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Department of State
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“AUKUS Implementation and Challenges to International Security and Arms Control in the
21st Century”
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Meeks, and members of the committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to all of you today about the work that I oversee at the Department of State as Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security. Let me give you a broad overview of the challenges and opportunities we face in this rapidly changing international security landscape, and the tools we employ to ensure that the United States is leading from a position of innovation during this inflection point in history.

The Bureaus that I oversee are the Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability Bureau (ADS), the International Security and Nonproliferation Bureau (ISN), and the Political-Military Affairs Bureau (PM). Our work encompasses, and is not limited to, the United States’ participation in multilateral export control regimes; multilateral institutions such as the Conference on Disarmament, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the International Atomic Energy Agency; in international meetings concerning the Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological Weapons Convention, and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; in bilateral meetings regarding arms control with Russia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC); in defense security agreements and cooperation with partners throughout the world; and the trilateral partnership between Australia, United Kingdom, and United States – also known as AUKUS. The shorthand for my position is “T,” and I oversee the “T Family.”

We play a critical role in applying our subject matter expertise and diplomatic tools to secure the long-term durability of the international security architecture. Through a judicious mixture of dialogue, dissuasion, deterrence, and disruption available in our diplomatic toolbox, we are constantly innovating and delivering on solutions to protect the United States, our allies, and our partners from the evolving and emerging conventional, asymmetric, and strategic challenges and threats we face today and in the future.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

We find ourselves at a time where we are certainly challenged. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is about to begin its third year. The PRC continues to pressure Taiwan across the spectrum of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic measures. The Middle East is on a knife's edge, as Israel defends itself from Hamas terrorism amid a deepening humanitarian crisis, and Houthi extremists engage in illegal and reckless attacks on commercial vessels exercising their navigational rights and freedoms. The deepening cooperation among Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Iran is cause for concern.

Geopolitical fault lines are deepening. Diplomatic tensions are heightening. There are seemingly more questions presented to us than answers. But it is precisely during these moments where we must be agile and innovative, while maintaining international norms and institutions that help provide the foundations for global security. We need to focus on addressing the headlines of today, but also keep an eye on the trendlines for future challenges to come.

This is exactly what we have been doing in the T Family.

We are addressing the challenges posed by Russia and the PRC, to include those related to arms control, nonproliferation, and regional security.

This includes working to advance the full scope of arms control measures, both in terms of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, to strengthen deterrence and strategic stability. Despite challenges posed by strategic competitors, we are addressing how to reduce risks, avoid miscalculation, and close the gap of miscommunication. In the past two years alone, this Administration has secured allied unity to suspend the Treaty on Armed Conventional Forces in Europe in response to the Russian withdrawal; we proposed and passed United Nations resolutions calling on countries to not conduct destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile tests and to not use radiological weapons; we led 52 States – and counting – in endorsing responsible practices in the use of artificial intelligence for military applications; and finally – finally – completed the destruction of the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile, ensuring that an entire category of declared weapons of mass destruction (WMD) stockpiles has been eliminated.

At the same time, we are continuing our strong support to the international nuclear nonproliferation regime by strengthening nuclear safety, security, and safeguards, especially as we assist nations in partnering in nuclear energy and peaceful nuclear cooperation; building capacity to mitigate proliferation threats; sanctioning actors engaged in illicit activities; enhancing interdiction measures; and protecting sensitive U.S. technologies from exploitation. Thanks to the strong bipartisan support of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 and the International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund, this Administration has made profound contributions to protect semiconductor and other emerging technologies.

We continue to advance deeper security cooperation with our allies and partners around the world. We have provided over \$44 billion in security assistance to strengthen the international coalition, help Ukraine defend itself, and assist our allies and partners as they transition off Russian-origin equipment. We are working hand-in-glove to strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, implementing new security assistance authorities, and approving the highest single-year number of Foreign Military Sales (FMS) notifications to Taiwan in 30 years to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We are implementing AUKUS, which has significantly deepened our cooperation on a range of security and defense capabilities with Australia and the UK, to strengthen our long-term defense and deterrence. And we are helping Israel defend itself, calling for additional humanitarian assistance to address the ongoing crisis while simultaneously providing border screening equipment to Egypt to increase the flow of humanitarian aid, and continuing to press for a two-state solution that puts Palestinian voices at the center of post-crisis governance in Gaza.

Whether it is standing with our democratic partners in their hour of need, deepening security cooperation with partners old and new, or working with industry to meet the rising demand for U.S. defense articles, we are sending a clear message: the United States stands with its friends, we stand with democracy, and our commitment to the norms and principles of the UN Charter will not waver.

Our efforts apply across domains—from land to space and to the deep sea—and through technology realms.

We are particularly paying close attention to critical and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum, and advanced computing to ensure our security and prevent their misuse by countries like the PRC. While we are using existing regulations, export controls, legislation, and treaties to address these challenges, we fully recognize that we must adapt to the speed, scope, and scale of how fast these technology sectors are moving. Therefore, we must be innovative and think outside the box to apply our toolkits if we want to continue to secure and safeguard our supply chains, our intellectual property, and our security partnerships around the world.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with our closest allies is one of the hallmarks of American diplomacy. In an increasingly fragmented and elevated geopolitical risk environment, enhancing our collective security frameworks with our closest allies and partners to facilitate unprecedented trade and defense integration is a game changer. It is innovative, it is bold, and it is defining how we modernize our security partnerships that also reinvigorates our economies and strengthens our democracies.

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AUKUS, as many of you know, is consequential in a positive way. By deepening our cooperation across the three countries, AUKUS strengthens our long-term defense and national security, provides us a clear pathway to continue advancing our shared vision of a free, open, and more secure Indo-Pacific, and sends a strong signal of deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and around the world.

Through AUKUS, pursuing unparalleled integration of our three nations' scientists, technologists, industrial bases and supply chains in an effort to build together the capabilities that will bolster security and stability in the Indo-Pacific. And we are making steady progress on executing the first major deliverable of AUKUS: supporting Australia's acquisition of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability, while remaining committed to setting the highest nonproliferation standard for naval nuclear propulsion as promised by our leadership.

And we need not go at it alone.

With your passage of the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, we are making great strides within AUKUS on export controls, fostering an Indo-Pacific ecosystem that supports operational readiness and interoperability of U.S. allies for generations to come. We have a historic responsibility to get this right, and with everyone in this room working together, we are on the right path.

Let us continue to work together.

Twenty-first century challenges require 21st century solutions. These solutions are no longer just the traditional mechanisms we have employed in the past. Some have been strengthened while others are adjusted, or new and different. This new security landscape requires innovation and creativity; it requires resilience and modernization. We are clear-eyed about the areas in which our adversaries or competitors are making inroads, and how our actions will determine the safety and security of our future generations.

I look forward to discussing with you your questions and observations. What I have shared scratches the surface of the work that we do to advance the goals of the Administration, and I am sure there are many more you wish to touch upon today. Let me end by saying that I am proud of all my T Family, our efforts to promote international security, and what this Administration has been doing – making the tough choices and laying the groundwork for long-term security, both at home and abroad.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.