

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE LLOYD J. AUSTIN III
PREPARED REMARKS BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
March 29, 2023

Introduction

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the President’s budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

On behalf of Deputy Secretary Hicks, the leadership of the Department of Defense, and our Service members, civilian workforce, and their families, let me also thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work to defend the United States. I also want to thank the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, and the Department’s Comptroller, Mike McCord, who are both testifying with me and are vital partners in realizing the Department’s priorities.

The President’s \$842 billion defense budget request for FY 2024 provides us with the capabilities and investments to advance our three key priorities: defending the nation, taking care of our people, and succeeding through teamwork.

This is a strategy-driven budget that provides the resources to continue to implement our 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the President’s National Security Strategy. This budget will also enable us to strengthen our deterrent and defensive capabilities across domains, informed by our 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and our 2022 Missile Defense Review.

As President Biden has said, we are in a “decisive decade,” and the choices that we make today will set our course for generations to come—not just for the United States but for the world. So the Department is rising to meet this moment, seizing on opportunities to outpace our competitors, strengthen our security, and move our world toward a more secure future.

As our National Defense Strategy makes clear, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the Department’s pacing challenge. To meet this challenge, the Department is honing new operational concepts, deploying cutting-edge capabilities, and making essential investments for the long term. This budget request shows it, including requests for the Department’s largest procurement and R&D budgets ever—\$170 billion and \$145 billion respectively. And our budget request will also help us meet the acute threat from Russia, as Russia’s unprovoked war of choice against Ukraine is now in its second year.

To maintain our edge, this budget will invest in vital technological advancements for the Joint Force, while also reflecting the need to eliminate capabilities that no longer best serve our national defense. Such decisions can be difficult, but they will enable us to invest in the advanced programs that our security demands.

The Department is also intensely focused on taking care of our people, who remain our greatest asset. This budget invests in significant quality-of-life improvements, including the largest military pay raise in 22 years and the largest civilian pay raise in 43 years. We remain focused on continuing to recruit, retain, and develop the best talent from across the country to serve in both uniformed and civilian roles.

We owe it to our outstanding Service members, civilian employees, and their families to provide the support that they need to thrive. We also owe them environments that reward excellence, promote teamwork, and are free from harassment and abuse. So, we are implementing military justice reforms, fighting sexual assault, and redoubling our efforts to end suicide in our ranks. These challenges are personal priorities for me, and this budget paves the way for even more progress.

We rely on teamwork within our Department and beyond it—including with our interagency colleagues, Congress, the defense industrial base, and our peerless network of Allies and Partners worldwide. That network is a strategic advantage that no competitor can match. From rallying the world to support Ukraine’s fight for freedom to conducting joint exercises in the Indo-Pacific with like-minded countries, our Allies and Partners are a huge force multiplier. They magnify our power, advance our shared security interests, and help uphold a world that is free, open, prosperous, and secure, and this budget will support the security partnerships that make America even stronger.

I have never been more confident in the power of our fighting force and the talents of our civilian workforce. The FY 2024 budget request will help ensure that we meet America’s national security challenges and use this decisive decade to defend our democracy and forge a world of greater security, prosperity, and liberty. I therefore ask for your support of our budget and our mission as Congress writes authorizing and appropriations bills in the months ahead.

Defending the Nation

We are deeply aware of our responsibility to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. This budget request has been carefully prepared to provide the resources for the objectives laid out in our 2022 NDS, Nuclear Posture Review, and Missile Defense Review.

The NDS directs the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence, with the PRC as our pacing challenge. The NDS also directs the Department to tackle the acute threat of Russia, as well as the persistent threats from Iran, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and global terrorist groups.

The NDS clearly articulates our priorities: defend the homeland from the growing, multi-domain challenge posed by the PRC; deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our Partners; deter aggression, while preparing to prevail in conflict if necessary, by prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, followed by the Russian challenge in Europe; and build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

Within the Department, the NDS is our North Star, and we have aligned our processes, policies, and plans to implement it. The FY 2024 budget is the latest concrete manifestation of our strategy—and its deep recognition that the PRC presents a challenge now and in the years to come.

Prioritizing the PRC as Our Pacing Challenge

In recent decades, the PRC has demonstrated both the will and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to reshape its region and the international order to suit its preferences. The United States will not let that happen. This budget will enable us to continue executing our strategy and outpacing the PRC, across all timeframes and domains.

Through the FY 2024 budget, we will strengthen U.S. deterrence and continue advancing new operational concepts, deploying cutting-edge capabilities across all domains, and investing in the innovations that we will need in the future. Through a \$9.1 billion request for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, the largest ever, the Department is expanding the scope and scale of our activities to reinforce security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthen deterrence, and bolster our advantages and those of our Allies and Partners.

The Department is also investing in a more resilient posture across the Indo-Pacific region. For example, in Japan, Australia, Guam, and the Compact of Free Association States, we are forward-stationing and deploying more capable forces even as we make major infrastructure investments in airfields, logistics, domain awareness, and resilience. In addition, throughout Southeast Asia, we are executing rotational deployments, logistics cooperation, and targeted security assistance to strengthen our partnerships, deepen our interoperability, and enhance our collective readiness. This budget allows us to continue to support Taiwan's self-defense, consistent with our longstanding commitments enumerated in the Taiwan Relations Act, the three U.S.-PRC Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances.

Across the Indo-Pacific region, we have increased the complexity and scale of our exercises and operations. In addition to building interoperability with our Allies and Partners, we are experimenting to build our warfighting advantages, which will help us further refine our operating concepts and investments. This budget request will enable us to continue that crucial work.

Meeting the Acute Threat of Russian Aggression

Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine poses a historic challenge to European and global security. Russia's campaign of conquest is also an attack on the rules-based international order that has helped to make the world safer and more secure since its creation in the aftermath of World War II. If Russia succeeds, it would send a message to other aggressor nations that they can attack and conquer their neighbors. With U.S. leadership, a broad coalition of Allies and Partners have rallied to help support Ukraine's defense of its sovereignty.

Over the past year, the United States has committed more than \$32 billion in game-changing security assistance to support Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression. This has helped meet

Ukraine’s most urgent needs—including for air defense, artillery systems, tanks and other armored vehicles, and other crucial capabilities—and it has translated to tangible gains on the battlefield. In the year since Russia’s unjust war of aggression began, Ukraine’s military forces have won the battles of Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson—and they have inspired the world with their courage and resilience.

We will continue to support Ukraine’s fight for freedom for as long as it takes. To keep pace with Ukraine’s urgent security needs even as we maintain our own readiness, we are pushing to expand production from the defense industrial base. We are focused on increasing the resiliency of supply chains that are critical for national security. And we are focused on accountability of the security assistance that we have provided.

Our NATO Allies face a historic challenge from Putin’s aggressive Russia, and we are making significant investments in bolstering European security. Those build on foundational investments in posture and presence that we have made in Europe since Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine and seizure of the Crimea region. These investments paid dividends in 2022 when we rapidly surged an additional 20,000 U.S. forces into the European theater to deter Russian aggression and reassure our NATO Allies. With little advance notice, the United States deployed additional combat power, repositioned U.S. forces already in Europe, and integrated deploying forces with prepositioned stocks of munitions and supplies. Our continued investments in posture and presence in Europe help deter Russian aggression against NATO—now and in the future.

Tackling Advanced and Persistent Threats

We remain vigilant against the advanced and persistent threats from the DPRK, Iran, and global terrorist organizations.

We continue to shore up security on the Korean Peninsula despite the DPRK’s provocations, including through bilateral and trilateral cooperation. We will continue to stand with our Allies, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. We remain steadfast and ironclad in our extended deterrence commitments to the ROK and Japan, and we continue to demonstrate our ability to respond rapidly and firmly to any DPRK provocation. We are working to strengthen and modernize our alliances with the ROK and Japan and will continue to ensure that our forces in and around the Korean Peninsula are ready to “Fight Tonight” in the event of DPRK aggression.

Iran’s nuclear program, its dangerous proxies, its support for terrorism, its cyber threats, and its proliferation of one-way attack unmanned aerial systems (UAS) all undermine Middle East security and threaten U.S. forces and Partners. We have acted decisively when Iran-backed militia groups have attacked U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. As Iran deepens its partnership with Russia, including Russian military support to Tehran in return for Iranian one-way attack UAS to deploy in Ukraine, we are developing and fielding effective approaches to counter the proliferating threats from Iran’s UAS. This budget request seeks to tackle these persistent challenges through investments in integrated air and missile defense, maritime domain awareness, and counter-UAS systems. We have repeatedly demonstrated our ability to deploy combat-credible forces into the region to deter potential Iranian aggression, and we will continue to take necessary and proportionate military action to defend U.S. forces and facilities from

attack, or threat of attack, from Iran or Iran-backed proxies. The United States will support and strengthen partnerships with countries that subscribe to the rules-based international order, and we will make sure those countries can defend themselves against foreign threats. These actions have the added benefit of demonstrating our commitment to the region's security that will offset the efforts by external powers to reshape the region in their interest and to our detriment.

Meanwhile, ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and other terrorist groups continue to threaten the security of the United States, our citizens, and our Partners in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. We are investing in a modernized, over-the-horizon counterterrorism architecture to prevent future attacks on our citizens and the U.S. homeland, and we have proven our continued ability to remove the most threatening al-Qa'ida and ISIS operatives from the battlefield.

One legislative authority that is key to our ability to tackle these advanced and persistent threats—Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act—expires at the end of this year. Section 702 provides essential, irreplaceable insights on the activities of critical foreign targets. The loss of this authority, or its renewal in diminished or unusable form, would profoundly damage the Department's ability to see and mitigate some of the most profound threats against the United States as well as its Allies and Partners. Reauthorization is therefore a matter of utmost priority. Along with our colleagues in the Intelligence Community and the Department of Justice, we look forward to working with this Committee and others, in order to secure Section 702's extension.

Innovating and Modernizing

The FY 2024 budget request will enable the Department to develop, acquire, and modernize across all domains to address all the above challenges, especially our competition with the PRC.

To maintain and expand our advantage over the PRC, we need to modernize not just our weapons systems but also our operational concepts and the ways that we do business. To operate effectively in a dynamic security environment, the Department is prioritizing investments to maintain a ready warfighting capability, build a skilled defense workforce, and work more effectively with our Allies and Partners.

A safe, secure, and effective U.S. nuclear deterrent is the ultimate backstop to deter strategic attacks on our country and our allies. The Department is committed to maintaining and modernizing our nuclear triad, while seeking to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national strategy. The FY 2024 budget request, including an investment of \$37.7 billion in FY 2024, fully funds the nuclear triad and nuclear command, control, and communications, demonstrating our commitment to maintain reliable and effective legacy systems while pursuing their timely replacements.

The Department is also accelerating investments in cutting-edge defense capabilities, such as uncrewed systems that can operate on the water, underwater, in the air, and on land. Integrating human-machine teaming, autonomous systems, and resilient networks will make our operations significantly faster, more lethal, and more survivable.

The FY 2024 budget request includes \$30.6 billion specifically for our munitions enterprise. It invests in modernizing and growing our munitions industrial base and expanding production capacity and procurement quantities. The Department is seeking to use the unprecedented multiyear procurement authorities provided by Congress to affordably acquire critical munitions, while bolstering our inventories and providing our industry partners with a more predictable “demand signal.”

The FY 2024 budget request makes long-term investments of \$33.3 billion in the resilience of our space architecture in the event of an attack. These investments will further expand and diversify constellations for space sensing and communications resilience, as well as augmenting our space warfighting capabilities. These steps will drive even deeper cooperation with the robust American commercial space sector.

In the cyberspace domain, this budget request makes targeted investments to speed the development and management of new cyber tools. This will help us integrate our sequentially developed Cyber Mission Force capabilities. It will also aid our transition to, and sustainment of, advanced cyber capabilities from the Department’s Science and Technology (S&T) activities. These efforts will enhance the interoperability and effectiveness of our Joint Cyberspace Warfighting Architecture and maintain an efficient pipeline from America’s world-class cyber-innovation workforce into the Department’s cyberspace operations forces.

The Department is also adapting to America’s changing labor market to ensure that we have the right team to execute the NDS. This budget funds a new civilian cyber workforce-incentive program to target skill gaps, and it develops a curriculum of advanced cyber training for our military. We are also increasing investments in international research partnerships on critical technologies with our Allies and Partners.

Our technological superiority is not a given; we have to work for it every day. That includes rapid prototyping and commercial integration. So, the Department is investing in tomorrow’s technology, such as responsible cutting-edge artificial intelligence, enhancing our critical supply chains, and modernizing our testing and training capabilities.

The Department continues to vigorously develop and test advanced weapons prototypes. Against the backdrop of our recent successful flight tests, the FY 2024 budget request expands the development of several hypersonic weapons programs, as well as demonstration and testing activities. This budget will also improve our subsonic cruise missiles to ensure their effectiveness against rapidly changing threats and targets.

The Department is pursuing a range of initiatives to harden U.S. basing and ensure that it is resilient against air and missile attacks. For example, we have made major investments in missile defenses for Guam and Hawaii, as well as infrastructure improvements across the entire Indo-Pacific region.

This budget request also funds the advancement of our joint warfighting concepts and the rapid experimentation and fielding of emerging capabilities across all domains. Ultimately, these

initiatives will ensure a Joint Force that is increasingly agile, innovative, interoperable with allies and partners, and resilient.

After decades of combat and coalition experience for our Special Operations Forces (SOF) in recent conflicts, we are pioneering new SOF approaches to help meet today's primary challenges. This budget enables our SOF enterprise to continue to modernize its crisis-response capabilities, while developing creative, adaptable, and asymmetric options that ensure our Joint Force will present a range of dilemmas to our adversaries.

The Department will also expand the Pacific Multi-Domain Training and Experimentation Capability, which will help our forces train in the ways and places they may be called upon to fight. These investments boost our readiness and lay the foundation for advances in sensor-to-shooter networks that will multiply our forces' lethality. To improve the speed and global integration of our operational decision-making, we will deliver proven Joint All Domain Command and Control enhancements to our warfighters by 2027.

The FY 2024 budget is rooted in the recognition that our competitors and adversaries are not standing still, and we must make the right investments now to retain our technological advantages in the decades to come.

The Department will continue to draw on America's longstanding strategic advantages by investing in critical innovations—such as quantum computing, advanced materials, renewable energy projects, integrated networks, and future-generation wireless technology. To maintain the United States' position as the global leader in research and development, we are cultivating a strong, adaptive, and highly skilled workforce of scientists and engineers through programs like the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation scholarship-for-service program.

Investing to Win Across All Domains

On land, the FY 2024 budget continues to build a combat-credible, ready, and lethal Army that can tackle challenges around the world. Our budget request seeks to strengthen Army capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region, with significant investments in our air and missile defenses as well as land-based long-range fires. We are also revitalizing and strengthening the Army's Organic Industrial Base by modernizing the Army's arsenals, maintenance depots, and ammunition facilities.

The FY 2024 budget builds on past investments in the Marine Corps Force Design 2030 concept, which focused on fielding capabilities and updating the Corps' force structure in the Indo-Pacific region. It also makes important new investments in electronic-warfare capabilities, command and control systems, air and missile defenses, and ground-force survivability, as well as in training and exercises.

At sea, this request helps deliver a ready and formidable naval force focused on deterring potential aggression from the PRC. The budget request continues the transition of our naval force to Distributed Maritime Operations, with an increased focus on uncrewed surface and underwater vehicles. Our request expands investments in long-range fires, more advanced

weapons systems, and next-generation platforms, including development of the COLUMBIA-class submarine. The Department also continues its critical investments in the submarine-construction industrial base; we will begin investing in better submarine-maintenance capacities, and we will increase our investments in the optimization of our shipyard infrastructure to make our industrial base healthier and more capable of meeting future needs. The budget request continues to move the Navy away from systems that are ill-suited for operations in highly contested environments.

In the air domain, the FY 2024 budget request makes significant investments to ensure air dominance in future conflicts. This includes F-35 and F-22 aircraft modernization, next-generation fighter development, and autonomous combat collaborative aircraft. These investments complement global strike capabilities such as the B-21 family of systems. The budget request invests in the development of strategic nuclear capabilities, such as Sentinel and the Long-Range Stand Off weapon. It also prioritizes long-range fires like hypersonic weapons, as well as a modern air command-and-control framework, rapid global mobility, and improved electronic warfare capabilities. To fully realize the tremendous advantages offered by our next-generation fighter and bomber platforms, we are investing in air-launched weapons that offer greater range, speed, precision, flexibility, and lethality. We are also closing shortfalls in supplying critical munitions by accelerating procurement where feasible, as well as expanding and procuring additional production capacity for our top-priority air-launched weapons. Moreover, this budget request continues to responsibly make the transition away from air-weapons systems that do not support our strategy, even as we invest in the maintenance and development of more advanced systems.

In the space domain, we continue to build our advantages over our competitors by investing in missile warning and tracking, data transport, communications, and space sensing. This budget request also funds upgrades to our launch infrastructure to support more government and commercial launches. Consistent with our recently completed Space Strategic Review, additional investments will deter hostile uses of space, and if deterrence fails, ensure that we can prevail in conflict in this domain, too.

This budget also strengthens our cyberspace operations force, which persistently engages both state and non-state cyber actors seeking to harm the United States, its interests, and its Allies. It upgrades our cyber operations training platform, accelerates the use of cloud-based capabilities, and invests in rapidly modernizing the software and hardware needed to further fortify our cyber posture.

Finally, over the past three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen the massive impact that biological threats can inflict on our country. Accordingly, the President's FY 2024 budget will enhance our ability to address any future pandemics or other biological threats.

Meeting the Climate Crisis

As the NDS makes clear, climate change is increasingly shaping the context in which the Department operates. That places new demands on the Joint Force, with implications for our readiness. Climate change is also creating new potential points of friction in places such as the

Arctic, while affecting security relationships with Allies and Partners around the world. We are determined to ensure that the United States can meet and deal with these challenges.

This budget therefore invests in enhancing operational capability, mission resilience, and readiness. This includes programs that mitigate the risk of energy supply disruptions to critical military facilities—whether caused by extreme weather, cyber operations, or kinetic attack. The budget request also includes funding to improve the energy efficiency of combat operations and platforms while deploying new technology to improve lethality and mitigate logistics risk in contested environments. Throughout, our focus is on building our operational advantages. These are not only essential steps for the climate of the world that we share, but also strategic moves to defend our country and strengthen our military.

Taking Care of Our People

The U.S. military is without a doubt the strongest fighting force in human history, and we remain determined to keep it that way. The foundation of that strength is our people. The Department is deeply committed to taking care of our total workforce by growing our talent, building resilience and readiness in the force, ensuring accountable leadership, and tackling even the most difficult workforce challenges.

This budget prioritizes our ongoing actions to take care of our outstanding Service members, and their families, including by increasing Service member and civilian employee compensation, raising housing allowance, and improving military housing. The budget also helps make quality childcare more accessible and affordable, including through the launch of universal pre-kindergarten at all Department of Defense Education Activity schools. We are also making investments to fight a range of problematic and harmful behaviors. That includes continued efforts to combat sexual assault and sexual harassment, reform the military justice system, and prevent suicide in the Force.

Growing Our Talent

To defend our Nation's security, we must tap into the talent that exists all across our Nation. We must recruit and retain the best of America, building pathways of opportunity for all qualified patriots who seek to serve. In this budget, we continue to provide our force with exceptional opportunities for service and professional development. This means being the employer of choice for personnel with technological skills, mastery of foreign languages, and more. We are also investing in training and education, as well as creating scholarships for science, technology, engineering, and math. We will continue to deepen the Department's partnerships with America's best universities, paving the way for the next generation of leaders. I am proud that the Department recently established its first university-affiliated research center at an Historically Black College and University—just one of the many ways that we are building new ways for talented Americans to join our team.

Building Resilience and Readiness

Ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of our Service members is a sacred trust—and a matter of readiness. We know that when economic challenges hit our teammates where they live, it can make it even harder to serve. However, we also know that when we take care of our Service members and ensure they are well trained and well equipped, they continue to serve.

So, in addition to robustly funding the factors that immediately contribute to readiness—training, equipping, and maintaining—we have made continued investments to support our Service members and their families, launching targeted initiatives to bring down daily costs for Service members. Those efforts have made childcare more accessible and affordable, lowered prices in the commissary system and made access to affordable food easier through online ordering, eased moving costs, and increased opportunities for spousal employment and career mobility including through the launch of the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot, a paid fellowship for military spouses that allows employers to connect with this diverse and talented pool of talent. We have also raised pay and allowances across the board. The FY 2024 budget will support a 5.2% pay raise for our Service members and our civilian employee workforce—the largest pay raise in decades. The FY 2024 budget also invests in full day pre-kindergarten at all Department of Defense Education Activity schools, providing our military children an essential head start on their education. There is no greater testament to the resilience and readiness of our force than the historically high retention rates across the Services.

Ensuring Accountability

The Department of Defense is committed to the health, safety, and well-being of our Service members and will not tolerate prohibited harmful behavior. This is a leadership issue, and we will lead. In February 2021, I ordered the creation of a 90-day independent review commission (IRC) on sexual assault in the military. The Department, including the Military Services, are now implementing the IRC recommendations that I approved.

The Department also worked with the President and Congress to enact historic legislation improving the response to sexual assault, domestic violence, and related crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The Offices of Special Trial Counsel, newly established to prosecute these crimes with independence and specialized expertise, will reach full operating capability in December 2023.

We will continue to work relentlessly to end sexual assault and related crimes, including through investments in a specialized prevention workforce and through important tools like the On-Site Installation Evaluations, which help us identify where our efforts are working and where more support is urgently needed.

The Department remains focused on efforts to eliminate suicide in the ranks and to respond better when these tragedies occur. This budget makes a significant investment in suicide prevention, and we are accelerating efforts to expand and increase access to mental health care, to including increased hiring and training of mental health professionals, to ensure that our Service members can access the help they need when they need it.

Succeeding Through Teamwork

Our world is increasingly defined by strategic competition, profound technological change, and 21st century challenges that pay no heed to borders. In this changing strategic environment, the United States is far stronger because of the power of our like-minded Allies and Partners, the improvements in industrial exchanges with our friends, the integration and development of innovation, and the interoperability of our forces. Our cooperation with Allies and Partners is central to co-developing advanced capabilities and rushing tangible improvements to our warfighters. These are strategic advantages that no rival can match. The Department is deeply committed to further strengthening our work with the Allies and Partners who magnify our might.

The AUKUS Partnership

The historic AUKUS partnership breaks new ground in working with two of our closest Allies – Australia and the United Kingdom – to take on the threats of the 21st century, just as we did together in the 20th century. As the President outlined in his State of the Union address, we are building bridges between Partners in the Pacific and those in the Atlantic, and AUKUS is a generational opportunity at the center of this change. This initiative translates our strategy into action, and it helps to forge a more advantageous balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, where the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom are actively strengthening deterrence across the region. AUKUS will enhance our collective military capabilities, especially in the advanced technologies that we believe will be critical for security and stability in the future.

On March 13, 2023, the President announced our plans for the first major initiative of AUKUS: providing Australia with a conventionally armed, nuclear powered submarine capability. This phased approach will allow us provide this capability on the fastest possible timeline, while upholding the highest standards for nuclear stewardship and setting a precedent that strengthens the nonproliferation regime. As the President made clear, our three nations are making concrete commitments to each other, and we are backing these commitments up with significant investments to strengthen the industrial bases of each of our nations.

Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific Region

In the Indo-Pacific region, we continue to build and strengthen our peerless network of alliances and partnerships. Recent progress only underscores the enormous value of our Allies and Partners in the region.

For example, we are working closely with Japan to expand the roles and missions of our alliance. We are forward-deploying more versatile, resilient, and mobile U.S. capabilities even as we enhance Japan's capabilities, including in counterstrike, unmanned vehicles, and counter-hypersonic weapons. We are also increasing our trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Australia, further demonstrating regional commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

We are working with the ROK to ensure that our combined forces are able to deter the DPRK and help ensure peace and stability in Northeast Asia, including by returning our defensive exercises to historical norms.

In Australia, we have built a deep partnership on technology and the development of advanced capabilities, including space cooperation and space domain awareness. We are continuing the rotational presence of U.S. capabilities through Australia, across the air, land, and maritime domains. Working alongside our ally, we are identifying locations to support enhanced U.S. presence with necessary infrastructure improvements. In 2022, we also announced that we will preposition munitions and fuel to support U.S. capabilities in Australia.

In the Philippines, we are modernizing the U.S.-Philippine Alliance by enhancing maritime cooperation, improving interoperability and information sharing, and adding four important new locations under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. These steps underscore our unwavering commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines.

In Thailand, we are continuing to strengthen the long-standing U.S.-Thai alliance. Our annual Cobra Gold exercise, for example, contributes immeasurably to peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific, while ensuring we are prepared to respond rapidly and effectively to a humanitarian disaster.

Meanwhile, with India, we are advancing our Major Defense Partnership and launching a new chapter in U.S.-India ties. The Department is bolstering the Indian military's deterrent capabilities to ensure that India remains the preeminent power in the Indian Ocean and can help uphold a favorable balance of power across the wider Indo-Pacific region. We are committed to working closely with India on technology cooperation; deepening our interoperability across key defense and security domains, including space and cyberspace; and ensuring that the U.S.-India partnership supports the efforts of our broader network of like-minded Allies and Partners, especially the Quad.

European Security Cooperation and Support to Ukraine

Under President Biden's leadership, the United States has changed the course of history by surging critical security assistance to Ukraine over the past year. With the support of Congress, our response to Russia's full-scale reprehensible assault on its peaceful and democratic neighbor has provided historic levels of security assistance to Ukraine through a combination of Presidential Drawdown Authority and the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. The United States has also rallied like-minded countries around the world to support Ukraine's brave defenders. The engine of our efforts is the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, the coalition of some 50 countries that I convene regularly to spur and coordinate support to Ukraine. Our Allies and Partners have collectively committed approximately \$20 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, including hundreds of tanks, thousands of other armored vehicles, vital air-defense systems, hundreds of artillery systems, and other crucial capabilities.

In the face of the biggest threat to European security since the height of the Cold War, the NATO Alliance is more united than ever. We have moved urgently with our Allies to further fortify

NATO and bolster its defenses on its eastern flank. Our commitment to Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty remains ironclad. We will not be dragged into Putin’s war of choice, but we will stand with Ukraine as it fights to defend itself, and we will continue to strengthen NATO’s collective defense and deterrence.

Building Teamwork at Home

Our partners at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial levels provide essential support for our Service members and their families, caregivers, and survivors at military installations and communities around the country. The Department is committed to working even more closely with these vital partners. Meanwhile, our Service members continue to proudly support our fellow Americans in times of crisis, as they have this year during natural disasters and amidst the lingering COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, we are supporting our federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners’ efforts to become more resilient and less reliant on Department of Defense support. Increased national resilience will ensure that America stands ready should an adversary choose to test our will with cyber or kinetic attacks on the U.S. homeland.

In addition, our partners in industry remain an engine of innovation—one that ensures that our warfighters remain ready to tackle the security challenges of this century. Our budget request will shore up our defense industrial base, strengthen its ability to produce the capabilities that we need, and develop critical technologies for the future.

It is the honor of my lifetime to lead our exceptional and dynamic team at the Department of Defense. We continue to strengthen our internal processes to ensure that we make timely decisions based on rigorous cooperation among civilian and military teams across the Department and with our interagency partners. We will demonstrate that spirit of partnership at the highest levels, and we will expect it from every person in the Department.

Conclusion

The way that we respond to today’s challenges will help determine America’s course for generations to come. The Department is seizing this inflection point in history. We will never flinch in the defense of the democracy that we have vowed to protect, and we will take care of all of the extraordinary patriots who comprise the world’s strongest fighting force.

The FY 2024 budget enables us to deliver on these priorities, and we ask for your support as we build the Department of the future. We remain deeply committed to working with Congress on oversight and appropriations to ensure that we have the resources that our Total Force needs and deserves—today, tomorrow, and in the future.

We will be good stewards of those resources, for both warfighters and taxpayers. Defense reform will ensure that we use taxpayer dollars efficiently by modernizing our business processes, improving our financial and contract management, and completing the Department’s audit.

Above all, our accountability to both our own forces and the American public is core to our democracy and sets us apart from our competitors on the world stage.

Finally, we are grateful for our extraordinary Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, their families, caregivers, and survivors, and civilian employees. They are the foundation of America's strength, and we are honored to serve alongside them. Thank you.