Monáe, a Black singer and rapper.

The Army's partnership with the Black engineering awards has historically been about talent, not race, recruiters argue. The military's growing emphasis on STEM has made events like BEYA even more critical to recruiting, particularly as services compete for skilled candidates in a shrinking pool of qualified applicants.

"The military has been selecting on merit the whole time," said Katherine Kuzminski, an expert on the military and veterans at the Center for a New American Security think tank in Washington, D.C. "Some people might be seeing how the civilian world has handled DEI issues and applying that view to the military, but it has frameworks in law and policy, all these interwoven standards that are rigorous and always have been rigorous."

The number of Black recruits in the Army -- the largest military service by far -- has risen over the years. In 2022, Black applicants made up 24% of the Army's new enlistments, according to internal data reviewed by Military.com, while Black Americans are just 14% of the general population.

Much of the Pentagon's recruiting woes have been tied to a shrinking pool of quality applicants, who increasingly struggle to meet academic standards on the military's SAT-style entrance exam.

The Navy and Army, the largest services with the highest recruiting quotas, have started pre-basic training prep courses that tutor applicants to perform well enough on the test to qualify for a job and move onto basic training. Those prep courses have effectively ended the recruiting slump that has plagued the Pentagon since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator KAINE. First two paragraphs of the article. Here they are, “The Army and other service branches are abandoning recruiting efforts at a prestigious Black engineering event this week, turning down access to a key pool of highly qualified potential applicants amid President Donald Trump’s purge of diversity initiatives in the military.

Until this week, army Recruiting Command had a longstanding public partnership with the Black Engineer of the Year Awards or BEA, an annual conference that draws students, academics, and professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM. The event which takes place in Baltimore has historically been a key venue for the Pentagon to recruit talent, including awarding Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Corps scholarships and pitching military service to rising engineers.

Past BEA events have included the Army Chief of Staff and the Defense Secretary. This is one of the most talent dense events we do, when Army Recruiter told military.com, on the condition that their name not be used, “our footprint there has always been significant. We need the talent”.

My staffer, Mark, said to me when he sent me this article, I would never have served in the military if there weren’t men and women who looked like me in the recruiting process. Limiting military recruitment to avoid qualified Black applicants in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) will ultimately hurt our all-voluntary military. I was intending to ask questions about NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM until I got Mark’s email this morning.

Intentionally avoiding an event chockfull of STEM Talent and Engineers, because it happens to be a draw for Black engineers, is more than an anti-DEI initiative. It is an intentional effort to avoid certain kinds of people in recruiting. The article goes on to say, it’s not just the army that has pulled out of this event. All the service branches have pulled out of this event.

I just want to put this on the record. Two things happened on January 31st that I found very unusual. The President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, did what every President since Gerald Ford has done on January 31st, he declared February Black History Month.

On January 31st, the Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, put out a directive, “Identity months are dead at DOD.” That was not the newspaper headline summarizing the directive, that was the directive from the Secretary of Defense. “Identity Months are Dead at DOD,” including Black History Month.

So, we have two events on January 31st, we have the President and Commander in Chief issuing the standard Black History Month proclamation for the Nation, but apparently at DOD it’s different. At DOD, Black History Month is dead, at DOD, we won’t go and recruit engineers who happen to be Black to come in and serve at a time when we need more people serving in the military and all of our service branches are struggling with attracting talent.

There’s a lot of issues dealing with NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. I’m glad my colleague Senator Cotton asked about Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs), I had a whole series of ques-

tions I wanted to ask about Haiti and other SOUTHCOM priorities, Admiral Holsey, I'm glad we had the chance to talk about those in my office. The United States military has been at the forefront of including talent of all kinds, with the actions on January 31 the President acknowledging Black History Month, but within the DOD family, now this is dead.

I worry that the military will no longer be at the forefront, won't even be at the average, but will be behind. That would be a terrible sellout of an amazing tradition that our United States military should be very, very proud of. With that, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for being here. Thank you for all the servicemen and women that serve with you. So all these hearings are important. This is important one, I like this one a lot because SOUTHCOM's here and it's from my home State of Florida. I was hoping my good friend Senator Sullivan was still here because all he talks about is Alaska all the time.

So one thing I would always like is if people understood the risk that we're having in Latin America, and I think we have to put more effort into it. I know Admiral Holsey, we talked about that yesterday, and I know you're focused on it. So after years of Joe Biden's open border crisis wreaking havoc on our domestic security, with millions of illegal alien encounters at our border, an appeasement dangerous of dangerous regimes, the safety of our Nation in communities are top of mind, I think for all of us.

I think you have a very important job here as we bring back peace through strength. So let me just get to the questions first. General, President Trump recently signed two executive orders, one to seal the southern border, which is right, and another deploying 1,500 service men and women to the southern border, which none of us hoped he would have to do, but unfortunately, he'll have to do to secure the border.

Can you speak to how the administration's preparing for and do you feel you have the capability to face down the cartels and other U.S. enemies present in Mexico?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I do think that we have the capability and the support to meet the requirements established in the executive orders. As you might know, we've doubled the number of title 10 forces inside of a week, down there in their operating in seven roles in support of the Department of Homeland Security.

Then we've also increased some uniquely military capabilities that will get after the point you made, the cartels, which are driving the illegal migration. That's primarily through Airborne ISR to get more information on those and figure out how we can counter their actions.

Senator SCOTT. You think there's any chance you're going to need a carrier strike group in the Gulf of America?

General GUILLOT. Senator at this time I haven't gotten to a carrier strike group, but I will need a significant increased maritime presence in cooperation with the Coast Guard.

Senator SCOTT. Are the Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) at Mayport helpful at all?

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir. Those would be right in line with what we're looking to do in the Maritime. Thanks.

Senator SCOTT. So Admiral Holsey, I've been up here about a little over 6 years and it seems like, and I think we talked about this a little bit, Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) and Synchronous Communication Satellite (Syncom) receive a majority of this Committee's attention and a lot of their assets. I think we're seeing a little bit of change under President Trump.

SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility faces real threats to national security as we all know, we've got problems in Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and potentially Columbia. So you might need additional assets, especially with what China, Russia, Iran are doing in the region. Can you talk about the importance of having the right assets at SOUTHCOM to be able to deal with the threats?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator, to be clear, presence means power, presence mean relationships, and so not only when out of area deployers come, or the Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) are moving drugs, when they see presence, it gives them pause. But also, when we come down and work with our friends and partners in the region, they look for us as leadership.

So when they see our ships, our aircraft, you know, our boots on the ground working with them again and again, it builds those partnerships and it shows that we are there enduring, and we can block out the PRC and others.

Senator SCOTT. Thanks. Can you talk about the importance of Homestead Air Force Base and its mission?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, sir. For Homestead Air Force Base located there in south of Miami right now, we've used it in the past. We used it in our Haiti operations as a jump off point. We use it in exercises as well. So again, it's a key location when I think about contingencies down range and how I engage and using that as a base to forward deploy, if you will. Also, I'm looking at some opportunities coming up for unmanned assets as well. So I continue to work on that.

Senator SCOTT. You think it needs to be returned as an Active Duty base?

Admiral HOLSEY. I think it's more in the AirForce lane to answer that, but I could definitely use an Active Duty base, sir.

Senator SCOTT. [Presiding.] Thank you, Chairman. Now Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Acting Chairman. Appreciate it.

Senator SCOTT. First time, big promotion.

Senator KING. As we're sitting here, news feeds often come across and I just saw one that the Department of Defense has indicated in its February in its 2025 procurement plan to buy \$400 million worth of Tesla trucks. I'm going to just let that fact sink in, that's all I'm going to say about that.

Admiral, you talked about the activity of the Chinese in Latin America. Do you believe that that activity is number one significant and number two increasing? The nature of the activity, as I understand it is public works projects ports, two ports in Panama, for example, is this significant activity on behalf of China and Latin America?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator. I think all their efforts from an infrastructure standpoint, the development of dual use sites and facilities, is a challenge, and we should be concerned about that.

Senator KING. I would point out to the committee that 2 weeks ago we unilaterally disarmed in Latin America when we destroyed the Agency for International Development, because that's the agency that provides funds for these kinds of projects. So, basically, we've left the field in Latin America, and I think that should be understood.

We're always talking about competition with China and the outpacing threat. But here is a place where we basically have, as I say, left the field, we've abdicated, we've surrendered to China in Latin America by unilaterally and illegally and unconstitutionally abandoning the vehicle by which we were competing with them in terms of development and work in Latin America. I just think that should be noted.

We've gone almost entirely through this hearing and not talked much about terrorism. I believe that in all the talk about pivoting to great power competition, the Indo-Pacific, we've taken our eye off terrorism, and it worries me that that's still a threat. General, is terrorism's still a threat to this country? I believe you mentioned lone wolves, which is the most difficult kind of terrorism to combat.

General GUILLOT. Senator it's still a threat and a concern and one of the primary focus in the NORTHCOM part of my job. To address that we have very close ties with central command and special operations command to follow their operations in overseas, and they give me any indication of activities moving toward the United States that we'd have to plan for.

Of course, we have great relations across the intel and inter-agency to ensure that we have a consolidated look at any terror threats to the U.S.

Senator KING. Well, I hope that there is significant emphasis because I worry that this is one of those things we're going to wake up and find ourselves under attack, and everybody's going to say, well, what happened? It's a matter of taking our eye off the terrorism ball. That's one of the greatest threats to this country, particularly if terrorists get a hold of nuclear material.

There's a growing nuclear family, including Iran and North Korea where nuclear material might become available, and that's the nightmare scenario because deterrence doesn't work with terrorists. They don't care about dying, and they don't have a capital city to destroy. So, intelligence and awareness of what the terrorists are thinking and planning and plotting, I think is absolutely critical.

Admiral, every year when we have this hearing, I talk to the SOUTHCOM commander about the fact that we have intelligence reports about drug shipments coming to the U.S. in the maritime domain, and we have the assets to interdict 25 percent of them. To me, that is just straight up unconscionable.

There are people dying in my State from fentanyl overdoses, from drug overdoses generally, and we are not meeting because of a lack of basically allocation of assets, the drug shipments that we know about. That's what's so objectionable about this. Is that percentage still reasonable? Seventy-five percent is not being interdicted that we know of?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, sir. About 10 to 20 percent is what we can get after what we see. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. That's because of a lack of assets. Is that not, correct? We don't have enough boats, ships?

Admiral HOLSEY. Primary lack of assets, the lack of resources ISR capability, yes, sir.

Senator KING. Well, I would argue that, again, this is a misallocation of resources. That here is an active attack on America that's killing our citizens and we don't have enough ships and whether it's Coast Guard or Navy in the region to interject these drug shipments.

I think that's basically a dereliction of duty, not of you, but of the entire policy apparatus, and this goes back three, four administrations. But it's one that I hope that this Administration might pay some attention to, and correct. Maybe there's a second round we'll talk about icebreakers General. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SCOTT. Thanks Senator King. One thing did, was it secretary, was it State or defense about the Tesla's? Do you know?

Senator KING. My understanding it was the Department of Defense armored Tesla Cyber trucks. Okay.

Senator SCOTT. All right. Senator Budd.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman, congrats on the promotion. [Laughter.]

Senator BUDD. Admiral, General, thank you all for being here. General, I enjoyed our conversation earlier this week, and also, just want to thank you on behalf of those in Western North Carolina for your efforts there. In the early days, late September of last year, early October, there was some bureaucratic hand wringing at the top, but that was not from you, that was not from our military. So again, thank you for all those in uniform who served those out west.

I want to shift to the southern border, and we've heard this a lot from our colleagues this morning, and I share the concern about fentanyl. In North Carolina we lose every single year the totality of what we lost on 9/11 just in North Carolina, and that's our whole country compared to just my great State.

I'm interested in stopping the supply of these Chinese precursors and chemicals that end up in Mexico and make their way here. Also stopping the Chinese nationals that are being caught illegally crossing our southern border in record numbers, I think it's up by a factor of 50 from 2021 to 2023.

So, what concerns do you have, if any, that foreign actors, not just South American immigrants, but they're using the southern border to access our nation? We'll start with you, Admiral.

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, as I look at the daring gap over the last year or so, we did see an increase in number of Chinese actors coming across. Typically, what we do is we've been working with the Panamanians as well as Colombian to kind of support them in stopping the flow of migration. Now, it's slowed down this year, I think President Mulino was pretty clear to try to stop migration when he got in office.

We've supported from a logistics intelligence and training equipment standpoint, with the Columbia and Panamanians. We saw the drop about 90 percent coming through the daring right now, but we have to keep our eye on it,

Senator BUDD. Of course. Thank you, General?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I want thank you for your comments for the men and women of primarily the 18th Airborne Corps that did an outstanding job supporting their teammates in the western part of North Carolina. I appreciate that. I share the concern on the intent of many that are crossing the border and in particular, work closely with the Border Patrol to figure out why the Chinese migrants, one, are so many and two, through such a narrow corridor in the San Diego region.

My concern there is a wolf and sheep's clothing coming across having someone who intends us harm. So we work very closely with the border patrol to see who is coming across and making sure that our intel agencies are tracking them. I'm encouraged by the recent decrease in detections and incursions across the border. But as I've mentioned before, the increase in military presence down there and some of the unique military capabilities, I hope will continue to seal that border.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. Let's go to another topic which was previously discussed in regards to Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). As you mentioned in your opening statement and in the discussion with Senator Cotton, we've seen UAS incursions over sensitive sites, military bases, it's an alarming amount. Can you briefly, briefly describe how bases are determined to be "covered facilities"? Under title 10, section 130i and titling them to an active defense.

General GUILLOT. Yes, Senator. To become a covered installation, there's nine criteria that any one of those could allow the base to be covered, ranges from nuclear deterrence, missile defense, all the way down to if it's a test facility there, roughly half of the 360 installations in the U.S. meet those criteria.

My request and proposal would be is if we look at 130i again, would be to expand coverage to all military installations and not just those that are covered.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. So, as the lead synchronizer of counter unmanned aerial system operations in the U.S., how are you preparing our bases to defend themselves from these threats? I know there's a policy discussion in your prior answer, but what are you doing right now?

General GUILLOT. Senator, since we received this responsibility in November, we're responsible for coordinating any response. The authority to defend a base as Senator Cotton mentioned, remains with the installation commander and the services. But we can be a synchronizer role and are a synchronizer role to ensure standardized training response, tactical techniques, and procedures.

If the base and the service aren't able to handle the incursion, we can bring in help from across the interagency and DOD to support, and perhaps most critically is we can work closely with the interagency to give them the authority to operate the systems once they arrive due to our close relationship with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In the near future, I think we will have our own capabilities to bring in from NORTHCOM once we procured them to assist if the service and the installation cannot handle the incursions.

Chairman WICKER. [Presiding.] Thank you very much.

Senator KING. Mr. Chairman, in your absence, I made a statement about the purchase of Tesla trucks I was misinformed, it was not the Department of Defense that's announced this purchase, it's the Department of State. So, I just wanted to clarify the record.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, and thank you very much for that. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Trump administration is sending troops to the southern border and holding immigrants at Guantanamo, redirecting Active Duty military personnel from critical missions and costing taxpayers several times more than when DHS does the same job. That seems to be bad for national security, bad for our military families and bad for America's bottom line.

We've seen this before. When the first Trump administration deployed troops to the border, it pegged the cost at a billion dollars over 3 years. But the GAO found that the Department of Defense estimates were not "reliable" and excluded "significant costs". DOD reports to Congress missed more than half the actual total for entire fiscal years.

GAO made seven detailed recommendations for the Department of Defense to improve its cost estimates, but 4 years later, the Department of Defense has not executed a single one. Now, DOD estimates that this new border deployment will cost almost a billion dollars over the next 8 months, but that may be another underestimate. So, general Guillot, you are overseeing the border deployment, does underestimating the cost of an operation put future missions and future readiness at risk?

General GUILLOT. Senator, I would assume so, but I think I need to point out that NORTHCOM is not appropriated funds for the Southwest border, and we've never had reprogramming or pass through funding. This is all done through the department comptroller and the services.

Senator WARREN I appreciate that, but I'm asking the question about running past the limits and the consequences of that, because the money has to come from somewhere, and I'm concerned that we're going to see the same problem that we saw the last time, big costs and little transparency and accountability.

When DOD has been tasked with doing DHS's job, it has cost taxpayers a lot more money. It costs three times more to deport migrants on military aircraft than civilian planes that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) often uses, and has cost ICE at least five times more per detention bed to hold migrants at Guantanamo Naval Base than at facilities in the United States.

Anytime civilian authorities ask DOD for help, DOD is supposed to evaluate the request based on six criteria, including cost, but we don't even have a cost estimate for the new Guantanamo operations. So, Admiral Holsey, what do you expect the budgetary cost of SOUTHCOM Guantanamo operations will be through the end of this fiscal year?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, we're new into the process right now, we surged assets down there to start building out the camp. It's a phased approach, so it's not automatically going up to 30,000. So right now—

Senator WARREN So, you're telling me you actually don't know the cost yet?

Admiral HOLSEY. Not at this point, ma'am.

Senator WARREN Not at this point. So, the decision to deploy DOD personnel and assets was made without knowing the cost, which is exactly what DOD is supposed to consider in making the decision to deploy. Will you at least commit to provide that estimate to Congress as soon as you have it?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator WARREN All right.

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, I'll work with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and DOD to get that to you.

Senator WARREN All right. I will hold you to that. I'm relying on both of you also to tell us if, DOD blows past whatever estimates you give us, given the potentially astronomical costs, will you commit to informing this Committee if you determine that these operations are not militarily effective?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator WARREN All right. You know, we need to know if the operations are having an unmanageable impact on readiness and morale. Political stunts like this can easily damage troop morale. Many Texas National Guard members who deployed to the southern border have felt isolated without purpose and some have even committed suicide. I think it is important that we have better oversight over these plans and that we make these plans that conform to the law. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Yes, Senator King.

Senator KING. One followup, General. Give us an outline of the Russian activity and militarization of the Northern Arctic Ocean. I don't know how to define Northern and Southern when you're coming from the North Pole, but on the Russian shoreline.

General GUILLOT. Senator, over the last year, we've seen a significant increase in both Russian air and maritime activity in the vicinity of Alaska, both in the bearing and up in the Arctic Ocean. In fact, the incursions in the number of ships this past year equal or exceeded the rate that it was before the Ukraine invasion, after which I think we all know the numbers dropped.

We've also seen increase in air patrols on the eastern side, what we call the two o'clock approach through the Greenland and Iceland gap toward Maine and the northeast portion of the United States. So I'm certainly concerned by that and I would expect the numbers on both sides of our coast to increase in the coming year.

Then also sir, along those lines also the Russian out of area patrols for both surface and undersea was significant last year, and I expect to see that on both coasts again this year.

Senator KING. The Chinese are increasingly active, are they not?

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir. Last year we saw the most Chinese vessels off the coast of Alaska than we've ever seen and simultaneously.

Senator KING. I was at a conference some years ago on the Arctic, and there was a huge delegation from China, and I said what is China's interest? They said, we are a near Arctic nation. My response was, Maine is a near Caribbean State. They are very active in increasing their actions. Now how about where are we? Do we

have a port for a facility, for example in the Arctic? Second, give us a breakdown of the status of icebreakers. We are woefully inadequate in terms of icebreakers, particularly for the use of the Northwest passage.

General GUILLOT. Senator, I was going to use the same word. We're in a woeful situation with icebreakers. The Coast Guard is working very hard to increase that for us, but at this time we're completely outnumbered with icebreakers.

Senator KING. They're building one new icebreaker, but it's really merely a replacement for the ancient one that's about to go out of service, is that not correct?

General GUILLOT. It is.

Senator KING. So, there's no net gain in icebreakers?

General GUILLOT. That right, Senator.

Senator KING. The icebreakers, we have commute between the Arctic and the Antarctic, is that not correct?

General GUILLOT. That that's correct as well.

Senator KING. How many icebreakers do you estimate the Russians have in the Arctic?

General GUILLOT. Between 20 and 40?

Senator KING. Twenty and fourty to less than one?

General GUILLOT. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. I would argue that the icebreakers are the essential infrastructure of the Arctic region and to say we are inadequate and behind where we should be as I believe is an understatement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Senator King, let me just say, I think you'll find a lot of bipartisan support, both in the Congress and in the administration for a substantial increase quickly in our number of icebreakers.

Senator KING. I believe that's the case, and I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. All right.

Chairman WICKER. We have Senator Peters, and then Senator Rosen.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your service to our country and for being here today. As Ranking Member of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, as well as having served in the U.S. Navy Reserve, I want to echo some of my colleagues concerns on the dangers of increasing the Department of Defense's role in border security and civil immigration enforcement.

I'm going to be following up with both the Department of the Defense and the Department of Homeland Security to get additional information, related to the DOD deportation flights and DHS's use of naval station Guantanamo Bay.

But my questions first, General Guillot, as you have previously stated, the successful execution of your mission as commander of both NORTHCOM and NORAD, "relies on cohesive strategies, integrated planning, and collaboration across the whole-of-government." I completely agree with that, and with your assessment, and believe this also applies to executing SOUTHCOM missions as all.

So, my question for you, General, how do your commands collaborate with several intergovernmental agencies, including the De-

partment of Homeland Security, Missile Defense Agency, and the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency in executing your missions? How do you coordinate with these agencies and deconflict efforts to ensure the successful defense of our Homeland while certainly maintaining a Left-of-Launch framework?

General GUILLOT. Senator, our partnership with DOD, other combatant commands and the interagency is critical to us. The way we approach it is we have well over 100 liaison officers, usually very high ranking, highly placed and trusted from their home agencies that work in our headquarters and participate in every one of our morning updates, Intel and operations updates, commander's updates, as well as all of our planning efforts.

Then for the combatant commands, we meet regularly, we talk regularly, and just for example, in this southern border the responsibility is widely shared between us, SOUTHCOM, NORTHCOM, and TRANSCOM, and the commanders. At all levels of our command, we integrate daily in a number of different planning groups and sessions.

Senator PETERS. Wonderful. Question for both of you, you both know about the importance of artificial intelligence systems (AI) and the pivotal role that they play in informing commanders' decisions by providing predictive analysis, real-time decision support and enhanced situational awareness in a future conflict.

Earlier this week, we received a classified briefing from U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Kurilla who shared those views as well. So, my question to each of you is, given the rapid advancements in AI, how do you see AI shaping the future of commanders' decisions-making ability, defensive operations, and weapons integration for both SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM? How can we be helpful in your efforts to accelerate the use of these new technologies?

General GUILLOT. Senator, the use of AI is becoming more and more important in NORAD and NORTHCOM. We currently use some capabilities in helping us look at imagery and find assets or activities with imagery using AI to help alert our intel analysts. Anything in the future that you'll see from us incorporating artificial intelligence certainly will always have what we call the man on the loop. We will always have men and women that are quality controlling (QC-ing) it, but we're finding that we can go through reams and reams of information much quicker.

I think that I should point out, we're also looking to see what the adversary is doing with AI and how we might be vulnerable to them and their use of AI in our defensive capabilities.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Admiral?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator at SOUTHCOM, we're in the process now of sending some of our senior leaders through training to actually learn more about AI so we can continue to use it. Another thing, we're doing it at South Joint Interagency Task Force South, we actually have AI marine machine learning battle lab.

We're able to take 15 years of data based off a ship size. You think about a drug smuggled ship size, location, time of year, expected route, and now we can use that predictably to locate our assets to interdict them and that's been very successful, and we'll

continue to look for some more support to get after that even faster.

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

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Senator Peters. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman

[Laughter.].

Chairman WICKER. I'm sorry, I should recognized Senator Rosen first.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I am more than happy to.

Chairman WICKER. The first mistake I've made. Unanimous consent to my left. Senator Kelly.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator Rosen, thank you, Senator Duckworth. Really appreciate it. So, General Guillot, and for both of you, Admiral, you as well, so both NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM have been tasked with supporting a border security and immigration enforcement mission. While I agree that our immigration system's broken and that we have to do more to secure the southern border, I'm concerned about the effect of these missions on our military readiness.

General Guillot, last week, over a hundred migrants were flown to India on a C-17, costing the American taxpayer approximately \$2.5 million dollars, and using up the limited flight hours allocated to that aircraft. Using military air costs around \$28,000 an hour or so, for a C-17, that's four times as much if ICE would've chartered a flight.

Given the strain on strategic airlift assets, are you concerned that continued use of C-17s and C-130's, and C-130's are less expensive, but still there are readiness issues with that? Are you concerned that using these for deportation flights could impact availability for higher priority missions?

General GUILLOT. Senator, we work closely with the transportation command that operates these flights and are always looking to see if there are the authorities to contract that capability.

Senator KELLY. Do you know what missions were dropped? And Admiral Holsey, same for you. Do you know if we dropped any missions to be able to support the flights to India or GTMO?

Admiral HOLSEY. I do not know, sir.

General GUILLOT. Senator, I'm not aware either.

Senator KELLY. Are you aware what the chain of custody looks like for detainees as we transfer them?

Admiral HOLSEY. As far as right now, the DHS has the chain of custody for the detainees as far as those coming to GTMO.

Senator KELLY. So that's not a military responsibility at all?

Admiral HOLSEY. No, sir.

Senator KELLY. All right, and then, Admiral, I've got a question. We talked a little bit in my office about this yesterday. We're in the midst of a global strategic competition with China and China continues efforts to influence politics and societies in the Western Hemisphere in our neighborhood, and they use economic engagement to gain access and influence in countries in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

So, what's your assessment of the security situation in Panama, and what is your strategy to deter CCP influence in the region without contesting Panama's control over the Panama Canal?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, just like all places around the world now, China continues to gain their economic and infrastructure influence, and so we know they have some controlling interests in ports on both ends of the canal. We know that they have infrastructure projects as well. My role as the SOUTHCOM commander is to defend the Panama Canal in time of crisis or contingency. And I intend to do that.

Senator KELLY. Do you agree that working with our partners would be part of this strategy?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Sir, it is.

Senator KELLY. Our partners, meaning the Panamanians?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, sir. The Panamanians are key to working with us. In fact, right now we have an exercise called Panamax we do every year. That's an exercise where we work with the Panamanians and our allies and partners in the region to do a scenario where we defend the Panama Canal. Just recently, the Panamanian President mentioned that he wants to do Panamax in Panama. So, that's a change, right? So, we'll continue to work with allies and partners continue to work with Panamanians as we go forward.

Senator KELLY. Can you describe a little bit what that exercise would look like in Panama?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, sir. So, we think about nefarious actors trying to create an explosion on something in the canal or stop up the canal. So again, as we're working in the approaches to the canal, so it's whole, entire thing to include cyber activity as well. So again, in every exercise we do throughout the region, there's always some cyber component, and so, we continue to work that.

Senator KELLY. So, we do have a strategy and this exercise being part of the strategy to counter the PRCs influence in the region as it is today.

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, sir, and to be clear, I think I go back to a statement I made earlier about presence, right? Any presence in the region, presence means power, presence, blocks out the PRC, and so, I'll continue to do that.

Senator KELLY. All right, thank you, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Senator Kelly. General and Admiral, Senator Kelly was not the first to mention the cost of Mill Aris as compared to the cost of a charter flight to your knowledge are those figures correct?

General GUILLOT. Senator, to tell you the truth, I don't have knowledge of that because those are all run through U.S. transportation command. I don't have access to those numbers.

Chairman WICKER. Okay, but you'll get that to us, will you not?

General GUILLOT. Senator chairman, of course. I'll be very transparent.

Chairman WICKER. How about you, Admiral?

Admiral HOLSEY. I don't know the figure Senator but we can work to get that.

[The information referred to follows:]

General GUILLOT. Mr. Chairman, per data provided by USTRANSCOM, the total actual cost for the India flight in question was \$2,070,745.

Senator KELLY. Mr. Chairman, if I could just make one comment. Chairman WICKER. Absolutely.

Senator KELLY. Just from experience, about 21,000 pounds an hour of fuel for C-17, 737 is about 5,000 pounds per hour for fuel costs. So just in fuel costs, it's about four times.

Chairman WICKER. Okay. Thank you. But you'll followup. The witnesses will followup. I think we now have Senator Banks.

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Guillot, the President's executive order to establish the Iron Dome for America stresses the need for both weapons to shoot down enemy missiles and also the satellites to track them. The Executive Order (EO) called for the "acceleration of the deployment of the hypersonic and ballistic tracking space sensor layer."

If NORTHCOM is going to have an effective Iron Dome for the U.S. Homeland, how important is it that we expand our fleet of ballistic and hypersonic missile tracking satellites and space-based sensors?

General GUILLOT. Senator, expanding those capabilities would be imperative to having a successful shield over the North American continent.

Senator BANKS. You expand on that, why that's important.

General GUILLOT. First and foremost, Senator, we have to detect anything that we want to defeat, and so, the HBTSS that you described is the first capability that we think will reliably and accurately track hypersonic missile.

We have some capability already that can detect intercontinental ballistic missiles, but those are fairly easy to track because their ballistic profile, whereas the hypersonic are both maneuverable and much faster. So getting the space-based capability to detect and track those that could cue defeat mechanisms in the end is imperative.

Senator BANKS. How fast do we need them?

General GUILLOT. How fast do we need the capability?

Senator BANKS. Yes.

General GUILLOT. Immediately.

Senator BANKS. Thank you for that. Admiral, some of my colleagues have said that the U.S. military operations to defend the neutrality of the Panama Canal would be unprecedented or illegal. Do you agree with that?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator, that's more of a policy discussion. I think Department of State is better equipped to handle that.

Senator BANKS. So, no opinion on whether or not that's—if you were ordered to defend the Panama Canal that would be legal to do so.

Admiral HOLSEY. So, my job as commander is to provide options to the President, sir.

Senator BANKS. Fair enough. Mr. Chairman, that's all I've got. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed for holding this hearing. I'd like to thank General Guillot and

Admiral Holsey for testifying today and for your service to our country. We really appreciate you.

I want to talk a little bit about Guantanamo Bay. So, Admiral Holsey, the Administration has announced it's using our naval base at Guantanamo Bay to house undocumented individuals detained in the United States. Although I have deep concerns about this cruel and misguided policy, including about whether we can trust that ICE is not detaining American citizens, legal permanent residents, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients, dreamers, or children in these facilities.

But Admiral Holsey, understanding that you are only implementing policy decided to be by others, how is DOD planning to pay for the transport and care? More importantly, what are the divisions of the missions and the responsibilities between DOD and ICE? Are military personnel charged with the guarding, carrying, feeding of people, or Guantanamo base? Are you paying to get them there? Are you staffing when they are there?

Admiral HOLSEY. So, Senator, we're not paying for them to arrive. I guess TRANSCOM would probably be able to answer that question there. As far as our role is to provide safe, humane treatment of those in the facility. To be clear, we've done this mission before, from a migrant standpoint, I plan every year for a mass migration scenario. So, it's kind of a modification to the existing mission, and again, to bring them on board. The role of the military forces there is to provide supplies, food care, shelter medical support at this time.

Senator ROSEN. Well, I guess we have a lot of things to worry about in that, whether it impedes our readiness from a readiness perspective, having to take care of migrants takes you away from your mission. But I'll move on because we only have 3 minutes.

I want to talk to you, Admiral Holsey, now about critical language skills, because the Department of Defense is increasingly making investments on countering the people's Republic of China. We know they are a major threat to us. Are there any concerns regarding a lack of language expertise needed for countries in SOUTHCOM area of responsibility, especially considering the involving situation at GTMO, the potential need for more Spanish speakers?

How will the elimination of some of these diversity initiatives impact your ability to recruit and retain linguists, people who speak all of the different languages, speak Chinese to enable your critical mission?

Admiral HOLSEY. To be clear Senator, we're a war fighting organization. So, our most fundamental duty is supported within the Constitution, ensure the safety and security of the American people. We look for talent throughout.

So, I think right now, as I look at the critical skills, language skills in the SOUTHCOM or throughout my entire headquarters, I have several multilingual people. Then we've been able to hire folks as well. We'll continue to do that and that's kind of my point to be made there.

Senator ROSEN. Well, we just want to be sure you're not hampered in doing that because it is critical to have those language skills. I want to move on and talk about with general Guillot, psych

guarding, domain awareness. You know, our competitors continue to feel advanced capabilities across domains that have the potential to threaten the Homeland.

In light of these threats, NORTHCOM and NORAD have to ensure the system providing the Homeland with domain awareness are survivable, adaptable, and modern. In addition, the systems must be hardened as they're going to be subject to an array of cyber-attacks during any contingency. I'm encouraged by your efforts to modernize, but what steps are you currently taking to harden our command-and-control nodes, particularly in the cyber domain, so that we're able to effectively share operational picture during a potential conflict?

General GUILLOT. Senator, as you alluded to, the most persistent and present threat that we face in the NORTHCOM area of responsibility every day is in the cyber domain, with hundreds or maybe even thousands attacks or attempted attacks on our networks.

So, the way we harden that is primarily through cyber protection teams, that we have that first look at our unique NORAD and NORTHCOM computer systems and networks, and then across the DOD network in partnership with Cyber Command to make sure that those are protected.

Then when you go outside of that ring, we look at critical infrastructure for capabilities that not only help the American citizens, but also help the DOD. Then it's four partners we have there, or three others in addition to NORTHCOM, Cyber Command (CYBERCOM), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA). We worked very well with them to monitor the cyber domain to ensure that all of those systems are protected.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank You. Senator Rosen. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for being here, and thanks for your service. Good visiting with you, both of you. You got tough jobs.

General, you talked in your opening statement about the cooperation and the coming together of our adversaries. What do we need to do and what do you need to do for the next 3 or 4 years to protect our country from those coalitions that are coming together, possibly for a threat to us?

General GUILLOT. Senator, first, we need to continue to work on our ability to detect their activities. Not only are they working together, but even independently, they're increasing their own capabilities and they can affect us from further ranges than they could in years past, individually, and certainly combined, that just magnifies that challenge.

Our ability to detect them from all domains, undersea all the way to space is the first. So we can watch what they're doing and have awareness of what they're doing. Then after that is just presence, not only with the U.S. Forces, but within our command. Anything that we can do with the Canadian forces to show that we can, one, detect them and two respond to them in order to deter their activities, would be the second emphasis that I have.

Senator TUBERVILLE. That's the other question I want to ask you, as we speak how is our working relationship with our Canadian partners up North?

General GUILLOT. Senator, on a military-to-military basis, it's outstanding. NORAD is a binational command, and so they're partnered with the United States at every level of the command. We talked earlier about the first time ever, the Chinese and the Russians flew together in the Arctic, our intercept of that was with United States and Canadian fighters that were completely integrated.

So, at the mil-to-mil level in NORAD, it's excellent. Then also between NORTHCOM and CJOC, the Canadian Joint Operations Command, there's several times where we have Russian or Chinese ships out in the Arctic that are being patrolled by the Canadians out of United States bases to build that strength and relationship we have.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Speaking of the Arctic, do we actually have an icebreaker that works now?

General GUILLOT. The Coast Guard has one that was just repaired, but unfortunately it was out of service for a period of time over the last few months.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We obviously need to add to that. I would imagine. Admiral, you and I talked about saildrones, which were made in my great State of Alabama. Can you give us this group a kind of a rundown of what you think about saildrones, your experience and the need probably for more all over the world? We have them in the Indo-Pacific, and we have them in the Caribbean and your experience with saildrone?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator. Over the last couple years, we've seen a decrement in navy assets in the region, and one thing that Navy has done with this new hybrid fleet out of the United States Naval Forces Southern Command (NAVSOUTH), we've been able to incorporate saildrones into our mission sets. They provide great domain awareness.

Right now, we're doing operation Southern Sphere where at this point, we'll have saildrones in the Caribbean and in the Eastern Pacific, along with other unmanned assets to counter drug fight, right? So, it gives me more maritime domain awareness, and it helps our partners as well because we're trying to bring them into this piece and so have a better understanding.

One thing our partners continue to ask for is domain awareness, intel sharing. So again, having those assets in the region for a lack of other assets is making a difference for me.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What main reason are they used for, as we speak for, drug runners?

Admiral HOLSEY. So right now, it's maritime domain awareness, so overall surveillance, right? They actually have the capability to patch back to our MOC, our Maritime Operations Center, in NAVSOUTH. So again, they can pick up contacts and it completes the picture, right? The information can sell. So, if you spread these assets out, they can cover more domain as opposed to just one ship.

Senator TUBERVILLE. As we speak, how many do you have Operatable in the Caribbean?

Admiral HOLSEY. So right now, I have eight operational in the Caribbean and three in the Eastern Pacific and more flowing in. So, I have a total of 20 here in the next couple days.

Senator TUBERVILLE. That's great. Well, we appreciate what both of you do and anything we can do to help let us know. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Tuberville. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Yay. It's my turn. Thank you. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Reed. The number of troops assigned to the Board of Mission continues to grow. We've had this discussion today, but I want to emphasize it, with the total expected to reach at least 3,600. I think General, you testified that it'll be maybe even upwards getting closer to 5,000 potentially. This number includes some of our most experienced infantry and support units.

Are we really preparing for great power competition with the communist PRC? Or are we asking our Marines to lay Constantino wire at the border? Are we asking our pilots to be combat ready, or are they supporting deportation flights?

As we consider the ways that responding to these missions in NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM impacting the military's ability to focus on the primary mission of great power competition and war fighting, we need to also factor in uncertain, but rapidly increasing costs of DOD support at Guantanamo Bay.

On January 29th, President Trump green lighted the expansion of the Migrant Operations Center, or MOC, at Guantanamo Bay. As you're likely where this expansion comes with the range of costs that will impact the overall budget, everything from medical care and sanitation to education for migrants, as well as expenses tied to deploying military personnel to GTMO.

Admiral Holsey, could you provide a breakdown of the timeline and projected construction costs for increasing Gitmo's capacity to 30,000 people as outlined by the President's directive?

Admiral HOLSEY. Senator at this time we're doing a phase approach. So right now, we're going to have a capability for about 2,500 cots, and that plan's going to go up if we continue to phase it in. We haven't decided that yet, I'm waiting further direction. So, at the initial point, I don't have a cost estimate of what would take for 30,000. So right now, we're still in the infancy phase of it.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, you have a Presidential directive, have you not started planning to fulfill that directive?

Admiral HOLSEY. So right now, again, it's a stage approach, a tailor approach, right? So right now, we won't necessarily go, we don't know. We're working with DHS to understand the flow of migrants. So, we're not going to go, we won't go to 30,000 unless we know that migrant flow will come. So, we're waiting at this point.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, as that planning process moves forward, can you get me those data, figures?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, Senator

[The information referred to follows:]

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller has directed the Services and Agencies to establish accounting mechanisms to track costs of the mission. I defer to OSD Comptroller for further details.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. The Fiscal Year 2017 Military Construction (MILCON) actually a project for mass migration complex was actually for 13,000 migrants, and it cost \$33 million in fiscal year 2017, just as a comparison. It stands to reason that an expansion to more than double that capacity nearly 10 years later would mostly, most certainly cost much more than the \$33 million that was projected to cost in fiscal year 2017.

In addition to facilities costs in 2019, the commander of detentions estimated that it cost more than \$100,000 for each guard, each guard's 9-month deployment to GTMO cost taxpayers a hundred thousand dollars. Admiral Holsey, do you have, as you're doing this, do you have an estimate for the personnel costs associated with this effort, even for the first 2,500?

Admiral HOLSEY. No, we do not yet. But I can say that the cost of running GTMO at this point, just the facility the last several years been approximately \$100 million.

Senator DUCKWORTH. One hundred million dollars per year?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, for the JTF-GTMO facility along with the rotational enforcers that comes in.

Senator DUCKWORTH. How many detainees are there?

Admiral HOLSEY. Currently, there are 30 detainees, and 15 war detainees, and then approximately, 68 other detainees, so not detainees, but migrants from the DHS.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So, to house 118 detainees there and to maintain GTMO, it's costing taxpayers \$100 million dollars currently, and we're going to project to go up to \$30 million?

Admiral HOLSEY. For the GTMO facility.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Just the facility, so the cost would be much higher than that. What is the source of funding for the expansion of the MOC?

Admiral HOLSEY. Right now, as the forces flow in, the services are bearing the initial cost for the initial flow, and so that's where it's at right now, the services.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So, it's coming out of the services pockets. What priorities will be left unfunded as a result of this shift in priorities?

Admiral HOLSEY. I can't answer that, ma'am. I think we have to ask the services.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Okay. I would also like to address accountability on the DOD flights. Admiral Holsey, what is being done to ensure that risk mitigated is mitigated for pilots and what security measures are in place to manage the personnel on board?

Admiral HOLSEY. Right now, the DHS actually, or is controlled those flights along with TRANSCOM probably have a better understanding of the flow of migrants to what they do on the aircraft.

Senator DUCKWORTH. So TRANSCOM is responsible for the safety of the crew of the aircraft on those flights?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, ma'am.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I do think that we need to run this down, and if the DOD does not take ownership of migrants boarding their aircraft, who onboard the aircraft is responsible for the passengers?

Admiral HOLSEY. Again, I would say that TRANSCOM has a plan in place and TRANSCOM would better have that the understanding of how they protect their aircraft in flight.

Senator DUCKWORTH. A lot of unanswered questions. Thank you, Admiral.

Chairman WICKER. Indeed, and Senator Duckworth, this is part of our oversight responsibility, and so I appreciate the members participation today. This concludes the open portion of today's hearing. I'd like to thank our witnesses for their testimony. For the information of Members, questions for the record will be due to the Committee within two business days of the conclusion of this hearing.

We will commence the closed portion of this hearing in Senate Security in 15 minutes. We have until 11:45 a.m.

[Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

MANNED FIGHTERS IN HOMELAND DEFENSE

1. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, we've learned from the Chinese spy balloon and several drone incursions that our Homeland is dangerously exposed to attack. What role do you believe manned fighters play in securing our National Airspace?

General GUILLOT. Manned fighters are a critical and indispensable piece of layered defense employed by NORAD and USNORTHCOM in the defense of the Homeland. The vast majority of air-breathing threats can be defeated by employing manned fighters under an "eyes on" construct in which trained fighter pilots obtain positive visual identification and assessments of potential threats, which can range from civilian aircraft to long-range Russian and Chinese bombers and cruise missiles. Positive visual identifications remain the best way to judge the intent of potential threats and are critical to making accurate assessments and taking appropriate action. Fighter aircraft remain the most capable, versatile, and flexible means to defeat the majority of air threats we face.

2. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, do you believe fighter aircraft play a necessary and complementary role to ballistic missile interceptors in defending the Homeland from air and missile threats?

General GUILLOT. Yes. I see manned fighters operating in a complementary role to ballistic missile interceptors in defending the Homeland from air and missile threats. Manned fighters are employed to respond to threats ranging from general aviation aircraft to advanced cruise missiles. Manned fighters are not the answer to every air and missile threat to the Homeland, but they do play a critical role and remain a critical asset for our ability to defend the Homeland.

3. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, in 3 decades, the Air Force fighter fleet has shrunk to less than half its size. Will you have enough aircraft over the next decade to keep our airspace secure and meet the China threat?

General GUILLOT. Department of Defense force management processes provide USNORTHCOM sufficient resources to conduct its day-to-day aerospace control mission for the United States, including the allocation of additional aircraft and other capabilities as necessary to meet heightened operational requirements. I anticipate this will continue to be the case in the coming years given the primacy of the homeland defense mission and continued fielding of innovative capabilities and implementation of novel homeland defense concepts. I will remain a vocal advocate for sufficient fighter allocation to the Homeland Defense mission.

CRUISE MISSILE THREAT

4. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, can you explain how Russia and China can use conventionally armed cruise missiles to threaten and coerce the United States?

General GUILLOT. Cruise missiles pose unique warning and defense challenges due to their reduced signatures and flexible flight profiles. Conventionally armed cruise missiles—launched from the air or sea—provide Russia and China a viable strike option against the United States Homeland without the escalatory risks associated with nuclear strikes. Today, Russian long-range heavy bombers can employ air-launched cruise missiles against U.S. critical infrastructure from multiple axes. Russian Navy surface combatants and the growing fleet of ultra-quiet Severodvinsk

II-class guided missile submarines can employ land-attack cruise missiles against the Homeland from the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The PLA Navy will soon have the ability to conduct long-range precision strikes against land targets from its submarine and surface combatants using land-attack cruise missiles. It is also possible the PRC is developing a launcher that can fit inside a standard commercial shipping container for employing these missiles aboard merchant ships. In the air domain, the PRC is developing a new generation of long-range bombers that may debut sometime in the next decade and be capable of launching conventional weapons.

During a conflict, Russian and PRC military leaders would likely consider employing these conventional strike capabilities against North American critical economic and military infrastructure as part of an effort to degrade our political will, disrupt our force flows to regional conflicts, and compel negotiations to end those conflicts.

5. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, are the services moving quickly enough to field capabilities to detect and defend against these cruise missiles? In other words, are we pacing the threat?

General GUILLOT. No, legacy acquisition processes are not maintaining pace with the rapidly shifting landscape of potential threats. However, I am encouraged by the Department's renewed emphasis on leveraging flexible authorities provided by Congress to accelerate fielding of advanced capabilities. For example, the Golden Dome for America will be a pivotal opportunity to correctly prioritize and align our efforts to deliver and field capabilities at a much faster rate. Specific to cruise missiles, I view the ability to defeat cruise missiles that threaten critical infrastructure as the biggest capability gap we face. I support increased development of new capabilities, including directed energy and other low-collateral, non-kinetic means.

6. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, what additional resources do you need to address this threat?

General GUILLOT. Defense of the Homeland will require a layered, integrated, multi-domain architecture that includes next generation sensors and effectors. NORAD and USNORTHCOM are considering the full range of threats and mitigation methods in developing Golden Dome for America. Investment in advanced capabilities remains critical to addressing present and future threats. The primary capabilities we need are space-based Airborne Moving Target Indicator, over-the-horizon radar, E-7 Wedgetail, and cruise missile defeat mechanisms.

COUNTER DRONE AUTHORITY

7. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, you mentioned expanding authorities for detecting unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) beyond the perimeter of military installations to improve the identification and tracking of threats. Could you briefly describe what a layered defense would look like, and how detection capabilities beyond the fence lines would strengthen efforts to counter hostile drone threats?

General GUILLOT. A layered defense against unmanned aerial systems consists of passive and active detection as well as kinetic and non-kinetic defeat capability. Detection capabilities should include active or passive radars, radio-frequency sensors, electro-optical and infrared cameras, and low collateral defeat systems such as low-collateral interceptors, high-powered microwaves, and high-energy laser systems. It is important to detect, track, and identify potential threats before a UAS crosses an installation boundary because unauthorized UASs operating over installations present an immediate risk to safety and security and because acquiring an inbound UAS prior to an installation incursion greatly increases the likelihood of successful mitigation.

8. Senator COTTON. General Guillot, how far beyond the perimeter of a military installation would Department of Defense (DOD) need to detect UAS threats in order to defend against intruders crossing the fence line?

General GUILLOT. Installation commanders would ideally have the ability to detect and track unmanned aerial systems five miles from installation boundaries to allow base force protection teams to determine the best method for defeating potential threat UAS and the time to employ appropriate defeat mechanisms.

PANAMA CANAL

9. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, how can China use its ports near the canal to disrupt or shut down canal operations?

Admiral HOLSEY. As we saw with the 2021 Suez Canal disruption by a cargo ship running aground, or the impact of last year's drought conditions in Panama, it

doesn't take much to impact the flow of traffic through these critical maritime chokepoints. In the event of hostilities, China might leverage its current port access near the canal, which includes access to physical infrastructure and human connections, to choose and disrupt canal operations via sabotage, cyberattack, or even Global Positioning System jamming that might result in an accidental blockage.

10. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, has U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) allocated sufficient resources to help Panama properly defend the Canal?

Admiral HOLSEY. The SOUTHCOM team dedicates significant attention to the security of the Canal, as we strive to be credible, present, and engaged with our Panamanian partners.

SOUTHCOM has detailed plans to preserve neutrality of the Canal and continuously monitors for threats. Should a specific credible threat emerge, it could potentially lead to a request for additional forces or capabilities.

We endeavor to provide persistent presence in Panama primarily through our Army Security Force Assistance teams and other rotational assets. We capitalize on a long history and close partnership with our Panamanian counterparts. We conduct bi-lateral Operations, Activities and Investments with our Panamanian counterparts and employ theater security cooperation efforts to build Panamanian defensive capabilities and capacities as well as enhance our interoperability to execute bi-lateral operations in defense of the Panama Canal. Finally, we exercise our Defense of the Canal Concept of Operations Plan every 2 years as a major regional exercise. Panama has agreed to host our major security exercise PANAMAX in 2026.

11. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, has SOUTHCOM conducted planning for defense of the Panama Canal in a potential Taiwan conflict scenario?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM conducts prudent planning for the Defense of the Panama Canal as directed by the Joint Staff and in accordance with U.S. obligations from the 1977 Neutrality Treaty. Our planning addresses several potential threats. I recently signed an updated plan and am happy to discuss in the appropriate setting.

RUSSIA/CUBA COOPERATION

12. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, what military advantage does Russia gain by increasingly cooperating with Cuba?

Admiral HOLSEY. By increasing cooperating with Cuba, Russia solidifies its foothold in the United States' near abroad, 90 miles from the Homeland. Cuba's geographic location is appealing to Moscow as it seeks to enhance its regional intelligence-gathering capabilities. Moscow also may leverage its cooperative relationship with Havana to ensure acceptance of additional Russian navy port call requests, such as the submarine and surface combatant port visits Russia conducted in 2024. These port calls help expand Russian access to Cuban ports or airfields for Russian power projection that could be weaponized against the Homeland.

13. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, should the United States be concerned about Russian submarine access to a port so close to the Homeland in event of a conflict with Russia—or even with China, for that matter?

Admiral HOLSEY. The U.S. military's primary mission is to defend the Homeland. We take adversary combatant movements into our hemisphere very seriously and monitor them very closely.

That said, I could use additional maritime and ISR capability to better monitor, track and respond to potential threats.

14. Senator COTTON. Admiral Holsey, what additional resources do you need to deter Russian military activity around Cuba?

Admiral HOLSEY. In the SOUTHCOM AOR, presence means power. SOUTHCOM needs additional resources to better deter Russian activities and presence in and around Cuba. Russia deploying a nuclear-powered submarine to Cuba last summer illustrates our deterrence challenges. To improve our posture, SOUTHCOM has consistently requested U.S. Navy assets to provide presence, reassure our partners and Allies, and deter our adversaries. Additionally, SOUTHCOM has requested, through the annual Global Force Management process, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to better understand adversary activities in the AOR.

Given SOUTHCOM's limited air and naval presence, we coordinate with NORTHCOM and the Coast Guard to share assets to help mitigate risk and meet mission critical needs. We have streamlined the force sharing procedures that NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM have put in place to enable force sharing between

our two Commands to address threats in the Western Hemisphere. Our work with Allies has been another way we are working to better integrate and synchronize efforts in the Western Hemisphere to address threats together.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MICHAEL ROUNDS

SPECTRUM

15. Senator ROUNDS. General Guillot, how critical is unimpeded use of the electromagnetic spectrum to our current Homeland defense architecture?

General GUILLOT. Uninterrupted access to the electromagnetic spectrum is essential for homeland defense, as it underpins crucial communications, radar, surveillance, and missile defense systems. Disruptions or interference with the spectrum will significantly impair military operations, intelligence gathering, and overall national security. Secure spectrum access is vital for ensuring the effectiveness of defense capabilities for the Homeland and timely threat response.

16. Senator ROUNDS. General Guillot, on January 27, President Trump issued an Executive Order directing the building of an “Iron Dome Missile Defense Shield for America.” In your professional military opinion, would an Iron Dome for America be feasible if DOD was forced to vacate portions of the Lower-3 GHz and 7-8 GHz bands of the spectrum?

General GUILLOT. Developing a Golden Dome for America would be severely challenged if the DOD was forced to vacate the Lower-3 GHz and 7-8 GHz bands. These frequencies are essential for radar systems used in missile detection and interception. Without access to these bands, radar effectiveness would be compromised, reducing detection capabilities and increasing susceptibility to interference.

U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND AND CYBER AUTHORITIES VS. TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

17. Senator ROUNDS. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, section 1505 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) grants the Secretary of Defense the authority for “countering illegal trafficking by Mexican transnational criminal organizations in cyberspace.” Is there anything preventing you from coordinating with U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM), National Security Agency (NSA), and other relevant agencies to exercise those authorities?

General GUILLOT. USNORTHCOM has not received an implementing directive or been delegated authorities related to section 1505 of the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA. However, USNORTHCOM is coordinating closely with USCYBERCOM and NSA to use other authorities in the cyber domain until authorization to use Section 1505 is received.

Admiral HOLSEY. NORTHCOM leads Department of Defense operations and activities involving Mexican transnational criminal organizations. I will defer to General Guillot.

18. Senator ROUNDS. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, is anyone in the Department using those section 1505 Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA authorities?

General GUILLOT. Not to my knowledge. Implementation of section 1505 authorities is pending a Department of Defense implementing directive. USNORTHCOM is evaluating options that include current authorities, as well as potential integration of § 1505 authority to counter transnational criminal organizations.

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM does not use Section 1505 Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA authorities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI ERNST

UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND

19. Senator ERNST. General Guillot, in Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA, I secured a provision that more clearly defines the DOD’s responsibilities under title 10 to safeguard our skies against the threats posed by drug cartels using drones at our borders. Has U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) started implementing the policies outlined in the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA to address the threat of drug cartels using drones at our borders?

General GUILLOT. USNORTHCOM is using all relevant authorities to address the potential threat presented by cartel drones operating along the U.S. southern border. In accordance with directives from the President and the Secretary of Defense to secure the southern border, USNORTHCOM is providing unique military capabilities to the Department of Homeland Security to augment Customs and Border Protection operations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

MISSILE DEFENSE AND INCREASING RESPONSE OPTIONS AND DETERRENCE OF MISSILE ENGAGEMENTS

20. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, in response to President Trump's executive order on an "Iron Dome for America," myself and Senator Cramer introduced the Increasing Response Options and Deterrence of Missile Engagements (IRONDOME) Act in the Senate. The act does three things: enhances domain awareness; bolsters existing missile defeat capacity; and accelerates new capabilities, including in space, to counter future threats. In your opinion, what are the necessary investments we need to make for increasing our domain awareness?

General GUILLOT. NORAD and USNORTHCOM require a system of layered sensors from the seafloor to space and cyberspace to provide persistent all-domain awareness. NORAD and USNORTHCOM's domain awareness investment priorities include space-based multi-domain Air Moving Target Indicator (AMTI) systems, E-7 Wedgetail, Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR), terrestrial-and space-borne missile warning and tracking sensors, and the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System. Additionally, N&NC requires an integrated Command, Control, and Communications architecture to tie these systems together and present the Commands with an effective system to employ defeat mechanisms.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, currently there are 20 missile silos at Fort Greely, AK sitting empty because of delays to the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) program. These ground-based interceptors give our Nation the necessary capacity to defeat missiles launched at the Homeland. How will you work to increase production of those ground-based interceptors and accelerate development and procurement of the Next-Generation Interceptor program?

General GUILLOT. The President's Executive Order on Golden Dome for America has made the fielding of the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) an even more vital element in defending the United States against a Long-Range Ballistic Missile attack. USNORTHCOM will continue to work with the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) to energize the industrial base and identify and exploit efficiencies in the fielding process to pull the delivery timeline to the left. I will also further advocate for an objectives-based NGI inventory informed by policy and threat assessments with the DOD and Joint Staff.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral Holsey, in 2021 the Chinese tested a Hypersonic Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) which could theoretically reach the Homeland by going over the South Pole, making it much more difficult to detect and defeat with our existing infrastructure. One of the provisions in my Increasing Response Options and Deterrence of Missile Engagements (IRONDOME) Act is a Southern hemisphere-facing early warning radar in the Homeland. However, we know that having partners in an integrated missile defense system can help provide the early warning that we need to notice weapons before they hit the Homeland. Do you believe that there are viable options or partners in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility that we could build relationships with to provide for early warning detection?

Admiral HOLSEY. When considering partners in the SOUTHCOM AOR who could assist in the provisioning of early warning detection, there are two elements that we examine—capability and willingness. Regarding capability, there are Partners within the AOR, or Allies who have interest in the region, that could potentially provide sensors to contribute to early warning detection.

However, from a willingness perspective, other than Allies, Chile might be the only Partner who has both the willingness and capability. That said, in the absence of organic capabilities, I think there are several partner nations in the SOUTHCOM AOR who might agree to host U.S. systems, if asked.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, do you believe that a southern hemisphere-facing sensor or radar system is an essential element of homeland missile defense given current threats?

General GUILLOT. Domain awareness is my top priority for fulfilling the President's Golden Dome for America Executive Order. A terrestrial southern hemisphere-oriented array of sensors capable of tracking ballistic, hypersonic, cruise, and other advanced threats is an important element of the layered approach to domain awareness. Developing and fielding 360° all-domain awareness capability from the seafloor to space is paramount to defending the Homeland from advanced threats.

AIR DEFENSE IDENTIFICATION ZONE/EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE INCURSIONS

24. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, over the past 5 years we have seen over 140 foreign vessels and aircraft penetrate the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) at our Northern Border in Alaska. Of these, a third have occurred in the last year alone. To what do you attribute the increased aggression from the Russians and Chinese over the past year, and do you expect it to continue?

General GUILLOT. Russia's ADIZ penetrations over the past year likely represent a return to pre-COVID and pre-Ukraine conflict levels of activities and is a reminder that Russia is a global power. This level of activity is likely to continue. The majority of recent PRC activity near Alaska has been in the maritime domain, to include the three PRC state-owned research vessels that operated in international waters within the U.S. EEZ in 2024. This Chinese activity is dual use with both military and scientific applications, and NORAD and USNORTHCOM characterize PRC maritime activity as a continuation of Beijing's desire to normalize its presence in the region and demonstrate relevance as a noteworthy voice on issues pertaining to the Arctic. NORAD and USNORTHCOM are also closely monitoring the steady increase in combined air and maritime PRC-Russian military activity in and over the Bering and Chukchi Seas near Alaska. I also expect the level of Chinese activity near Alaska to increase.

25. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, the Russians and Chinese have sailed together several times over the last few years near our Northern Border in Alaska. In July 2024, however, they also conducted the first joint strategic bomber incursion into our ADIZ. How concerned are you about the increasing cooperation between the Russians and Chinese and how do you think we should change our posture to compete strategically in the region?

General GUILLOT. I am concerned about the growing cooperation between Russia and the PRC in the Arctic. The Arctic is a region of critical security and economic importance to Russia, while the PRC sees tremendous opportunity for accessing vital natural resources in the region. These converging interests, along with a shared desire to counter the U.S. worldview, have driven them closer—not just economically, but militarily—in a region that constitutes the closest avenue of approach for striking North America. This growing cooperation could ultimately result in Russia allowing PRC military access to Arctic airfields and ports, providing PRC the ability to project conventional forces toward North America as was demonstrated during their combined bomber incursion into the Alaskan ADIZ. To give them pause, NORAD made a concerted effort to showcase a highly professional and binationally integrated response to the relatively rudimentary combined Russian-PRC patrol. I believe that demonstrating readiness through presence; increased patrols and exercises with Arctic-trained and equipped forces; updated infrastructure; and modernized all-domain awareness will make it clear that the U.S. is committed to defending the Arctic.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, the men and women of NORTHCOM do an outstanding job each and every time these intercepts occur. These aircraft sortie from interior Alaska at Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) or Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) and fly thousands of miles, tanking multiple times in order to make the intercept. Luckily these intercepts have occurred largely without incident, but what steps should we take to reduce the risk to our aircrews, decrease search and rescue response time, and give you operational flexibility for responding to the continued aggression of Russian and Chinese patrols?

General GUILLOT. Decreasing search and rescue (SAR) response time is a three-fold challenge of timely incident reporting, coordinating a response, and executing the rescue. The impeccable reporting and coordination between the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center, U.S. Coast Guard District 17, and State emergency management and law enforcement agencies informs and activates the military and civil

SAR enterprises supporting NORAD and USNORTHCOM operations. As missions continue to expand in both scope and scale, we should further bolster SAR capabilities by revitalizing dispersed operating locations that increase forward operating capabilities along the Aleutians and Northern Alaska. Additionally, as the Department's Arctic advocate, I support continued training and exercise opportunities in the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex that provide our Joint force access to the largest and most relevant training and exercise venue in the DOD and introduce them to the force generation and power projection challenges within the Arctic region, all while continuing our deterrence presence throughout the region.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, notwithstanding your close relationship with Admiral Samuel Paparo, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), do you believe that Congress should reevaluate the Unified Command Plan with respect to the Northern Pacific and Arctic to streamline operational handoff of assets in the region between future NORTHCOM commanders and INDOPACOM?

General GUILLOT. I do not see the need to adjust the Unified Command Plan assigned Area of Responsibility (AOR) boundary in the Northern Pacific between USINDOPACOM and USNORTHCOM. NORAD and USNORTHCOM coordinate on a regular basis with the USINDOPACOM for the seamless hand-off of tracking responsibility for adversary maritime and air assets and share resources without regard for the UCP boundary in order to defend Alaska, the Arctic, and Western U.S.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, do you believe that we need to increase our anti-submarine sensor capabilities in the northern Pacific?

General GUILLOT. Yes, I believe it is necessary to increase anti-submarine sensor capability in the northern Pacific. These sensors are crucial to undersea domain awareness as peer competitors continue to develop and deploy advanced attack submarines and unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) that could threaten the Homeland. A robust undersea sensor system is crucial to maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the underwater domain and deterring a spectrum of threats to the Homeland.

ARCTIC BASING

29. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, I know you are aware of the increased authoritarian aggression on our Nation's border near the State of Alaska. Russia and China are increasing collaboration in the air and on the sea. In 2022, 7 Russian and Chinese naval vessels were spotted 75 miles from Alaska. In 2023, a flotilla of 11 ships sailed near the Aleutians. In 2024, the first joint Russian and Chinese bomber task force flew into our Alaskan ADIZ. The same year, we saw the Chinese Coast Guard traverse through the Bering Strait, the first time we've seen them near Alaska. I have concerns that we are not adequately postured to respond to these threats posed by Russia and China in the Arctic Region and to our Homeland. Perhaps my biggest concern is that every time we respond to these threats, fighter aircraft fly over one-thousand miles, sometimes requiring multiple refueling operations along the way, because of lack of basing. Additionally, for the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard to maintain a constant presence in the Bering Sea and meet the Russians and Chinese where they are, they have to refuel at locations hundreds of miles away, such as Dutch Harbor. Can I get you to commit to helping me reopen basing on Adak?

General GUILLOT. Yes, I am very interested in conducting operations from Adak, and our command has just completed an assessment of the Adak facilities and infrastructure. Further, USNORTHCOM and Alaskan Command (ALCOM) are working to identify infrastructure and logistics requirements in Alaska with a focus on Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) situated along the North Slope, Western Coast, and Aleutian Islands.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. General Guillot, how will this island assist you in strategic response in our ADIZ/EEZ?

General GUILLOT. A Forward Operating Location (FOL) proximate to operating locations presents many benefits such as reduced air refueling tanker requirements, more rapid turn-around of fighters, and Naval port operations. As mentioned, Adak is included in our analysis of needed military infrastructure in Alaska.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE ASSETS AND COUNTER
NARCOTICS

31. Senator SCOTT. General Guillot, to provide airborne coverage in support of stopping the flow of illegal migration, the Department has reportedly deployed high-end airborne assets such as P-8 Poseidon and RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft to patrol the border with Mexico. As we continue to manage priorities in INDOPACOM and elsewhere that require such assets for Great Power Competition-focused missions, are there other cost-effective airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets DOD is considering to add capacity to patrolling our border?

General GUILLOT. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability in support of USNORTHCOM requirements along the southern border have proven to be critical. Sustainable operational costs are an important consideration for long-range planning, and USNORTHCOM is researching various platforms that can provide affordable and capable operations. Those options include unmanned systems of all sizes, especially novel long endurance platforms that can be used to complement, and potentially reduce the reliance on, systems such as the P-8 and RC-135.

32. Senator SCOTT. Admiral Holsey, the Administration has prioritized countering Transnational Criminal Organizations, including Latin American drug cartels, from threatening U.S. interests. What additional assets could you deploy to support Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) to increase the frequency and success rate of cocaine interdiction operations, including commercially available support that DOD's counter-drug fund had previously funded?

Admiral HOLSEY. I believe that with increased investment, JIATF-S can make a significant impact in the fight against TCOs and aid in securing our Nation's borders. Additional surface assets and Maritime Patrol Aircraft would immediately increase the success rate of cocaine interdictions. As demonstrated by our CN surge operations in 2020, with more assets, JIATF-S can increase the success rate of illicit drug interdictions. Deploying more Coast Guard Cutters, particularly National Security Cutters, and Navy CRUDES with USCG Law Enforcement Detachments would significantly bolster the Task Force's capabilities. The sensor capabilities on these types of vessels make them very effective for the CN mission.

Commercial capabilities, such as the Ship Special Mission (SSM), a contracted mothership that extends Partner Nation interceptors' range for high-seas interdictions, have helped offset gaps in DOD surface assets for unsourced validated requirements. For example, the SSM supported 23 disruptions in FY24, a 56 percent increase from FY22 and FY23.

In addition to surface assets, increasing the availability of Maritime Patrol Aircraft is crucial to enhancing JIATFS interdiction capabilities. Commercial air ISR capabilities can help offset these DOD resourcing gaps and provide critical support to our operations.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

PANAMA CANAL

33. Senator BUDD. Admiral Holsey, if conflict broke out in the Pacific, can SOUTHCOM ensure freedom of passage for our Navy through the Panama Canal with their assigned forces? If not, what additional forces or capabilities would you need?

Admiral HOLSEY. My number one priority is warfighter readiness. SOUTHCOM has comprehensive plans to preserve neutrality of the Canal and ensure unimpeded access. Should a specific credible threat emerge, I would request additional forces or capabilities.

SOUTHCOM works by, with and through our Allies and Partners to address defense of the canal to ensure freedom of passage. I need presence across all domains—air, sea, space, and cyber space to be effective.

RESOURCING SOUTHERN COMMAND

34. Senator BUDD. Admiral Holsey, understanding that SOUTHCOM is often resourced at less-than desired levels, what military options do you recommend to mitigate national security risks as efficiently as possible?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM must be credible, present, and engaged with our regional partners for us to be successful. Working together with our Allies and partners to address common security challenges throughout the region is a significant

force multiplier. Our allies add operational depth and significant maritime capacity to ongoing missions, especially in support of Counter Illicit Trafficking efforts. We must continue to prioritize our efforts to build partner capacity and ensure interoperability of key partners. Our side-by-side cooperation bolsters US security and blocks out adversaries. I need presence across all domains—air, sea, space, and cyber space to be effective.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT

35. Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, the Mexican Government recently announced it would be deploying 10,000 troops from its National Guard to the border to counter the flow of drugs and illegal migration. At certain points along the border, U.S. servicemembers are stationed less than 50 yards from the wall. To what extent is the Mexican Government sharing information with you? Specifically, how is that information relayed to the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and junior soldiers manning the Military Sealift Command (MSC) on the border?

General GUILLOT. Information from the Mexican Government is shared with and through our military forces, interagency partners, such as the Department of State, Customs and Border Protection, and other law enforcement agencies. From there, information is rapidly communicated to the appropriate military personnel on the border. We currently benefit from heightened information sharing with Mexican military forces, both on the border and at sea.

Admiral HOLSEY. Operational coordination with the Mexican military is under the purview of NORTHCOM. I will defer to General Guillot.

36. General Guillot, the Mexican State police, Mexican Federal police, Mexican National Guard, transnational criminal organizations, including the cartels are all operating on the Mexican side of the border near MSC Asarco, near El Paso, Texas. Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Active Duty troops, Federalized National Guard troops, and the Texas National Guard supporting Operation Lone Star are all operating on the U.S. side of the border at MSC Asarco. Can personnel from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Defense communicate their operations at the tactical level? If so, how are commanders and DHS leaders deconflicting operations at all echelons?

General GUILLOT. Operational information between the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense is shared regularly at various echelons of command. DOD personnel have been supporting Customs and Border Patrol agents directly, with communication and tactical coordination occurring regularly. Regarding communicating operational information from the U.S. side of the border to Mexican officials, that information is shared with and through JTF-Southern Border, USNORTHCOM's interagency partners, such as the Department of State, and Border Protection, and other law enforcement agencies.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

SCOPE OF DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

37. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, please provide a complete list of Active Duty units deployed to the southern border and the estimated length of deployment for each.

General GUILLOT.

Active Duty Army Units (as of 17 March 2025)

89th Military Police (MP) Brigade (BDE) HQ until 30 September 2025

41st Combat Engineer Company (CO) until 30 September 2025

23d MP CO until 30 September 2025

401st MP CO until 30 September 2025

530th Combat Engineer Co (CEC) until 30 September 2025

716th MP Battalion (BN) until 30 September 2025

66th MP CO until 30 September 2025

202d MP CO until 30 September 2025

720th MP BN until 30 September 2025

759th MP BN until 30 September 2025

977th MP CO until 30 September 2025

549th MP CO until 30 September 2025
 569th CEC until 30 September 2025
 24th Press Camp HQ until 30 September 2025
 10th Mountain Division HQ until 30 September 2025
 2–4ID Stryker BDE Combat Team until 30 September 2025
 101st Division Sustainment BDE until 30 September 2025
 264th Combat Sustainment Support BN (-) until 30 September 2025
 A CO, 189th DSSB until 30 September 2025
 B CO, 68th Division Sustainment Support BN (-) until 30 September 2025
 C CO, 129th Division Sustainment Support BN (-) until 30 September 2025
 Field Feeding Company, 61st Quartermaster BN until 30 September 2025
 70th Movement Control Team until 30 September 2025
 19th Public Affairs Detachment until 30 September 2025
 3d Combat Aviation BDE until 15 October 2025
 2–3 GSAB until 30 September 2025

Allocated, not yet deployed:

20th Engineer BDE HHC until 30 September 2025
 19th Engineer BN until 30 September 2025
 15th Engineer CO until 30 September 2025
 687th Engineer CO until 30 September 2025

U.S. Marine Corps

1st Combat Engineer Battalion until 30 September 2025

U.S. Navy

Patrol Squadron 5 (2 P–8A AAS detachment) until 30 April 2025

Joint Sourcing

Joint Intelligence Company (Multiple units from Active Duty and Service Reserve Components sourced ISO CBP RFA25)

24x USMC, 44x USA, 34x USAF, 30x USN, 6x USSF until 30 September 2025

Joint Intelligence Task Force—Southern Border (Multiple units from Active Duty and Service Reserve Components)

29x USMC, 3x USSF, 38x USAF (currently still sourcing)

Army Reserve Units

90th Combat Sustainment BDE until 30 September 2025
 489th Engineering (EN) BN CO until 30 September 2025
 214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment until 30 September 2025
 346th MP CO until 30 September 2025
 192d Quartermaster (QM) CO until 30 September 2025
 313th Army Band CO until 27 October 2025
 808th EN CO until 30 September 2025

38. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, please list all National Guard forces that are currently participating in southern border operations and the authority under which they have deployed.

General GUILLOT. The following National Guard Units are deployed to the Southern Border. These units are activated in a Title 10 authority.

3–140th Aviation (AV) BN until 30 September 2025
 277th Ordnance (OD) CO until 30 September 2025
 724th EN BN until 30 September 2025
 152th MP CO until 30 September 2025
 877th EN CO until 30 September 2025
 144th Transportation CO until 30 September 2025
 168th MP BN until 30 September 2025
 1463th Transportation CO until 30 September 2025
 157th MP CO until 30 September 2025
 142d EN BN until 30 September 2025
 109th EN BN until 30 September 2025
 132d MP CO until 30 September 2025
 1055th Transportation CO until September 2025
 118th Transportation CO until 30 September 2025

39. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, is DOD considering using any military bases or DOD-contracted facilities within the United States for migrant detention operations?

General GUILLOT. DHS is conducting Pre-Deployment Site Surveys at several DOD locations but have yet to provide a RFA for proposed DOD support sites for OSD approval. I understand the sites under consideration include Camp Atterbury, IN; Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ; Dover AFB, DE; Camp Parks, CA; and Travis AFB, CA. Additionally, the Department of the Army has received OSD approval to support the expansion of the DHS-ICE Montana facility in El Paso, TX.

40. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, please provide a full list of tasks to which Active Duty Forces, DOD contractors, and DOD civilian employees will be assigned at the border and Guantanamo, along with a summary of functions to date and a summary of upcoming functions DOD troops will engage in.

General GUILLOT. DOD border tasks are approved within Secretary of Defense Action Memorandums in support of DHS requests for assistance. Expanded and additional (e.g., upcoming) tasks are pending Secretary of Defense approval on a case-by-case basis. These tasks, collectively, function to establish, maintain, and seal the border to ensure territorial integrity of the United States.

Current tasks include:

- Detection and Monitoring
- Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
- Maritime Patrol
- Warehousing / Logistical supply chain support
- Transportation support
- Vehicle maintenance support
- Training Support such as range safety officer, role players, and basic classroom preparation and maintenance
- Data entry support
- Light rotary wing aerial reconnaissance
- Medium rotary wing lift
- Provide airlift support to DHS to repatriate illegal aliens
- General Engineering support
- Intelligence analysis
- All-domain Intelligence Preparation of the Environment

Admiral HOLSEY. The primary function of the Department of Defense (DOD) forces at GTMO is to support Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We provide the facilities and some services/logistical support to include on island transportation of the illegal aliens (IA)'s. Control and custody remain with ICE. Our tasks include:

- Expand migrant operations, as directed, to provide additional holding space for IAs.
- Establish camp operation and expansion of camps on the leeward side of NSGB and support operations on the Windward side to meet IA holding operations.
- Enhance IA Holding Operation at the Windward Holding Facility (Camp VI).
- Conduct IA holding operations at NSGB to provide care, safety, security, and transportation as required.

41. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, how will DOD assess whether its southern border and Guantanamo operations are militarily effective?

General GUILLOT. The USNORTHCOM southern border concept plan defines measures of performance, measures of effectiveness, and clear objectives for each line of effort in the southern border mission. USNORTHCOM headquarters and supporting joint task forces, in coordination with our interagency partners, develop and track metrics daily to refine military operations and improve effectiveness.

Admiral HOLSEY. I have been tasked with increasing capacity to hold illegal aliens at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (NSGB) as repatriation efforts occur in support of DHS and ICE. At the same time, I am working with NORTHCOM to address defense of the Homeland as we look further out into the SOUTHCOM AOR and work to counter threats and address security challenges that pose a threat to the Homeland before they reach our borders. I will assess SOUTHCOM's effectiveness through that lens and our overall contributions to defense of the Homeland. Our operation's effectiveness will be measured in coordination with DOD and DHS objectives.

42. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, please describe DOD's precise role(s) in Guantanamo's migrant detention operations.

Admiral HOLSEY. The DOD has tasked SOUTHCOM to support the DHS in response to the President's Executive Order and declaration of a national emergency for the border. SOUTHCOM is supporting DHS with the transport, care and safety of illegal aliens with final deportation orders at Guantanamo Bay until they are repatriated or accepted by another country.

43. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how, if at all, are DOD personnel directly involved in the detention of any migrants at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD's role is in support to DHS/ICE. ICE maintains custody of illegal aliens and DOD helps by providing facilities and other approved services and logistics support, e.g. food, laundry, medical services, security, and utilities. To this effort, our force is comprised primarily of security personnel (Military Police), HQs staff, and logistical support.

44. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, has DOD (or any of its components) signed any memoranda of understanding or similar agreements with DHS regarding the detention of migrants at Guantanamo? Please provide a copy of any agreements if so.

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD and DHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 March 2025 that clarifies the scope of DOD support. Defer to OSD to provide the signed MOU.

45. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, describe DOD's precise role at the Migrant Operations Center (MOC) and Camp VI and how this role is currently projected to evolve.

Admiral HOLSEY. DHS operates the MOC building. SOUTHCOM is providing external security around the MOC building to support DHS/ICE with holding the low threat IAs. At Camp VI, SOUTHCOM supports DHS/ICE by providing the facility to hold High Threat Illegal Aliens and assisting with internal security. DOD supports operations at both locations by providing other approved services and logistics support. ICE retains full custody of all IAs.

46. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, there are reports that DOD personnel are guarding migrants at Camp VI. Please explain in detail who is currently guarding Camp VI and whether there are plans to change the personnel stationed at Camp VI.

Admiral HOLSEY. Camp VI is being used to support DHS/ICE with holding of high threat illegal aliens. For DOD, we have Army Military Police that provides external security and assist ICE with internal security. These Military Police are under the operational control of Joint Task Force Southern Guard.

47. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, please provide a summary of the age and gender of migrants currently being held at Guantanamo's MOC.

Admiral HOLSEY. I defer to the DHS to provide current status and numbers regarding illegal aliens at NSGB.

48. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, has DOD been informed of any plan to detain women or children at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. At this point, SOUTHCOM has not been informed of any plans by DHS to transfer any persons but unaccompanied adult males for holding at NSGB.

49. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how will DOD assess whether its Guantanamo operations are militarily effective?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM is in support of DHS for this operation. Camp operations have been sufficient to meet DHS current and projected need. We will strive to meet our obligations to support DHS while remaining good stewards of financial resources, equipment, and personnel assigned to the mission while continuing to meet our theater requirements.

COST AND PRIVATE CONTRACTORS

50. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, how is DOD tracking border and Guantanamo support activity costs and ensuring the accuracy of cost tallies?

General GUILLOT. USNORTHCOM provides inputs on expenditures by the combatant command headquarters for southern border operations to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) in accordance with the 13 April 2018 "Re-

porting Requirements for the Department of Defense Support to Department of Homeland Security in Securing the Southern Border.” For questions on broader DOD cost tracking, USNORTHCOM defers to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller), which is responsible for capturing and tracking overall costs for border operations.

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller has directed the Services and Agencies to establish accounting mechanisms to track costs of the mission. I’ve directed my Headquarters staff and Components to collect and report costs back to their Service Comptrollers and OSD Comptroller. I defer to OSD Comptroller for further details.

51. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, what was the total cost of DOD’s border deployment between 2018 to 2020?

General GUILLOT. The border deployment activation is Service funded. Costs are captured and reported to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) using Standard Financial Information System (SFIS). USNORTHCOM does not have visibility into Service financial systems to track costs.

52. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, what does DOD currently project the total cost of border and Guantanamo operations will each be this fiscal year?

General GUILLOT. USNORTHCOM defers to OUSD Comptroller which projects and tracks total costs.

Admiral HOLSEY. As the Combatant Commander, I execute the directed mission, the Services provide the forces and resources, and the Services report projected and actual costs to OSD. DOD and DHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 March 2025 that clarifies the scope of DOD support. There remain details to be defined such as the standards of care and the number of illegal aliens to be held at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. Once defined, OSD Comptroller will work with the Services to assess projected costs.

53. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, DOD previously informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that it estimates the Department will spend roughly \$900 million on its southern border deployment through the end of this fiscal year. How did DOD reach that estimate, and what assumptions underlie that estimate?

General GUILLOT. For questions regarding Department projections, USNORTHCOM defers to OUSD Comptroller, which is responsible for projecting DOD costs.

54. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what does DOD project the total cost of Guantanamo’s MOC operations will be this fiscal year? If no single cost estimate is available, please provide a series of cost estimates based on the different scenarios for which DOD is planning.

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD and DHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 March 2025 that refines the scope of DOD support. There remain details to be defined such as the standards of care and the number of illegal aliens to be held at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. Once defined, OSD Comptroller will work with the Services to assess projected costs.

55. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, what have been the total operational costs of DOD’s border and Guantanamo deployment since January 20, 2025?

General GUILLOT. For questions regarding Department cost assessments, USNORTHCOM defers to the OUSD Comptroller.

Admiral HOLSEY. As Combatant Commander, I execute the mission, and the Services provide the forces and resources. I’m appreciative of the support received from all the Services. In terms of costs, OSD Comptroller has centralized cost reporting and collects costs from all Services and Agencies. FY25 obligations for Operation Southern Guard are approximately \$31M as of 27 March 2025, which covers transportation, supplies, facilities improvements and repairs, and base operation support.

56. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, what budgetary account will be used to pay for the border and Guantanamo operations?

General GUILLOT. OUSD Comptroller determines the budgetary accounts used for border operations. Costs are captured and reported to the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) using Standard Financial Information System (SFIS).

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller has centralized cost reporting and collects costs from all Services and Agencies. Per OSD’s cost reporting system, Service Operations and Maintenance accounts have been used to pay for Operations Southern

Guard to date. My Headquarters' costs for temporary duty travel and civilian over-time have been paid using Army Operations and Maintenance appropriations. I defer to OSD Comptroller and the Services for further details.

57. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, which border and Guantanamo expenses, if any, is DOD paying for on a non-reimbursable basis? If DOD is waiving reimbursement for any expenses under title 10 U.S.C. § 277, provide the justification for doing so.

General GUILLOT. In accordance with Secretary of Defense Guidance, DOD is supporting Department of Homeland Security on a non-reimbursable basis under authorities provided by Section 1059 of the 2016 NDAA.

Admiral HOLSEY. I am presently tasked to provide support to DHS on a non-reimbursable basis. The determination of reimbursement is made by OSD, and I defer to OSD.

58. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, does DOD currently have a contract with any private contractor for migrant-related border or Guantanamo operations? If so, for each contract, please share the name of the company, the tasks it performs under the contract, the amount and duration of the contract, and a copy of the contract.

General GUILLOT. USNORTHCOM does not have any contracts with any private contractor for migrant-related border operations that directly engage in migrant-related activities such as processing, holding, transporting, feeding, billeting. Current contracts are limited to operations to secure the border, force sustainment, and logistics. Our current southern border contract support is conducted through Army North (ARNORTH), Joint Task Force North (JTF-N), and Joint Task Force Southern Border (JTF-SB).

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM has not entered into any new contracts to support IA holding operations at NSGB. Instead, the Navy has temporarily modified existing Base Operating Service (BOS) Contracts to meet immediate needs until the requirements have been defined and negotiated between DOD and the DHS, namely, the number of IAs to be housed at GTMO and the standards of care for those IAs.

The contracts that have been modified to support Illegal Alien Holding Operations at NSGB up to this point include:

Company	Task	Fiscal Year 2025 Est. Cost
Kira Construction Management LLC	Port / Ferry Operation Services: Support increased ferry operations to/from the airfield and holding facilities and concrete delivery for security fencing construction.	\$170,000.
Pentad Corporation	Food Galley Services: Leeward Galley contract to feed IAs and U.S. Forces for 90 days with two 30 days options..	\$2.02 million contract with \$750,000 for 90 days.
Vectrus (GCSC)	Security Fencing and Other Limited Services: Constructed ~1 mile of security fencing around Camps L1 and L6, planning services, and mobile light plants.	\$3.795 million.
Vectrus (GCSC)	Base Operating Services (BOS) Blanket Task Order: Providing sustainment services.	\$300,000.

59. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, given the Government Accountability Office's 2021 findings that DOD's estimates of the costs of its border operations were "not reliable" and excluded "significant costs," what steps is DOD now taking to ensure the reliability of its cost estimates for border and Guantanamo operations?

General GUILLOT. OUSD Comptroller has directed the Department of Defense to track costs using a Standard Contingency Code per the 13 April 2018 Reporting Requirements for the Department of Defense Support to Department of Homeland Security in Securing the Southern Border.

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller is working with the Services to establish cost estimates for the operation. I defer to OSD Comptroller for details.

60. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what does DOD project the cost per bed will be at Guantanamo's MOC and at Guantanamo's Camp VI?

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller is working with the Services to establish cost estimates for the operation. I defer to OSD Comptroller for details.

61. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how much does DOD expect to spend to get the permanent infrastructure at Guantanamo up to habitable standards this fiscal year?

Admiral HOLSEY. At this time, no permanent structure construction is planned or requested.

62. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how much does DOD expect to spend on soft-sided facilities at Guantanamo this fiscal year?

Admiral HOLSEY. I defer to OSD for further details.

63. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, how much does DOD expect to spend on deploying personnel to the border and Guantanamo this fiscal year?

General GUILLOT. While I defer to the OUSD Comptroller for its cost estimates, it is my understanding that OUSD Comptroller and the Joint Staff are currently preparing FY25 DOD estimates to deploy personnel to the border.

Admiral HOLSEY. OSD Comptroller has directed the Services and Agencies to establish accounting mechanisms to track costs of the mission. I defer to OSD Comptroller for further details.

READINESS

64. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, please describe how DOD is assessing the impact of southern border and Guantanamo operations on troops' readiness.

General GUILLOT. As the Commander of USNORTHCOM, I am responsible for assessing the readiness to execute the missions assigned to USNORTHCOM. To date, the forces I have been provided have been performing all assigned missions admirably. I defer to the military Services for assessments of troop readiness within their respective services as the force providers assess the impact of current and emerging requirements and the impact on their readiness to provide ready and trained forces for other current and future requirements. I will continue to coordinate with force providers to ensure they have an accurate picture on current and upcoming requirements.

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM is monitoring impact to unit and mission readiness through monthly readiness reporting in the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS). Units, especially JTF GTMO and ARSOUTH continue to evaluate and will update impacts during daily updates, if urgent, or in the monthly DRRS reports. Additionally, I routinely engage my service components and staff to better understand the mission impacts on troop readiness in addition to utilizing the official DOD system of record to gauge readiness (DRRS).

65. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, have any training exercises been delayed or canceled due to the recent deployments to the southern border or Guantanamo? Please provide the date and type of any affected training exercises and explain which units were impacted.

General GUILLOT. No NORAD and USNORTHCOM exercises have been delayed or canceled due to recent deployments and Southern Border operations. However, although not due to deployments, the Tier 1 ARDENT SENTRY 25 exercise that took place 12–18 March 2025 was scaled down to a Headquarters-response cell level of participation to meet cross-Combatant Command objectives. N&NC Components also scaled their participation in AS 25 to a response cell to address competing mission demands.

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM has not canceled or delayed any training exercises due to the recent deployments to NSGB.

66. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, is DOD separating units when sending personnel to the border or Guantanamo? If so, please explain the rationale for doing so, given evidence of how doing so between 2018 to 2020 harmed units' readiness.

General GUILLOT. I defer to the Joint Staff regarding the sourcing of forces assigned to the mission on the southern border.

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM has requested specific capabilities from DOD but does not make the overall determination of which units from across the military services will meet the request. In some instances, the services provide a capability

in the appropriate size for the mission, such as a Military Police Company or Field Feeding Team, while retaining some home station capabilities and depth.

67. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) previously found that “DOD has not defined what it considers to be a manageable impact on readiness.” How is DOD determining when an anticipated impact on readiness is “manageable”?

General GUILLOT. I defer to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding Department-level assessments of readiness.

Admiral HOLSEY. Within the SOUTHCOM theater, we see this operation as having a manageable impact on readiness. As we continue to execute our other priority missions SOUTHCOM monitors impact to unit and mission readiness through monthly readiness reporting in the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS). Units continually evaluate readiness and will update impacts as appropriate.

MORALE

68. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, how, if at all, is DOD monitoring the impact of the border deployment on troops’ morale?

General GUILLOT. Troop morale is monitored at all echelons of command. All units deployed to the southern border have a commander and senior enlisted leader who conduct unit circulation as a means of monitoring unit performance and morale. These leaders report their assessment of unit morale up the chain of command.

Admiral HOLSEY. Commanders and all leaders routinely assess the morale of our highly trained forces to ensure they remain focused on the mission.

69. Senator WARREN. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, will DOD commit to inform the Senate Armed Services Committee if it sees patterns of suicide, substance abuse, and other warning signs that the border operations are degrading servicemembers’ mental health?

General GUILLOT. I commit to working with Department to ensure our military personnel receive the necessary care and treatment in support of the southern border mission and will always be transparent with the Committee.

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM will continue to report suicide and substance abuse events consistent with established reporting requirements and procedures, and Commanders will continue to assess the behavioral health and readiness of their units. All servicemembers deployed in support of JTF-SG have access to NSGB’s hospital, programs and services, including Morale, Welfare & Recreation, and Behavioral Health. JTF-SG has a mobile hospital with primary care, laboratory, and X-Ray capabilities. It is staffed with two (2) behavioral health personnel.

CONDUCT AND CONDITIONS

70. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, what are the rules of engagement that govern each unit deployed to the border?

General GUILLOT. Units deployed to the Southern Border are operating under the Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) established in CJCSI 3121.01. NORTHCOM has further clarified arming guidance, specifically to ensure force protection, for the forces in close proximity to the Southern Border.

71. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, are servicemembers authorized to use force at the border?

General GUILLOT. The SRUF authorizes servicemembers to use appropriate force in self-defense. The Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) apply to actions taken by U.S. commanders and their forces during all DOD civil support and routine Military Department functions occurring inside U.S. territory or territorial seas. SRUF sets out the basic self-defense posture, and the use of force is only authorized when applicable pursuant to the SRUF.

72. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, in 2020, the DOD Inspector General found that some troops did not receive Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) training. What percentage of troops currently deployed to the border have completed training on when and how they can use force? Please describe the training they receive on the authorization of military force.

General GUILLOT. All servicemembers arriving for duty at the Southern Border receive Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) training as part of the Joint Reception, Staging, Onward-Movement, and Integration (JRSOI) process. The SRUF

training consists of instructional discussion followed by a series of scenario-based vignettes.

73. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, are servicemembers under DOD's command authorized to use force against unarmed civilians at the border?

General GUILLOT. SRUF sets out the basic self-defense posture, and the use of force against unarmed civilians is only authorized when applicable pursuant to the SRUF.

The Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) apply to actions taken by U.S. commanders and their forces during all DOD civil support and routine Military Department functions occurring inside U.S. territory or territorial seas.

74. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, under what circumstances, if any, are servicemembers under DOD's command authorized to make arrests at the border?

General GUILLOT. Servicemembers are not authorized to make arrests at the border. CBP conducts all law enforcement functions at the border.

75. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, how does DOD handle encounters with citizens at the border?

General GUILLOT. DOD notifies CBP upon detection of people/groups attempting to cross the border illegally and CBP takes appropriate actions.

76. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, are any noncitizens currently being held at the Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado? If so, please describe the authority under which they are being held and the protocol for them to access legal counsel.

General GUILLOT. According to reporting by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, no illegal aliens were held at Buckley Space Force Base.

77. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, has DHS informed DOD of whether Guantanamo's MOC will be used to hold any migrants who have not received final orders of removal?

General GUILLOT. I defer to the Commander of U.S. Southern Command regarding matters related to Guantanamo Bay, and to the Office of the Secretary of Defense regarding Department-level discussions.

78. Senator WARREN. General Guillot, have any migrants currently at the MOC not received final removal orders?

General GUILLOT. I defer to the Commander of U.S. Southern Command regarding matters related to Guantanamo Bay.

79. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, are migrants at the MOC or Camp VI free to leave or are they being formally detained? If they are detained, under what legal authority are migrants being detained at Guantanamo's Camp VI?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM is providing DOD facilities and limited types of services/logistics to DHS in response to a Request for Assistance from the Secretary of DHS. DHS detains these IAs in enforcement of U.S. immigration law, and DHS retains full legal custody and control over the illegal aliens at the MOC and Camp VI on NSGB. At this point, DHS has transferred only those illegal aliens with a final removal status to NSGB. Historically, any migrants encountered at sea by USCG are under full custody of DHS or their custody is transferred to the Department of State while held at the MOC.

80. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, GAO has found that DHS has detained U.S. citizens after mistaking them for foreign nationals. What steps, if any, does DOD take to confirm the identity of an individual before taking them into custody at a military facility or on a military aircraft?

Admiral HOLSEY. All individuals transferred to NSGB have been evaluated through DHS and ICE procedures and are the subject of final removal orders and remain in the full legal custody and control of DHS/ICE.

81. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, to date, has DOD, to the Department's knowledge, accidentally or otherwise, taken any U.S. citizens into custody at a military facility or on a military aircraft? If so, please list all such circumstances, including an explanation for how and why these individuals were taken into custody, and how long they were in DOD custody.

Admiral HOLSEY. We are not aware of any U.S. citizens transported to NSGB under DHS control or custody. We are informed by DHS that all persons transferred to NSGB have been the subject of final removal orders under U.S. immigration law.

82. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what is DOD's timeline for constructing permanent structures at the MOC and what will be the capacity of the permanent structures that DOD is constructing?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM is still assessing future Illegal Alien holding options at Naval Station Guantanamo. At this time, no permanent structure construction is planned or requested.

83. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how long on average do you anticipate a migrant will be held in a tent or other soft-sided facility?

Admiral HOLSEY. Currently, no IAs are being held in the tents or soft-sided facilities.

84. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what term is being used to describe noncitizens deported from the United States to Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. The term being used to describe noncitizens removed by DHS from the U.S. to NSGB is 'illegal alien.'

85. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what is DOD's plan for migrants held at Guantanamo whose home country will not accept their repatriation?

Admiral HOLSEY. I defer to the DHS to answer this question.

86. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what is DOD's plan for evacuating the MOC during extreme weather events?

Admiral HOLSEY. Naval Region South-East is finalizing an extreme weather shelter plan with all stakeholders at NSGB. We will develop options, tailored to the extreme weather threat, to include shelter in place options and evacuation options.

87. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what Government entities, if any, will conduct onsite inspections of Guantanamo's MOC and Camp VI, and at what frequency? Will they publicly report on findings?

Admiral HOLSEY. Our standards of care for both Camp VI and the MOC are based on interim Standard Operating Procedures utilized by DHS as the lead Federal agency, with the DOD supporting. The frequency of inspections and any reporting process within DOD/DHS still needs to be determined, consistent with the newly signed MOU between the departments.

88. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, has DOD received requests for access to the MOC or Camp VI by legal service providers, humanitarian organizations, press, or other members of the public and how have requests been handled?

Admiral HOLSEY. DHS is the lead Federal agency for immigration enforcement. SOUTHCOM is providing support to DHS illegal alien holding operations on Guantanamo Bay. DHS/ICE retains legal, physical, and administrative custody of illegal aliens in their charge, and the roles and responsibilities for support are dictated by a Memorandum of Agreement and ICE Detention Standards. All requests for access are immediately forwarded to DHS and DOD Policy for coordination with DHS/ICE and JTF Southern Guard personnel co-located on Guantanamo Bay for their action as appropriate.

89. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, describe DOD's plans for facilitating migrants' access to counsel.

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD is in support of DHS requirements, to include access to counsel. On February 19, 2025, DHS posted written notice, in English and Spanish, of the procedure for illegal aliens to request to place a private, unmonitored telephone call to counsel. For illegal aliens housed at Camp VI, counsel calls are conducted in a building adjacent to Camp VI. It has six telephones in six separate rooms, each with a table and chair. During the calls, guards maintain line of sight through the use of video monitoring (which does not include sound). DOD facilitates DHS movements of the illegal aliens for these calls as needed. For low threat illegal aliens housed at the MOC on the Leeward side of the Naval Station, counsel calls occur from a private room in the MOC, which is under the control of DHS.

90. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, has the Department of Homeland Security requested that DOD facilitate confidential legal phone calls or legal visits?

Admiral HOLSEY. See above response for coordination with DHS for use of DOD facilities.

91. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what steps is DOD taking to make the MOC and Camp VI facilities habitable for the number of migrants expected to be held at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. DHS is responsible for the MOC building. SOUTHCOM and JTF-SG are responsible for the Camp VI facility, with ICE responsible for maintaining custody of IAs. SOUTHCOM has a facilities maintenance team that responds to any maintenance requirements for cells in Camp VI, or to assist ICE. DOD is committed to meeting standards of care for IAs to include meals and hygiene.

92. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, are any migrants currently housed in spaces with black mold, leaks, electrical fires, other housing quality issues?

Admiral HOLSEY. JTF-SG relocated some IAs after individual cells began to experience clogged toilets and plumbing issues after excessive use or misuse. The damaged cells have been repaired and are currently available for reoccupation. I defer to DHS to provide information on conditions in the MOC building.

93. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, as of the date of your response, what is the current capacity of the MOC at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. The DHS/ICE run MOC building capacity is 50 IAs. JTF-SG has established tents with cots in the MOC West and East overflow areas that could house an additional 520 IAs. These are the same tents and cots U.S. service members routinely live in.

94. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, how long does DOD anticipate it will take DOD to complete the first phase of the MOC expansion to 2,000 migrants?

Admiral HOLSEY. JTF-SG has already established the physical space for holding up to 2,500 IAs if needed.

95. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what is the maximum number of migrants for whom Guantanamo's MOC currently has the capacity and resources to provide sanitary facilities, medical care, food, and potable water?

Admiral HOLSEY. We currently have combined capacity for 570 IAs in the MOC building and MOC overflow tents, with restrooms, showers, food, water, and cots. DHS is responsible for medical and plans to meter their medical footprint based on the IA population in the MOC. DOD is available to provide other authorized medical care if needed.

96. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, please explain the standards of care that DOD personnel are bound to provide at Guantanamo and provide a copy of DOD's protocol, if any, on standards of care.

Admiral HOLSEY. Illegal Alien Holding Operations on NSGB are in support of DHS execution of national immigration law, ICE maintains legal custody of the illegal alien population and is responsible for applying standards of care consistent with care required to provide under US law and regulations. An MOU between DOD and DHS on roles and responsibilities for holding illegal aliens at NSGB was signed on March 7, 2025. It provides for broad standards of care with a goal to have DOD and DHS agree additional requirements within 15 days. Those discussions are underway to ensure proper custody with care and treatment in accordance with U.S. law.

97. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what emergency and non-emergency medical services are provided to migrants at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD may provide IAs with preventative health services, first aid and emergent life-saving medical care if needed subject to capability and availability on NSGB. DHS is responsible for MEDEVAC for any higher level of care needed that is not provided by DOD for IAs at NSGB.

98. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, what is the number of medical providers available to treat migrants at Guantanamo?

Admiral HOLSEY. As are pre-screened to prevent any medically fragile adult males from being held at GTMO. DHS is the lead agency for medical care of IAs and currently has more than 15 providers at NSGB. DOD is available to provide preventative health services, first aid and emergent life-saving medical care if needed.

99. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, are there plans to downgrade the naval hospital at Guantanamo to a clinic? If so, what services would no longer be available to migrants?

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD may provide IAs with preventative health services, first aid and emergent life-saving medical care if needed subject to capability and availability on NSGB. DHS is responsible for MEDEVAC for any higher level of care needed that is not provided by DOD for IAs at NSGB.

100. Senator WARREN. Admiral Holsey, to date, have there been any injuries, medical events, or fatalities of migrants at Guantanamo? If so, please provide a list of all such incidents.

Admiral HOLSEY. DHS is the lead agency for medical care of IAs. There have been no fatalities of IAs at NSGB but there have been 10 cases of IAs committing acts of self-harm, 3 IAs treated for hyperglycemia, and 5 cases of dental work. All cases were provided appropriate medical treatment for their corresponding condition.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

JOINT TASK FORCE GUANTANAMO EXPANSION EFFECTS ON READINESS

101. Senator KELLY. Admiral Holsey, SOUTHCOM has been asked to dramatically expand the Migrant Operations Center at Naval Station Guantanamo to accommodate up to 30,000 migrants, well beyond the level ever held there. When you consider the cost of transporting a migrant there before deporting them to Cuba, it's clear this is about headlines and intimidation. SOUTHCOM is already balancing many critical missions, including counter-narcotics operations. Any resources dedicated to expanding detention capacity at Guantanamo—whether personnel, funding, or infrastructure—must come from somewhere. What are specific tradeoffs that SOUTHCOM must make to accommodate this mission?

Admiral HOLSEY. SOUTHCOM is monitoring impact to unit and mission readiness through monthly readiness reporting in the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS). As of the 1 March report, SOUTHCOM components have not reflected any impact to their readiness, apart from the need for additional augmentees from force providers, if an additional contingency should arise. Units, especially JTF GTMO and ARSOUTH are continuing to evaluate and will update impacts during daily updates, if urgent, or in monthly DRRS reports.

102. Senator KELLY. Admiral Holsey, how many ICE personnel are stationed at Guantanamo now?

Admiral HOLSEY. ICE personnel currently supporting this mission at NSGB fall under DHS. At the time of this response, there are 20 ICE officers and 70 ICE contracted guards.

103. Senator KELLY. Admiral Holsey, what is the division of duties between SOUTHCOM and DHS as it relates to the immigration detainees?

Admiral HOLSEY. DOD and SOUTHCOM are in a support role to DHS and ICE. ICE is responsible for the custody of all IAs at NSGB. DOD military police augment the ICE contract guards with interior security, whereas U.S. Marines provide perimeter security exterior to the camps.

104. Senator KELLY. Admiral Holsey, are the U.S. servicemembers serving in Guantanamo Bay trained on non-combatant detainee operations in accordance with applicable laws and regulations?

Admiral HOLSEY. Yes, but this is not a DOD non-combatant detainee operation under DODD 2310.01E. I want to clearly distinguish the Illegal Alien Holding Operations in support of DHS from the Law of War Detention Operations and Military Commissions. They have separate guard forces and are completely different missions. For the Illegal Alien Holding Operations, specific training in line with ICE detention standards is being reviewed. All interactions with the illegal alien population in ICE custody ensure their humane treatment and safety and security of all personnel.

105. Senator KELLY. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, I am deeply concerned about cartels and the flow of drugs across the southern border. NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM are uniquely positioned to provide counter narcotics support to prevent the manufacturing of fentanyl with precursors imported from China. NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM have long supported counter narcotics and human trafficking operations across the southern border. What have you seen within your areas regarding the importation of Fentanyl precursors from China?

General GUILLOT. China continues to be the primary source for precursor chemicals used to produce fentanyl. These precursor chemicals make their way to Mexico through air and maritime conveyances and are often concealed in legitimate goods that are mislabeled or routed through third party countries. However, not all precursors used in the production of illegal drugs are themselves illegal. Supply chain disruption is made more difficult by the unlawful diversion of otherwise lawful dual-use chemicals imported for legitimate business purposes. Additionally, the chemical companies often communicate directly with customers through encrypted platforms and accept cryptocurrency payments which reduce their risk of detection by law enforcement.

Admiral HOLSEY. We are not seeing fentanyl trafficking in the maritime domain. Legal fentanyl precursors are shipped into Mexico. Mexican Cartels produce finished fentanyl in Mexico and traffic it over the Southwest U.S. land border. Maritime interdictions directly support investigations into transnational criminal networks involved in fentanyl productions/trafficking and other criminal activity.

The majority of illicit fentanyl synthesis occurs in Mexico, and we do not have confirmed cases of any illicit fentanyl synthesis in the SOUTHCOM AOR. However, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Guatemala are identified as potential hotspots for fentanyl supply manufacturing.

106. Senator KELLY. General Guillot and Admiral Holsey, I know much of your work on counter narcotics efforts requires collaboration and cooperation from our partners in the region. I worry the Administration's actions using the military for deportations and threatening tariffs appear to be creating unnecessary tensions with our regional partners. What does that cooperation look like today and what can be done to improve cooperation toward your efforts in the region?

General GUILLOT. The United States-Mexico military-to-military relationship is strong and resilient. My Mexican military counterparts and I have regular communications to facilitate transparency and coordination, to reiterate mutual respect for sovereignty, and to ensure the combined security of the border. USNORTHCOM security cooperation efforts with Mexico focus on homeland defense and addressing the following mutual defense priorities: (1) Domain Awareness, (2) Domain Control, and (3) Institutional Strengthening. USNORTHCOM invests over \$25 million annually in Title 10 security cooperation funding with the Mexican military and includes significant investments in air interception, intel sharing, ISR, cUAS, riverine and littoral capabilities, counter-WMD, SOF capabilities, logistics, training, equipment, exercises, and subject matter expert exchanges with the Mexican Secretariats of National Defense and Navy. These security cooperation efforts address long-term North American defense priorities while enabling Mexico's border security and counter transnational criminal organization operations. With sufficient resources, our existing USNORTHCOM managed bilateral framework could be increasingly leveraged to support emerging southern border and territorial integrity requirements.

Admiral HOLSEY. Overall, our mil-mil engagements in the region remain strong, especially in areas like counternarcotics and targeting cartels that threaten both the United States and our partners. Our approach to strengthening military and security partnerships takes the 'long view,' through joint operations, multinational exercises, and training, we build a foundation of trust and mutual understanding that endures despite any geopolitical changes.

In the area of counternarcotics, our partners are eager to work with us to counter the flow of drugs, people, and other illicit traffic by cartels and criminal groups, and our collaboration in this area has never been stronger. Partners and Allies now contribute to ~80 percent of JIATF South interdictions, and we are deepening CN cooperation nations like the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Guatemala, who welcome our engagement and share our commitment to hemispheric security. With the recent designation of certain cartels and criminal groups as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), many nations are expressing an interest in even greater CN cooperation. Simply put, our partners are with us in this fight, and I anticipate a deepening of our defense and security relationships in the year ahead.

Working by, with, and through our partners to address security challenges in the hemisphere is what we do every day. But we see increasing competition in security cooperation with malign State actors like the China and Russia. That is why it is so critical for us to continue to meet our partners at their needs, delivering security solutions to address common security challenges that also impacts United States national security interests.

