

House Armed Services on DOD FY23 Budget Proposal

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Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Good morning, we'll call the meeting to order. The full Committee hearing for the fiscal year 2023. Defense budget requests. The Committee is honored this morning to have the Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin with us as well as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley and the comptroller at the Pentagon, Mike McCord, a guy whose job it is to keep track of the money.

So important to have all three of you here. Obviously, this is an incredibly important time for the national defense of this country and for peace and stability in the globe. We all watch on a daily basis, what is happening in Ukraine, the horror and devastation from the violent attack that Vladimir Putin and Russia have brought down upon Ukraine, and we see the world that we do not want, unquestionably. And this Committee and the Department of Defense have a huge role in trying to figure out how we create the better world that we do want.

And as a starting point, our ability and our allies ability to get aid and weapons to Ukraine has been crucial in the early days of this fight. Russia has struggled far greater than just about anybody expected. There are a lot of reasons for that. Certainly the biggest is the will and the courage of the Ukrainian people.

But it has also been crucial that our alliances, the NATO alliance, and others have come together to offer that support Ukraine. Now one of the biggest questions that we're going to have in this Committee, for you three gentlemen is how can we do more? How can we make sure we're getting absolutely everything we can to Ukraine, to help them defend their country and defend themselves? And we will be very focused on that effort and standing ready to do anything we can to help make that happen.

And then the larger question, as we look at this, is, we have to make sure that Russia does not succeed, because the implications it has, certainly for Ukraine, but for the larger world as well. We do not want Russia or other aggressive countries in the world to think that by force, they can simply expand their territory and attack their neighbors, we need to build a robust deterrence across the globe to make sure that this kind of thing does not happen again. We've been working on that for a long time, obviously, on our national security policy, but it comes into incredibly sharp focus. Now, as we see the war in Ukraine, deterrence is many things.

Certainly it is incredibly important we build those alliances. Where would we be if we were trying to do this on our own, or if we were deeply divided in the West, it would be in a terrible place. So making sure that we continue to build those alliances, across Europe and across the world, is enormously important. We also need to understand that Russia and China are the principal threats here.

As we now have the national security strategy, we have the 2023 budget, we see that President Biden and his team recognize that and prioritize those threats is what we need to deter going forward, we face a very stark choice in the world, the President has outlined this clearly, we can push for greater freedom, greater economic and political freedom. Or we can face the theocracy that Russia and China are trying to bring down upon us. And it is crucial that we build a defense budget that reflects that. And I believe that the budget that has been submitted gets us headed in the right direction.

Now there will be a lot of discussion about the top line, we had a fairly robust increase in the budget last year as it was enacted, we have a robust increase in the budget this year, we will have that debate about what that top line number should be, and that that is fine. But what I hope we also really focus on is where do we spend the money, spending that money efficiently and effectively in a rapidly changing environment, to me is the most important thing that this Committee and the Pentagon could do. And it starts with recognizing the changing nature of warfare. I've come to sum it up as information and survivability, which I guess I've always been central to warfare says that they're changing so much now.

And you can look and learn from how the Russians are struggling in Ukraine. There. They can't communicate with each other their large tank columns are victims to relatively cheap and expensive missiles. We need to figure out how do we build the force that can survive in today's world.

We have to make sure that we can protect our information in distributed we have to make sure that our systems are not just single points of failure, you know, large, exquisite systems that can be shut down either by a cyber attack or a missile. We need to fundamentally rethink how we approach the military. And our biggest focus on this Committee has been that innovation. And sadly, you know, the Pentagon is not the most innovative institution in the world.

It is slow to adopt new technology is certainly slow to adopt software. A number of reforms and changes have been made in recent years to try to address that issue. But it is crucially important that we figure out how to develop new technologies first. And even more crucially, we figure out how to use them.

Ai, missile technology, drones, these are all critically important. How do you employ those? How do we put the right people in place to make sure that we are making the best use of the technology and innovation that we are doing. And I would recommend all of you an article in Foreign Affairs magazine that former Secretary Spencer sent me that's entitled The Pentagon's office culture is stuck in 1968.

That may be a slight overstatement. But when you read the analysis of how you structure a company today, to adopt to the innovative, the innovative economy, the fate that we face, the technology changes that we face, versus how you would build a company in the more assembly line industrial age, the 1960s. You can see a stark contrast, really want to see that change that we have a more innovative Pentagon that can take advantage of of the changes that are happening out there and make sure that we get there first because without question, when you look at the world, you have the US in the west and our involvement. And then you have China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and transnational terrorist groups, our job is simple.

We want to deter those adversaries, all of them. We get into our ranking issue occasionally. And certainly China is the biggest economy, the biggest, you know, alternative out there, Russia clearly is committing violent acts as we speak. But they all matter.

We need to build an alliance that promotes economic and political freedom, and we need to do it with a very, very strong military and a robust involvement in the world and diplomacy and development and alliances. We have to build that Pentagon is a huge part of that. morning's the discussion is the kickoff point for our Committee to looking at how the FY 23 budget affects that fight. I look forward to the testimony on the questions and answers.

And with that I will yield to the Ranking Member, Mr Rogers, for his opening statement.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and I want to thank the witnesses for their attendance and their service to our country. The threats that we face now are more formidable than at any point in the 20 years I've had the privilege of serving on this Committee. Unprecedented Chinese military modernization has enabled him to lead progress in key capabilities. The Chinese Communist Party now controls the largest army and navy in the world.

It has more troops, more ships and more hypersonic missiles than United States, with each passing day more and more clear more and more clear their interest or is more and more clear that they diametrically opposed our interest. And to make matters worse, President Xi has entered into a No Limits partnership with Putin, providing him with strategic cover and international legitimacy. But Putin's catastrophic invasion of Ukraine has proven to the rest of the world that he's nothing more than an unhinged crackpot. The problem is, this crackpot has his finger on the world's largest nuclear arsenal and illegal stockpile of chemical and biological weapons, which he hasn't hesitated to use against his perceived enemies.

Emulating Putin's desire to undermine democracy are the despotic leaders of North Korea and Iran, both continue to aggressively pursue nuclear weapons and conduct destabilizing activities in their region. Finally, President--the President's decision to unilaterally and unconditionally withdraw US forces from Afghanistan has offered terrorists the opportunity to regain their footing, and our capability to keep an eye on them and strike them before they strike us has diminished. These are just a few of the growing threats confronting our nation, how we respond to them as the biggest test we will face as Americans. Many of us here regardless of party believe we should respond with increase investment in the men and women of our armed forces, and the modernization of our conventional and strategic deterrence.

Unfortunately, the President doesn't see things the same way. But the second year in a row, the President has sent us a budget that fails to keep pace with China and Russia. And yet again, it fails to keep pace with inflation. Despite predictions from leading economists, the record high inflation will endure.

The White House directed the Pentagon to assume a rate of only 2.2% for FY 23. Regardless of this inflation, we are now at 8% inflation to get to get an average of 2.2% next year would require months of unprecedented low inflation, inflation. Everyone here knows that's not going to happen. That means every dollar of increase in this budget will be eaten by inflation.

Very little if anything will be left over to modernize or grow capability. The President may claim this budget bolsters our national security. But that's far from the truth. The budget cuts the number of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, well below authorized levels.

It slashes the number of ships and aircraft in our arsenal, in fact, at no point over the next five years does the size of the Navy grow. Instead of moving toward a 500 ship Navy needed to counter China it shrinks to 280 ships. The budget cuts procurement for the Army and Marine Corps delaying critical modernization efforts. It slashes funding for next generation aircraft, new nuclear deterrent capability and modernize ground combat vehicles.

Finally, according to the President's comptroller the budget was completed before Putin's invasion of Ukraine. No funds have been added to the account. For the increased cost of reinforcing NATO allies are to continue to provide lethal aid to Ukraine in the next fiscal year. This is extremely short sighted.

The problem again this year is not that the President refuses to spend money is that he refuses to spend it on defense. Yet again, the budget proposes massive increases in funding for the EPA and the Department of Education and HHS. In all, non defense discretionary spending grows by an astonishing 12%. Three times more than defense.

Using GDP as a metric defense spending will total 3.1% of GDP, non defense spending will total 18% of GDP nearly six times more than defense. I know these numbers are inconvenient to many people in the White House, some on the far left one slash defending defense spending by 10%. To his credit, the President hadn't gone there. But what he is proposing is far from what's needed to maintain a credible deterrent.

Under the old national defense strategy, we needed an annual increase of three to 5%. Over inflation to stay ahead of China. The new national defense strategy departs little from the last one. I suspect the new commission we're appointing to review the national defense strategy will again recommend at least that level of funding.

If this budget was truly driven by risk 5% above inflation is the level of growth we would see. Unfortunately, that's not the case. This budget fails to account for the record inflation the Department is currently facing and severely underestimates its impact over the next year. It robs our warfighters of vital capabilities, they need to carry out their missions, but most regrettably, it gives China more time to enhance their military advantage and undermine our deterrence.

Urge my colleagues to reject this budget and work on a bipartisan manner to address the urgent needs of our national defense. And with that, Mr Chairman, I yield.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Secretary Austin.

Lloyd Austin

Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the chance to testify today in support of the President's budget request for fiscal year 2023. It's great to be here with General Milley, who has been an outstanding partner and I'm also glad to be joined by our--today by our Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer, Mike McCord. Mr Chairman, we're still focused on three key priorities at the Department of Defense, defending our nation, taking care of our people and succeeding through teamwork.

And the budget requests that we've submitted to you helps us meet each of those priorities. Our budget seeks more than \$56 billion for airpower platforms and systems, and more than \$40 billion to maintain our dominance at sea, including buying nine more battle force ships, and almost \$13 billion to support and modernize our combat credible forces on land. A budget

Campaigning means our day-to-day efforts to gain and sustain military advantage, counter acute forms of coercion by our competitors and complicate their preparations for aggression and to build enduring advantages. We need to accelerate force development, acquiring the technology that are warfighters need. So our budget seeks more than \$130 billion for research, development, testing and evaluation. And that's the largest R&D request that this Department has ever made is nearly a 10% increase over last year, which was the department's previous high previous high watermark.

And this includes \$2 billion for artificial intelligence \$250 million for 5g nearly \$28 billion for space capabilities, and another \$11 billion to protect our networks and develop a cyber mission force. This budget maintains our edge, but it does not take that edge for granted. And quite frankly, Mr Chairman, in the 21st century, you either innovate or you get left behind. And through the President's budget, and with the help of this Committee, we will continue to innovate.

And with your help, we will continue to defend this nation, take care of our people, and support our allies and partners. And with your help, I know that we will continue to lead. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Chairman Milley.

Mark Milley

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers distinguished members of Committee, I'm privileged to represent the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians of the United States Joint Force. Our troops are the best lead best equipped, best trained, most lethal and most capable military force in the world. Alongside our allies and partners at any given time, approximately 400,000 American troops are currently standing watch in 155 countries and conducting operations every day to keep Americans safe. Currently, we are supporting our European allies and guarding NATO's eastern flank, in the face of the unnecessary war of aggression by Russia, against the people of Ukraine, and the assault on the democratic institutions and the rules based international order that have prevented great power war for the last 78 years.

Since the end of World War Two. We are now facing two global powers, China and Russia, each with significant military capabilities, both who intend to fundamentally change the rules based current global order. We are entering a world that is becoming more unstable, and the potential for significant international conflict between great powers is increasing, not decreasing. The United States military comprises one of the four key components of national power, diplomatic, economic informational in military that protect the homeland and sustain a stable and open international system.

In coordination with the other elements of power. We constantly develop a wide range of military options for the president as commander in chief and for this Congress to consider. As the US military we are prepared to deter and if necessary, fight and win anyone who seeks to attack the United States or our allies are significant core vital national security interests. The Joint Force appreciates the work that our elected representatives do to ensure that we have the resources needed to train, equip, and manage the force in order to be ready.

We thank the Congress for increasing last year's last fiscal year's level of military funding. And we look forward to your support for this year's budget. The Joint Force will deliver modernization and readiness for armed forces and secure the people of the United States at the fiscal year 23 budget request of 773 billion. This budget will enable the appropriate decisions for modernization and transformation of the joint force in order to set and meet the conditions of the operating environment that we will face in 2030 and beyond the so called Changing character of war that we've discussed many times in the past.

We will work diligently to ensure the resources of American people in trust to us are spent prudently and in the best interest of the nation. In alignment with the forthcoming national defense strategy and the national military strategy. This budget delivers a ready agile and capable joint force that will defend the nation while taking care of our people and working with our partners and allies. We are witness to the greatest threat to peace and security of Europe in perhaps the world in my 42 years of service in uniform.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is threatening to undermine not only European peace and stability, but global peace and stability that my parents and a generation of Americans fought so hard to defend. The islands of the Pacific and the beaches of Normandy bore witness to the incredible tragedy that falls humanity when nations seek power through military aggression across sovereign borders. Despite the horrific assault on the institutions of freedom, it is heartening to see the world rally and say never again to the specter of war in Europe, your military stands ready to do whatever is directed. In order to maintain peace and stability on the European continent, a piece of insurance global stability, an international order where all nations can prosper and peace.

We are also prepared and need to sustain our capabilities anywhere else in the globe. As well with our priority effort, being in the Asia Pacific region, measured against our pacing challenge of rising People's Republic of China. And in defense of our nation, we must also maintain competitive overmatch in all the domains of war, cyber space, land, sea and air. To conclude, the United States is at a very critical and historic geostrategic inflection point, we need to pursue a clear eyed strategy of maintaining the peace to the unambiguous capability of strength relative to China, or Russia.

This requires we simultaneously maintain readiness and modernize the force for the future. If we do not do that, then we will be risking the security of future generations. And I believe this budget is a major step in the right direction. I look forward to your questions.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you very much for the question and answers, as all of you know, but want to reiterate, we have five minutes. And when we're done, we're done. So even if the witnesses are in the middle of answering the question, I will cut them off and move on to other members. The Secretary and Chairman have generously said they will be here to get through all members questions, so we will get through them.

One other thing, it's perfectly okay to it's your five minutes, you want to make a speech for five minutes, that's cool. You want to ask questions, I am going to try to make sure no one badgers the witnesses, if you ask a question, you have to at least give them the tiniest little bit of a chance to answer -- cutting off a filibuster is fine, but make sure they have a chance to speak. I don't want this to turn in to a badgering session. With that, focusing on Ukraine, it's important to remember we passed the supplemental budget just a couple of weeks ago.

So in addition to the number that we have, we have roughly \$14 billion to specifically address Ukraine. So it's wrong to say that the President or this Congress has ignored the situation in Ukraine \$14 billion is a significant investment. My question is, what's most important in that \$14 billion? What are you using it for?

How is that helping the fight in Ukraine, Mr Secretary?

Lloyd Austin

Thank you, Chairman. And thanks for the support that--that you continue to provide to, to our efforts to provide security force assistance to Ukraine. I speak with my counterpart, Minister Reznikov. Frequently, and as I said earlier, I just spoke with him yesterday, because we do want to make sure that that we are meeting their needs, and we're providing them to things that are most useful to their, to their fight.

And, and the things that we have provided them, as you've seen, have been very instrumental in their efforts to block the the advance of an overwhelming Russia, Russian force. So what has been very helpful has been the ANA armor in anti aircraft capability that we provided, um, also the the the UAV capability that that's been pushed in, as well, as you know, we have over the over the years provided them the ability to communicate through tactical radios, secure tactical radios, that that, you know, we've pushed in over a number of years. And they have been able to, to maintain command and control over their forces throughout that's enabled them to do things that have provided them an advantage in certain cases. So we will continue to focus on those types of things that have been then been most useful to them, as well as emerging needs that the Minister of Defense identifies.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank--thank you and for both of you. What lessons have we learned as we've watched the last month plus now the fight in Ukraine because you've got Russia a global power, going up against a much, much smaller, less armed, less resourced foe, and struggling mightily in doing that, as we look at what we need to build and how we need to think about deterrence? You know, we all we want to be ready for the fight if it comes. But the main goal of what we're trying to do here is to build a force that will deter adversaries.

Iran, China, Russia, you know, being at the top of that list, North Korea, what have we learned about what we would need Need, as you see, I mean, obviously one of the lessons is the tank isn't what it used to be. How does that informing for both of you what you think is most important to find to make sure that we have that deterrence for the battlefield that we face today with the technology that is available.

Lloyd Austin

We've learned that armed with the with the right capabilities, a determined force can do tremendous work in terms of defending itself and the Ukrainians demonstrate that each and every day. We've seen them, again, blunt the, the advance of a far superior force with respect to the Russians in terms of numbers and capability by using the right types of techniques. And the right weapon systems, the javelin, the Stingers have proven to be very, very effective in this fight. We've also learned that that just because you have the capability, it doesn't mean that you're going to overwhelm another force easily.

Now Russians had--have significant mechanized capability. But as you look at the techniques and tactics, procedures that they used, they were not very effective. And so you question the training, the leadership at the at the, at the noncommissioned level, noncommissioned officer level, and their ability to provide basic logistics to a force that size. Those are the things that have given him significant problems over the over the last several weeks, in addition to their inability to link, you know, air power to to the ground effort.

But there are a number of lessons that have been learned, I think, because the Russians have not been effective in using their--their armor, it does not mean that armor is ineffective on the battlefield going forward, it means that they were ineffective because of the things that they failed to do in this fight.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Chairman Milley?

Mark Milley

Just a couple of comments briefly. One is the importance of intelligence. We've had extraordinary intelligence all throughout and the intelligence sharing that we've enabled Ukraine to see. So I wouldn't suggest that it's at the level of the ultra-secret sort of thing from World War Two.

But the ability of us to transmit information that is useful to Ukraine has been enormously helpful, I believe to them and, and I talked to my Ukrainian counterpart several times a week. So he has reiterated that multiple times. Secondly, is the importance of leadership that's at the national level. I think that's been pretty clear with Zelensky.

But also at the tactical level. Ukraine has been trained by the United States since 2014. And they have given me feedback personally saying that that train has been quite effective in terms of the concept of mission command, distributed junior level leadership, development of an NCO Corps junior officers that have initiative that is not present in the Russian army that is present right now in the Ukrainian army, you see the effects of mission command, decentralized operation. And that is working out extraordinarily well on the battlefield.

The third piece, I would say, is focusing on that which gives you the best effect on a battlefield, which in this case, has been anti tank weapons and air defense weapons denied the Russians have the ability to maintain their supremacy or even achieve their superiority. And the last thing as you mentioned character for one of the things we know is that by mid century, roughly speaking, 90% of the eight or 9 billion people that are going to inhabit the earth, they're going to be living in highly dense urban areas. So the the character of war is going to shift character we're being how you fight with what weapons, you fight the organization's tactics, etc. That is going to shift we've seen precursors of that in the battles of Mosul in Iraq.

We're seeing, again, Kiev Kharkiv, and all these urban battles. So what you're seeing is forces that are optimized to fight in rural, wooded rolling hill type terrain, are going to have very, very difficult times in urban terrain. And that proved true and that's one of the reasons why the Russians have withdrawn from Kiev because they couldn't match the combat power to seize Kiev. So urban battle is going to dominate land combat in the future.

And that will then also drive our use of helicopters, our use of radios, our use of tanks, armored vehicles, light infantry, dismounted light infantry, and so on, so forth. So there's a lot of lessons to be learned. And I've got a whole laundry list we've been working with the Ukrainians on but that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you very much. Mr Rogers.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Mr Chairman, General Milley, last week we had General Wolters, EUCOM Commander testified before us and he stated that it was his best military judgment that we should reallocate some of our European troops for permanent basing in Poland, Romania, and in the Baltics, and your best military judgment. Is that good deterrent for us to pursue.

Mark Milley

I think actual presence is always a good deterrent. relative to a given thread, as a general rule of thumb, with respect to what General Wolters said, I have a slight modification to my view anyway, my advice would be to create permanent basis but don't permanently station. So you get the effect of permanence by rotational forces cycling through permanent bases. And what you don't have to do is incur the cost of family moves, PXs, schools, housing and that sort of thing.

So you cycle through Expeditionary Forces, through forward deployed permanent bases. And I believe that a lot of our European allies, especially those, such as in the Baltics, or Poland, or Romania or elsewhere, they are very, very willing to establish permanent basis. They'll build them they'll pay form, etc. And for us to cycle through on a rotational basis, so you get the effect of permanent presence of forces, but the actual individual soldier, sailor, airman, Marine are not permanently stationed there for two or three years.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Right. Thank you, Secretary Austin. We had Celeste Wallander in here and ask her about this basing issue and if the decision is close to being made, she said they're working on it. Can you tell me something with more clarity about when we can expect a decision on this basing issue?

Lloyd Austin

As you would expect, Ranking Member Rogers? NATO is going through a process right now to really kind of assess how that we expect that to the security architecture in the region is going to change for the foreseeable future or has changed for the foreseeable future. With that in mind, then, you know, we'll look to work with with NATO to if NATO deems that it's appropriate to to change its footprint, then, certainly we'll be a part of that. Our goal is to make sure that we continue to reassure our allies and partners, especially those that are on the eastern flank, and especially our our allies that are in the Baltic area of Baltic region.

So this is a work in progress as Secretary Wallander said, and I suspect that will I expect that we'll discuss this as we go into the the June summit with NATO?

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Well, I can't think of a better signal that we can send to our allies and to Putin, that we are committed to NATO than this basing issue. I am concerned that with the budget that it only had one Patriot battery in it. And in my position, in my view, we need at least three. I know we have a Manning issue with that.

But General Milley in your opinion, could we use? Do we need more than one Patriot battery? In addition to what we currently have an inventory?

Mark Milley

Well, thanks, Congressman. The Patriot is one of those systems that's in huge demand worldwide. We've got 15 battalions, I think it is, in the army. And one of those is really an experimental type or training unit.

So call it 14 for deployment, we've got several spread out in the Middle East, Asia and in in Europe. And they are in a very, very high op tempo high one of the highest in the force. So additional Patriot is always a good thing. Now, having said that, Patriot is extraordinarily expensive, takes a long time to train on it.

So one method could be to produce Patriot sold them to allies and partners, that'd be a technique that could work we've done that in the Middle East. Another one is to produce patriot, and load them to allied partners and train the soldiers from the other countries, because our soldiers in that particular MOS, we would have to expand the numbers significantly of those troops, that man, patriot, but there's a couple of different ways to go about it. But I think Patriot is one of the systems that is definitely worth investing in.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Great. Well, that's what I would like to see us do, I'd like for us to instead of buying one additional light versus that two by three, and then use at least two of those in along the the European Eastern European flank on a loan basis and let them man them. But for our needs alone, we need at least one more outside of Eastern Europe. And so I hope the budget that we come up with does reflect that.

Last question. I'd have an I know it's hard to answer, but this would be for Secretary Austin. We've just given in this current year, fiscal year, a 6%. Increase.

I know you just got the omnibus bill in the last couple of weeks defund it. But do you have any idea how you're going to keep up with inflation given that we just pushed you up by 6%? But we're living in an 8% inflation world?

Lloyd Austin

I would say that this is this is a very robust budget that we've we've asked for, and and I think Ranking Member Rogers that we can--we can address our needs with that's in this budget. And clearly, you know, when we snap the chalk line when we built the budget inflation was at a different point. But But I think this budget gives us the capability to go after the types of things that we believe that we need to support our strategy and and give us the warfighting capabilities that we need. Thank you on the Patriot battery issue, I absolutely agree with you.

You know, we we do need more, if you take a look at what we're doing across the fight up, we are going to invest in in additional Patriot batteries. Going forward, we expect to have three batteries by the end of '26.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Mr Langevin is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, I want to thank our witnesses for your testimony today. And thank you for your service to our country. I applaud everything that we're doing to put weapons in the hands of the Ukrainian people. Thank you for making that happen under President Biden's leadership.

Obviously, they've shown incredible resilience and effectiveness of the weapons that we have given them to push back against the Russians, the javelins in the Stingers in particular. But because we all want to do more, and the Secretary you and I had a conversation at the Pentagon not long ago about what Lethal Weapon Systems and you did respond, saying that it doesn't do us any good to give them weapons that the Ukrainians aren't trained to use, which I agree with that. But now that we have the luxury of time, we identifying those ball lethal weapon systems that would help them to be even more effective at fighting against the Russians with the minimal amount of of training that we could give some of the Ukrainians and get those more sophisticated weapon systems into their hands.

Lloyd Austin

Yes, we are doing that. And I think if you look at the latest, the inventory of the latest round of assistance that we provided them there, there are UAVs, like the Switchblade UAV, that we discussed earlier, that is that is, you know, a higher level of technology, but provides them additional capability to go after armor formations, and that sort of thing. And we continue to work with our allies, to to see what they may have in their inventory, to be able to kind of up the game there in terms of additional capability. So again, we continue to interact with them on a daily basis and endeavor to meet their needs as the situation evolves.

Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.)

Thank you. Let me try to cyber for a minute. Secretary last in last year's testimony, I asked you a question that I can revisit. At the Department of Defense recognizes five, warfighter domains air, land, sea space, and cyberspace.

And the case of four of these the senior civilian responsible for this domain is is a service secretary. However, in the cyber domain, the senior most civilian official is four rungs below in that hierarchy. Obviously, this seems like an imbalance. Can you explain to us why this does or does not make sense.

Lloyd Austin

Thank you, sir. Well, cyber is a warfighting domain. There is not a cyber force, like there is what special operations forces with the with Army forces Space Forces. So there is not a secretary, service secretary, you know, designated the head of the Cyber Command, obviously reports to, to me, and he also is, is supervised by the by my Undersecretary for policy.

And so we have a number of checks and balances that provide civilian oversight. But because he's not a there's not a separate service. There's not a service secretary designate.

Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.)

I'm--I remain concerned about this, this this structure. And I think that's something we're going to have to continue to look at, especially since cyber the US Cyber Command cyber mission force, which can be is highly effective. I still think that we need to elevate the civilian oversight on this and involvement. Let me turn to something else.

The so-called Valley of Death often makes it impossible for technology to transition from nontraditional organizations to programs of record to support the warfighter. What is the Department doing to solve this problem? And how does this budget request reflect that effort?

Lloyd Austin

We've we've established an initiative it's a--it's a reserve. It's called rater that that encourages joint experiment, joint experimentation and encourages entrepreneurs to come in and bring their their capabilities forward. And hopefully using initiatives like that we can help bridge this bow valley of death that that you mentioned here. This is very important to us.

We want to make sure that, that we're getting the best that's available out there in terms of technology and capability. And so will will continue to focus on on that particular issue. But I think it's really important to make sure that the the the small entrepreneurs have a chance to get their products, you know, in the inventory.

Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.)

Couldn't agree more. We have incredible entrepreneurs out there that can make me the warfighter even more effective, we want to make sure they have that opportunity to do so. I'll yield back, Mr Chairman.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Turner is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for your service and your leadership. We were all very concerned, as the war broke out in Ukraine. As to the concern about weapons getting into Ukraine, we have advocated for the administration to give lethal assistance to Ukraine before the conflict occurred after the conflict occurred.

We were very concerned about how quickly things would would get in both of you had given us assurances that you were doing so and doing so quickly. I think we've seen the evidence of that on the battlefield. So I want to thank you for your your efforts, I think the whole world is seeing the the effectiveness of us lethal aid that has been provided to Ukraine. And that brings me to my area of question, the Ranking Member had raised the issue of the budget and the top line.

And that's certainly important. And two other components under your responsibility are also cost cost structures, how do we manage the overall cost if we give you more money, but we don't manage it effectively, we don't really buy more. Another issue is the rate of production, how quickly things get where they're going. Now, I think one of the lessons from Ukraine to our allies is going to be the need for them to stockpile weapons, we have a number of weapons that have been used by the US and our allies that are going to have to be backfill, and then our whole inventory concept is going to have to change, as we look to the fact that we now have an aggressive Russia.

Secretary, how do you view this issue of what we need to be doing specifically in the areas of missiles and ammunition so that we can get the defense industrial base to ramp up production and also lower overall our costs?

Lloyd Austin

Well, thanks, sorry, this is a very, obviously a very important issue for us, for us. And, and my staff is working hard to ensure that, you know, we have we've been, we have engaged industry, we have highlighted what our requirements are. And we're working with them to speed up the process to replenish those stocks that, that you mentioned. And I'm optimistic that we'll be able to truncate, you know, the, the forecast at timelines that we got early on.

But this is very, very important to us, we not only have to replenish our stock edges, we have to also make sure that those allies who volunteer to provide capability to the effort, and it was if it's us capability, we're able to replenish those stocks as well. So we're working very hard and the streets been responsive. And if we need additional help or authorities from Congress, we won't hesitate to ask.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

Excellent, because--I appreciate you mentioned because the the the timelines that we're hearing from you are certainly very concerning. And I hope that that you're able to move this to some extent, I think the defense industrial base looks at some of these weapon production systems as annuities rather than actual contributions to national security, because when we need to turn that dial, they need to be able to respond. That takes me to the next topic, you recently called in the defense industrial community that were involved in the hypersonics development to have a discussion as to how we can speed that up. We're behind our adversaries.

Could you tell us how that's how that's turning out?

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, when we say we're behind our adversaries, I think I think we have to be careful now. hypersonics is a capability, sir. But it's not the only capability.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

I seriously just we have a short period time. I really want to hear how you're meeting endeavor. We want to ask that, but I need to speed it up. I mean, you can tell me that there are other systems but we're talking hypersonics.

Lloyd Austin

And there are other systems and we look for a balance of capabilities that match our warfighting concepts here. And so yeah, I have engaged industry and ask them to to make sure that they're leaning into the this issue of hypersonic development. Most importantly, I've asked them to make sure that they're working with us on how we're going to defend ourselves with respect to hypersonics.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

Appreciate that as auditor general, I have a question for you. The Sea Launch cruise missile, SLCM, was zeroed out. You have previously stated the importance of the low yield nuclear weapon and that and that you supported it. I'm assuming you have not changed your position?

Mark Milley

I have not. That's correct.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio)

Thank you. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Larsen.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

Thank you just said, thanks for coming today, just maybe turning into some other issues in the defense budget, perhaps for the Secretary on the generally on the research and development in science and technology across the enterprise? How would you characterize that, the budget proposal?

Lloyd Austin

It's the largest amount that we've ever asked for in our budget, so \$130 billion dollars. So that's a substantial amount.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

And is it--how would you characterize how its allocated not by service, but by the timing of the investment to get a result, if you will, to meet this speed of relevance and catching up with with pure competitors in certain areas?

Lloyd Austin

I think, of course, as you know, we're calling a 22 budget, we invested heavily in RDT&E as well. And so there are a number of capabilities that we're going after that I think some of them will take time to, to come, come to reality, but investing in things like AI and those kinds of things, and space-based capabilities, again, long term, in some cases, long term investments, but investments that we need to make now.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

I know you probably came here to talk about today's headlines and such. So appreciate your answering those questions. There's a one particular program of interest in mind that NATO and the NATO alliance developed. Shorthand is DIANA, but it's the Defense Innovation accelerator for the North Atlantic.

And I don't think that we've committed yet to participating in the alliances efforts for investment entities developing and sharing, merging what they call EDT, emerging in disruptive technologies can give you an update on that.

Lloyd Austin

I would just point to some of the things that we are doing and like you'll recall orcas that we announced here this last year, that only not only includes the development of a submarine capability. It also includes working with, with our partners in other areas like hypersonics, like long range, strike and those kinds of things and AI. And that is coming along really, really well. So I agree with you, those types of investments are really important.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

For General Milley, Secretary mentioned artificial intelligence machine learning so on to what extent are we starting to incorporate just you know, a knowledge base and professional military education, on how to use AI what to expect from artificial intelligence, not to create a bunch of coders, but to ensure that the folks go into PME sort of understand these concepts and how they can be used as well as the ethics around them.

Mark Milley

Artificial Intelligence of my views would be for lack of a better term, I'd say it's the mother of all technologies here when it comes to military operations, because what that will enable you to do is to go through the OODA Loop, observe, orient direct and act loop the decision-making process, at rates of speed far greater than your opponent. So that side that masters artificial intelligence, and applies it to military operations is going to have a perhaps not decisive, but it's going to be a very, very significant advantage over your opponent. We are teaching those techniques and given essential, essentially introductory level information about artificial intelligence in our professional military education at the war colleges, not so much at the lower schools, but the war colleges for sure. And there's a significant amount of investment.

And I've thought, madam, I don't have it in front of me, but I think it's 15 or \$20 billion, something that in artificial intelligence in this budget. So that's a that's a real critical area of investment. Now, years ago, Department of Defense was the innovative leader in technology. Many, many decades ago.

Now it's the commercial industry. So we've got to leverage commercial efforts in artificial intelligence, for military application, and that will be an enormously advantage, enormous advantage in future combat.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

Great. Do you anticipate injecting this type of education into the service academies in the near future?

Mark Milley

Actually, the service academies right now are on the cutting edge of that the younger they did It'll natives. They do an awful lot of technical or technological courses at the service academies. So they are actually at the cutting edge of the artificial intelligence programs that Department Defense is doing.

Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.)

Yeah. Appreciate that. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Lamborn is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.)

Can you hear me now, Mr Chairman?

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

We gotcha. Go ahead.

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.)

Okay. Thank you so much. I have a concern I want to express and then I have several questions. Many of President Biden's national security failures, feature and unwillingness to listen to military and subject matter experts.

The atrocious withdrawal from Afghanistan, and its tragic consequences was the first alarm bell. At that time military advisors testified to Congress that in their opinion, the United States should have kept a troop presence in Afghanistan past the withdrawal date. But this was not listened to. The second alarm bells went off on February 24, when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Here the failure was the inability to deter Vladimir Putin and a misunderstanding of what it meant to deter. Throughout President Biden's response, the only constants have been reaction and assistance provided later than needed. And I'm concerned about what might be a third alarm bill. The flaws in the nuclear posture review a possible decision to reenter the Iran nuclear deal or others.

So with those concerns in mind, Chairman Milley I have some questions for you of last week. And Representative Turner's started on this line of questions. But we heard from general Wolters that his recommendation was to proceed with the nuclear Sea Launch cruise missile or SLCM in and its associated warhead general heighten was a big proponent of ensuring full funding for the slick come in. Just yesterday, the Committee received a letter from Admiral Richard where he stated that quote, the current situation in Ukraine, and China's nuclear trajectory convinces me a deterrence and assurance gap exists.

Unquote. He goes on to state that to address this gap he needs a low yield weapon with a non ballistic trajectory. In other words they see launched cruise missile, however, it seems that the Biden administration has chosen to cancel SLCM in its nuclear posture review. What was your best military advice General General Milley on the SLCM and during the NPR process, and did it mirror that of Admiral Richard, General Wolters and General Hyten?

Mark Milley

Thanks. And as I have stated many, many times before, my best military advice to this president or any president is a matter between me and that President. I will say that to you, though, as members of Congress who have oversight responsibilities, my position on SLCM has not changed, as I've mentioned, to Representative Turner, my general view is that this president or any president deserve to have multiple options to deal with national security situations. And my advice is listened to.

And I have an opportunity to express my voice on a continuous basis many, many times.

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.)

General Milley, was any of this put in writing that we would be able to get a copy of?

Mark Milley

My best military advice is almost always put in writing whether or not the Committee requests that there are rules, obviously how we do that. So it's all classified. But I defer to the Chairman--Chairman Smith. On that we we give up stuff to the Committee all the time, or individual members upon request for those procedures to do that, and it is in writing.

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.)

Okay, thank you. Now, for both of you, I see that there is full funding in the budget for the ground based strategic deterrent, W87-1 warhead and the two sites solution for producing plutonium pits. That is excellent. And I applaud that.

Now. I am curious as to why the Department of Defense cancelled a Minuteman 3 flight test last week. These are regularly scheduled tests that are scheduled months in advance. Secretary Austin, how could this have been perceived as escalatory when it's a routine test that scheduled months in advance and did the White House exercise?

It's in provide input over this cancellation?

Lloyd Austin

To answer your question on second part of your question, first, no, we did not get a directive to to cancel that from the White House. It's my assessment based upon the current state of the state of play with respect to escalation management, that it was the best thing to do in in, in terms of postponing, and then eventually canceling that test, we will certainly be able to continue to make progress in the program. And so that that is not an issue. And, and by the way, Thanks for your concern on our, our investment in our nuclear triad.

I would just point that there's, we've invested \$34.4 billion in the modernization of the triad in his budget.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. Mr Courtney is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses. Actually, I'm going to continue down this path, secretary and general and actually on June 4, we are going to have the -- for the USS Columbia, which is the first boat in the recapitalization of the ballistic missile program, the budget that came over, and again, I chair sea power, so we look at it pretty closely. It's \$6 billion for Columbia.

Again, that's the biggest number since this journey started back in 2008. So that, you know, the commitment by the administration in your Department in terms of really the most critical leg of the triad, which is the sea bass leg, I mean, that's 70% of our strategic deterrence is carried on those platforms. And the schedule is knife edge. we--there's no really margin for delay in terms of moving that forward.

And this budget certainly reflects that. I would also note, on page seven general of your testimony, you noted the fact that the budget invests in the industrial base to support Fleet Modernization and on time delivery of the Columbus Columbus class submarine, and there's \$538 million for supplier development, submarine supplier development as well as 227 for submarine workforce development, which is means that the Navy now is in the position of trying to boost welders, electricians, shipwrights pipe fitters, I mean, when we look at really the challenge that's being faced for Columbia, and frankly,

shipbuilding across, it really is a workforce issue. And I've been around for a while those numbers in terms of DOD investment into workforce, we've never seen anything that robust. And I just wonder maybe if you want to maybe in larger than your comment in the testimony general, in terms of that initiative.

Mark Milley

I just would underline that our submarine force in the in the joint force, as we look to the future change the character of war, and then operating environment in the 2030s 2040s. And beyond. The submarine force is the most lethal, the most capable and the most survivable part of the joint force that's out there. So continued investment in the sub force is fundamental to the nation's security.

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.)

And reaching beyond really just the Navy's sort of box in terms of reaching out into the industrial base in a way that this budget does. Again, the President back in December, designated the submarine workforce as essential in a defense production act executive orders at the end of December, which again, I don't think I've ever seen that any other sort of production platform that we have. The one point I just to go back to the question of the low yield missiles, I would note that the nuclear posture review does provide that low yield missiles will be deployed on ballistic submarines. Again, the question of SLCM is really whether they're going to be extended to attack submarines.

And I would just tell you, representing a district with a lot of Submariners, that issue of changing really, the mission of attack submarines is something that is greatly in dispute. And I think the administration made the right choice in terms of keeping the attack subs focused on their main mission, which is to have an agile mobile, the queen on the chessboard, as Admiral rough head used to call them and I think putting tactical weapons on there really changes it in a really clunky way in terms of moving forward. I would note also that the the budget that came over, in terms of shipbuilding, is about \$28 billion. That's the first time in six years where we've had a president's budget that's come over higher than the prior years enacted level.

You know, that may sound like sort of a green eyeshade sort of comment. But the fact is, is we're not beginning, you know, underground or below zero with this budget this year. In terms of the Committee, this is the first time we've actually seen investment in ship construction that's higher than the prior year. And again, I think that shows you know that this you're committed to you know, really making sure that we have the Fleet of the Future that's there.

It's not perfect. I think General Bergers' made a really good argument for You know, the LPD program to get looked at. And I know that's on his unfunded requirements list. And again, I think that's something we're certainly going to take a very strong look at.

And--and lastly, you know, the sea lift component, which is mentioned in your testimony. It's only two boats, we've got to do better than that. I, you know, again, from the army, that sea lift is not just a navy program, it's really for the whole service and 16 seconds left, maybe you could sort of respond to that question.

Lloyd Austin

Well, certainly, it is important, and we acknowledge that and you'll see if you, as you look at the budget, you know, the investment--investments that we've made, began to reflect that.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

And again, I apologize. Mr Courtney set me up horribly on that one. So we'll have we'll have we'll have to get that for the record. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr Wittman is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.)

Thank Mr Chairman. Gentlemen, thanks for joining us today. Thanks so much for your service to our nation. Secretary Austin, last March INDOPACOM Commander Phil Davidson said that he saw that China's making every preparation for a confrontation over Taiwan by 2027 current INDOPACOM commander, Admiral Aquilino, said the same thing former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo agreed.

In fact, General Milley has previously stated this, we're going to have to have a much larger fleet than we have today, if we're serious about great power competition and deterring great power war, and if we're serious about dominant capability over something like China or some other power that has significant capability. Secretary Austin, do you agree that we should be preparing for a showdown with Taiwan in this decade?

Lloyd Austin

I agree that we should have the right capabilities to be able to not only be relevant in deterring future adversaries, but also dominant on a future battlefield. And we are investing in those capabilities in this budget.

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.)

Thank you. General Milley, the Navy today has 297 ships. And this budget request for reduce our fleet to 280 by 2027. If you look at where we are in relation to the Chinese, our budget and number of ships have shrunk continuously over the past two decades, we have gone from 318 ships down to 297.

Today, during the same period of time, China has gone from 210 ships to 360 ships. The Audi's budget will further shrink that to 280. DOD his own China power report projects that China will have 460 ships by 2030. In this latest budget request, the Navy proposes to retire 24 ships and build eight ships.

I'm not a mathematician. But it seems like to me you can't do addition by subtraction that seems to be grossly irresponsible and completely, completely denies the reality of what we are facing General Milley in your professional military judgment. Does our shipbuilding plan accurately reflect the investments that we need to make in naval capacity and capabilities that we need to deter the Chinese in the years and decades to come?

Mark Milley

Let me make a couple of comments. Congressman, thank you for that. First, I think it's important to focus on capability. So capability matters, numbers matter, mass matters.

And I'm on board with all that. But capability matters and the ships that were returned, the 20-some-odd the two dozen ships that are coming out of the inventory in this particular budget, the Navy is assessed those very high maintenance costs high to sustain. The cost is exceeding the benefit of those ships staying on active-duty sort of thing. And the nine ships that were procuring the capability of those ships is the most modern in the fleet.

So you know, the capability versus capacity arguments there. I'm always in favor of great numbers, I think that's great. But I would bias towards capability rather than just sheer numbers. It is a fair argument about the number of ships the Chinese have.

And it even gets worse if you think about our global commitment. versus say the US fleet, it's in the western Pacific or in the Pacific, the numbers are even--the ratios are even worse. But again, it's capability versus capacity. And I'd caution folks to go down into the detail about what our ships can do, what the training of our Sailors can do, what our tactics are, what technologies are on our ships.

I think there's a fundamental and significant advantage to us, relative to China on that capability.

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.)

Well General Milley, I don't deny that our ships are great. Our sailors are great. But you do have to look this in terms of magnitude quantity has a quality all of all of its own. Notice if if we're going down to 280 and they're at 460 are great ships can only be in one place at one time.

They can only engage so many targets, I have a hard time figuring out how their trajectory of China going in this direction and their trajectory, the United States going in the opposite direction, it's almost impossible to make an argument to say that we're going to build enough capability in nine ships to displace the Chinese and that nine ships are going to be able to replace the the capacity and capability in 24 ships. You know, like I said, I'm not a not a mathematician, but just seems like to me, you can't do addition by subtraction.

Mark Milley

I'm not going to be over budget because I am on the side of mass matters, quantity has a quality all its own, etc. But you can't buy everything. You can't be everything to everyone at all times. Right.

So there has to be a balanced in the budget. And I think this particular budget is divesting.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has--has expired. I will say we also on this issue, shipbuilding capacity matters. I mean, basically, do we have the industrial base to support that even if we put them in the budget? My understanding is we don't so that that's a different challenge as well in terms of workforce.

Mr Garamendi is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

Thank you. Let me start with a thank you for the good work you've been doing with regard to Ukraine, pushing the necessary equipment into Ukraine. It's an extraordinary piece of work, and you're to be congratulated and thanked for that work. Also, the work Secretary Austin, and General Milley in rebuilding our relationships with NATO.

They were virtually destroyed in the previous four years of the administration, the previous administration, very rapidly rebuilt. And I think that may very well be Secretary Austin, part of your integrated Deterrence Strategy. Is that correct our allies.

Lloyd Austin

It is a part of a significant part of the of our strategy. Integrated deterrence means using all of the capability and capacity that's resident in all of the warfighting domains air, land, space, cyber, sea, and networking knows capabilities in new and different ways that really give us tremendous power and also make sure that we remain a dominant combat capable force. And a big part of that is using the capability capacity of our allies as well. And and you're seeing us do that in in NATO as we speak.

And you'll see us continue to do that in the Indo-Pacific. But I think I think we've done that in the past, certainly, but we want to increase our efforts going forward. And I think I point to orcas again, as one of the things one of the types of things that we're doing to leverage the capability of our, of our allies.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

Building on that, and on what Mr Courtney was raising with regard to sea lift, it's clear that we are in a position now to not be able to support our efforts in the western Pacific should it be necessary, and doesn't appear to be based upon the previous discussion, money to build the ships to provide the sea lift capacity? A quick comment if you work on a strategy that would utilize the current Jones Act fleet in its fullness, making it militarily useful, subsidizing, adding to the strength of the ships when necessary, repurposing them, and making them available motors we currently do with the craft program, the airline industry, if you'd care to comment on that kind of a strategy that would be using all of the assets of the United States, including our maritime assets.

Lloyd Austin

Absolutely. And that's what you would, we would, we would hope to do in in the case of need, you've seen us do that, as you pointed out with aircraft. That's the thing that that gives us the ability to punch above our weight class and in our, our, our country has always responded to our request in times of needs.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

Well, we'll be working on that a national maritime security program in the coming months ahead of us. A final point has to do with maintaining and repairing all of the things that we have. We don't do that so well. Our government owns shipyards are antiquated.

I'm looking for the investment. In that also in the depots mentioned earlier the issues of the arsenals if you'd care to comment on that, -- Milley or Secretary Austin?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks, sir, that's a that's a great question. And I think you'll see in this budget a \$1.7 billion investment in our in our public shipyards and, and that that begins to, to get after some of the things that you've mentioned, this is really important to make sure that we have the capability to not only build the kinds of ships that we need going forward, but also sustain them as well, as you pointed out.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

Here--the--we're not there yet. That level of investment in the government yards or the public yards, would probably not be sufficient to maintain the ships that we need to keep them at sea, we can build more and more ships. But if we cannot keep them at sea, because they cannot be maintained in a orderly and quick way doesn't do much for us.

Lloyd Austin

I absolutely agree with you, sir. And, you know, that's why I said this is a this is a good, a good start a good couple of steps forward, but we need more investment going forward.

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)

For the Committee here, we may want to consider this how we're going to invest in maintaining our ships at sea.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. Mr Scott is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Austin Scott (R-Ga.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for being here. I want to speak briefly about INDOPACOM, it is over half the world's population. Ukraine puts 50 million metric tons of corn and wheat into the export markets.

Russia is also responsible for a tremendous amount of wheat going into the global food supply. Russia has recently prohibited the export of sunflower seed, it seems that Russia is now using food, literally as weapon of war. I just want to make sure that at the DOD, we are paying attention to the potential for a significant reduction in the global food supply. And what that means for the INDOPACOM region, where Ukraine is the largest supplier of the UN World Food Program.

Are those assessments being done by DIA or any other type of analyzing agency with regard to the potential unrest and instability in the INDOPACOM region?

Lloyd Austin

Those assessments continue to be done, sir. And this has been a focus on is a focus of our government, in crisis across the interagency, you know, a number of agencies are looking at this, but but we certainly share your concern.

Rep. Austin Scott (R-Ga.)

I just, I want to that part of the world and really the global economy, the Black Sea region is something that the United States and NATO has seemed to have a strategy for. And I do hope that as we push forward, we will develop a strategy for the Black Sea region, the the importance of that, with regard to the world food supply, I don't think can be overestimated. There's another country in that region that I'm extremely concerned about. That's the country of Georgia, they have a partnership with the Georgia National Guard, one of the many state partnerships that we have.

What are we doing with regard to those partnerships to make sure that over the long term, those partnerships are strengthened. And using their ability to help fund putting the weapon systems in the region where we where we need them. In other words, as we talk about going to fight, we fight by with and through partners. And I want to make sure that we are using those partnerships to get the weapons in the region in such a manner that the US does not pay all of the--all of the cost.

Lloyd Austin

How we can continue to do great work in countries like Georgia, and I was there a couple of months ago, I did get a chance to go out and visit with our troops that are actually doing some of that training that you mentioned. This is invaluable. It provides us great capabilities.

And so we will continue to invest in it in terms of specific needs of countries. We'll work those on on a case-by-case individual basis. But our--the value of our troops engaging with--with countries in the region cannot be overstated. They are doing a tremendous job.

Rep. Austin Scott (R-Ga.)

One of one of my concerns, Mr Secretary is when we divest equipment in the United States, I think the A-10 is probably the best example. This is a weapon system that the DOD has requested be--that we divest from over the last several years, at least as long as I can remember being a member of Congress. Yet, when we look at the European theater right now, it's clearly a weapon system that if people who share our interests and our values had them, they would be doing even better in the war against Russia.

Lloyd Austin

We have, over time, provided capabilities that we no longer use to two other countries. And in every case, in terms of a high end capability, I think you have to start with a with a threat. And if you if they use this piece of equipment, or this, this system or capability in that environment, it's will it be relevant. And so as we look at the air defense systems that we can expect Georgia to encounter, we look at the capable training that's required.

We look at the, you know, the, the maintenance capabilities and those sorts of things. All of that goes in into into an assessment to, to see whether or not it makes sense to to actually do that. But definitely you make a great point.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Time has expired. Ms Speier is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.)

Chairman, thank you. Thank you to both Secretary Austin and General Milley for extraordinary work. First, Secretary Austin, last year, you made a commitment that you would deal with the issue of sexual assault, you actually delivered on that commitment. Thank you very much for the military justice reform we've seen but as you I believe agree, sexual harassment needs to be taken out of the chain of command as well, because sexual harassment begets sexual assault.

And it appeared to be taken out on the Senate side, because they were getting signals from the Department, I hope this year that we can count on you to make that case to our Senate colleagues about the importance of taking sexual harassment out of the chain as well.

Lloyd Austin

Well, as you said, I think this, this entire issue is is one that's, that's very important to us. And we'll continue to do the right things in terms of making sure that we provide the right environments for our troops to operate in. And we'll continue to work to achieve the objectives that we've outlined in terms of our reform of our UCMJ. And I really appreciate your support in in the past year or two.

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.)

Thank you. Let me move on. I'm troubled by the 41% increase in deaths by suicide by our servicemembers in the past five years, I know you are as well. There are many factors including up-tempo toxic climates and financial insecurity, by having talked to the widows talk to the parents, of those soldiers and airmen in particular who have taken their lives.

The biggest problem is the lack of behavioral health expertise in the system, we are woefully under served in that regard. And I'm going with Senator Sullivan to Alaska this month, I know we're going to hear that that's part of the problem, you can't wait two months when you are exhibiting suicidal ideation. Now, your Department, your defense health agency has said

it's going to take them to 2024 to come up with the number that is necessary to provide these services to our service members. Imagine if Kaiser or Providence told their board that it was going to take them two years to determine what the number of providers that was necessary to serve their patients, they would be fired.

What are you going to be able to do to light a fire under the Military Health System leadership to get a plan in place and the numbers identified?

Lloyd Austin

Well, as you've heard me say in my opening statement, this is something that's that's very important to me and the Department remains focused on it. As you know, we've, with your help, we've stood up an independent review commissioned to look at how we're doing across across the Department and to look at the resources that we need and how we can speed up resources to make them available to to our troops and our families. In the meantime, we're going to use every resource that's available to us. We're going to increase our our use of telehealth care.

And, and and again, I think this is very important in We're going to stay focused on it.

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.)

Thank you. General Milley, the Government Accountability Office has repeatedly shown that the surface Navy is critically undermanned, and some 6000 sailors undermanned yet, the budget requests the Navy is decreasing their end strength and requesting more ships. The GAO reports that sailors are working 80 to 100 hours per week and sleeping less than six hours at night and they're struggling with mental health. We saw it on the Fitzgerald.

We've seen it in the ship that was destroyed the \$4 billion ship in San Diego. What are we going to do to get the Navy to take this seriously?

Mark Milley

First, I think the Navy does take it seriously. The solution doesn't it's not a simple solution. It has to do with up-tempo, the Navy is got it, I don't know they're they're just under one to two up tempo for their ships, the fleet at sea. So they're running hard.

And we ask an awful lot of our Navy as we do, the Army and Air Force etc. But the Navy is particularly stressed because we extend ships and they're out there for extended periods time, etc. And as you note there, the numbers are lower, their Manning levels are lower per ship than optimally manned. So that's a problem.

They are taking it serious. But it's not something that the Changi commander Navy leadership has not taken serious. With respect to the behavioral health piece. I couldn't agree with you more.

I think behavioral health specialists are critical to part of the problem or to solve the problem. But I would also emphasize the chain of command.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Has expired. Hold the answer there. and Mr Brooks is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. This past year, we've seen an Afghanistan withdrawal debacle, Russia invade the Ukraine, China threatening a nuclear attack on Japan if Japan helps defend Taiwan against a Communist Chinese attack. And that brings me to my question for General Milley and Secretary Austin. In your professional opinion over the past year, is the world a more dangerous place a less dangerous place or about the same General Milley?

Mark Milley

Thanks, Congressman, as I said in my opening statement, it is my observation, my analysis that the world is becoming more unstable, not less unstable.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

Secretary Austin.

Lloyd Austin

We're trending towards greater instability.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

Now the consumer price index is increasing at a 7.9% rate according to the official federal government statistics. course that's an estimate. My personal belief is it's probably worse than that. Certainly, talking anecdotally to the people in my district, they believe that it's worse than that.

What is the inflation rate for our national defense cost? manpower, bullets, fuel everything that comprises national offense? What is the inflation rate for those items? General Milley.

Mark Milley

I defer to Mike McCord -- an expert but the this budget assumes an inflation rate of 2.2%, which is obviously incorrect, because it's almost 8%. And it might go up might go down, but most forecasts indicate it's gonna go up and it could level out at nine or 10%. Who knows? But it's clearly higher than what the assumption was in this budget.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

When you say it assumes a 2.2%. Are you talking about a 2.2% consumer price index inflation rate, which is what we commonly look at? Are you talking about a 2.2% increase for national defense costs?

Mark Milley

It's the CPI they as the budget assumes 2.2% inflation rate CPI inflation rate,

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

When what when the official rate is 7.9%. That's why are we assuming 2.2%?

Mark Milley

Budget was produced a while ago, those calculations were made prior to the current inflation rate. That's correct. And I'd asked Mike McCord to make a comment on the specifics.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

So you would agree would you not then that the assumption, at least according to the official federal government inflation rate is over 5% wrong?

Michael McCord

Congressman, Congressman, we--we in Department offense don't use have never used the CPI as what is relevant for what we do.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

Mr McCord, let me ask you the question, then what is the inflation rate for the things that the military has to purchase in order to provide adequate national security?

Michael McCord

What we saw last year was 4%. And that's what we built into that -- what we built into our pricing going forward was to get that 2% up to 4%.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

So what is your degree of confidence that the 4% rate is going to hold true?

Michael McCord

That's an unknown, congressman. Obviously, the fiscal year calculation that you're citing in the General Milley we're discussing is of course starts six months from now and ends 18 months from now, so a lot can happen up or down. To affect that.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.)

Well, let me add some comment and then some data. If we don't know what the inflation rate is for national defense secured products, then we can't really know whether the President's budget strengthens or weakens America's national security in an environment that both General Milley and Secretary Austin believe is becoming more dangerous, not the same or less dangerous. And I've just looked up a couple of items that I hope that you all would take into account as you determine what ultimately will be the budget that the President would support for national security over the past two years, from January 2020 to January of 2022. Crude oil has gone up 137%.

Now that's a big-ticket item in national defense, wholesale gas and other big ticket item and national defense has gone up 39% wholesale diesel has gone up 37%. There probably other fuels, like jet fuels or what have you, that have gone up significantly. So I would hope that you would take all these things into account and increase our defense spending in order to at least hold our own in real purchasing power. And then I'll add this final note, if I recall correctly, you're looking at about a 4.6% pay raise for our military personnel.

Is that what I heard? Well, if 4.6% is it, given that the consumer price index is gone up 7.9% Do the math that comes out to a 3.3% pay cut for our military personnel. Thank you, Mr Chairman. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Norcross is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.)

Thank you, Chairman. And I just want to follow up on some of the previous conversations when we start having the conversation of what we have available to us in our stockpiles. There is probably not a day that goes by since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict started, that we're not talking about sending javelins and Stingers. But I want to back up a little bit.

We have a strategic stockpile that has been formulated based on risk over the years. General Milley your assessment with respect to the weapons that we continue to supply, Ukraine, the level of lethal aid that we can sustain, are we anywhere close right now to depleting what we need? And as an assessment of risk for our own protection of potentially.

Mark Milley

No, what we've supplied is a wide variety of small arms, munitions, machine guns, grenades, grenade launcher, etc. And the two weapon systems there that are most in the news of the javelin. And the stinger Stinger doesn't get produces no more production line on stinger. And with respect to Javelin No, we're not we're not at our we're still meeting our mission requirements for Javelin so we're not breaking breaking any of those red lines.

Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.)

So when we look at our single point of failures are critical rare earth materials that go into the explosive, the accelerant. Our Committee had a hearing earlier last week that talked about the Army's ongoing efforts to modernize the ammunition production facilities, which would be kind of call them at war work to and certainly over the next five years, they have \$2 billion that has been looked at as something that we understand is minimum, given that, like critical supply chain. One of the other issues in that supply chain is the human efforts and Secretary offs. And this is where I like to get your feedback.

You know, buying America has always been a motto that most of us adhere to. It has shown us over the course of the pandemic how important that is, for a variety of reasons. You heard about the the naval shipbuilding areas but across the board. We miss locking led to task force about those critical supply chain and bringing up the workforce.

As you know the soldiers do not get born and trained overnight. It takes time, as does our industry for workforce. What are we doing to try to onshore some of those critical supply chain issues and build up what's made here in America versus across the globe?

Lloyd Austin

So this has been a thanks for question. It's been a point of emphasis emphasis for us over the last year, as you know, the President has really worked is really working hard to onshore some of the key capabilities that that have caused some concern with respect to our supply chains here, micro electronics, and those kinds of things.

Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.)

And we should be sure to point out that our allies and partners are not the problem. It's those in second and third chain that create the problem. And again, just as you know, we have to build this industrial base, no way we can do it is to signal the industry, how critically important it is that we give them the assurances. It's just not a one year.

And with that, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you, Dr. DesJarlais, is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

Thank you, Chairman, General Milley, in your opening statement, you began with the fact that we have the greatest military force on the planet, and that we are prepared to defend ourselves and our allies and detour against aggression. That didn't work in in Ukraine. What lessons have we learned in being perhaps more concerned about provocation of Vladimir Putin rather than deterring him? And how can we apply that when looking forward to the Chinese threat to Taiwan?

Mark Milley

Well, I think that with respect to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it's been a long-standing objective of Putin. And candidly, short of the commitment of US military forces into Ukraine proper. I not sure he was detectable, this has been a long term, objective of his that goes back years. So I think the idea of deterring Putin from invading Ukraine, deterring them by the United States would have required the commitment of US military forces, and I think that would have risked armed conflict with Russia, which I certainly would have advised.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

Okay. The President's strategy, at least publicly and his administration was to impose economic state sanctions to detour Russia. So did you advise him that that was probably not going to work, and this invasion was inevitable.

Mark Milley

The--it's not my lane to comment on sanctions per se, but sanctions have a very poor track record of deterring aggression, but they are a means of imposing significant costs. The objective of the sanctions is to impose significant cost if he invaded those significant costs. The sanctions in combination with the export controls are breaking the back of the Russian economy as we speak.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

Secretary Austin several members have brought up hypersonic weapons and you mentioned we have other options, but of the three countries currently fielding hypersonic glide weapons, Russia, China and the United States who's leading in that capability.

Lloyd Austin

I don't know what the inventories of the Chinese--

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

Okay, you must not be attending the same briefings we are because clearly, China seems to be out front. We don't have a current capability that can defend against hypersonic threats. Is that correct? And that gap--or that's the gap that the glide phase interceptor is supposed to fill Correct.

Okay, I heard some very concerned reports over the past week that the White House and the Department may be slowing the development of the glide phase interceptor. Can you confirm?

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, we remain on track with our programming as you can see from the budget we we were investing significant amount of money for the defense of for missile defense,

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

Okay, we brought up undersea capabilities and Russia currently has a nuclear capable submarine launch cruise missile, correct?

Lloyd Austin

Russia has--I'm sorry, they--

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

They have a nuclear capable submarine launch cruise missile, correct?

Lloyd Austin

That's correct.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

All right. Right. President Biden suggests that we cut our own capability for nuclear capable sea launch cruise missiles. And that's correct as well, right.

Lloyd Austin

You can see what we're investing in is \$34 billion in our in our nuclear triad here.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

General Milley, you commented that your best medical advice is that we should keep this capability. Admiral Richards, General Wolters, I think VanHerck has mentioned that. Secretary Austin, do you agree with your colleagues that this is a capability that we should focus on to help limit the asymmetry we have when it comes to the delivery of low yield nuclear capability?

Lloyd Austin

You know, the the marginal capability that this this provides is far outweighed by the cost. And so we have colleagues who provide options to the President with a number of means.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.)

So, the one thing that we hope is that regardless of which party is empowering the White House that our military advisors, like yourselves, look at this through an objective lens, and we had concern about the Department losing focus on our lethal capability and focusing on more of a woke military hope that's not the case. And it seems like a lot of us are in agreement on capabilities.

Lloyd Austin

But let me tell you, it is not listening. Congressman, this is the most lethal force on the planet, and it will remain that way. And we will continue to invest in the things that we need to remain dominant on the battlefield.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. Mr Gallego?

Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.)

Secretary Austin, can you explain the concept of integrated deterrence in a little more detail? And are there any examples we had, we would have seen it succeed thus far, especially if there's any NATO examples.

Lloyd Austin

I think you've heard me say a bit earlier that integrated deterrence really means using all the capability and capacity in all of the warfighting domains air, land, sea, cyber and space, and linking and networking those capabilities together in new ways to provide to create synergies. And you're seeing us do that in a number of areas. It also involves leveraging the capability and capacity of our allies. And again, I mentioned earlier that, that we've done that in the past, but we need to do that a lot better, not only air, land and sea, but also in space and cyber, and many of our allies have significant capability there as well.

Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.)

Sir, I was just to follow up on that one of the things I was very happy in that you had in your written remarks of steps we've taken with the allies to bolster NATO--NATO's Eastern flanked. In fact, one of my proudest moments in Congress thus far as securing an authorization for the Baltic secure initiative, which provides targeted defense systems to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, including an air defense, ammunition, and C4ISR, across these capabilities, or others, are there particular areas where you would like to deepen defense and military to military cooperation between the United States and the Baltic countries? And which capabilities do you think are most important for the Baltic states prioritize.

Lloyd Austin

Some of them have some pretty significant capabilities in cyber, and I think they can add to our already robust inventory here, but but I think things like cyber in air and missile defense, we'd like to see them to to begin to develop more capabilities there and work together with their, with our neighbors to link those capabilities together.

Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.)

Thank you. And then Secretary Austin, again, you referenced gray zone multiple times in your written testimony, noting our competitors malign activities, and one of my greatest concerns is Russia's ability to exploit the gray zone and to conduct targeted disinformation operations, spreading Putin's propaganda and blatant lies over the long term. I'm also concerned about the lessons that China is drawing from Russia in the space itself. Could you share your perspective on our forces can be more effective operating in this gray zone of conflict?

What short- and long-term steps should we be taken to counter this malign influence from Russia right now and from China to as it becomes more adept at spreading disinformation operating in the gray zone?

Lloyd Austin

Well, we we have been very active and before the onset of hostilities here with with the Ukrainians and helping them with their cyber capabilities, and helping them develop methods to to begin to counter some of the activity in the gray zone. And we can this is a learning process we continue to learn thus far, I think we've been very effective in helping them and and they have been able to, to push back on a number of unhelpful narratives and stay ahead of the power curve, actually. So there are there will be a number of lessons learned coming out of this. But I think I think we've grown in our awareness in terms of what it takes to be able to begin to be effective in countering unhelpful narratives in the information space.

Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.)

And then lastly, what are my maritime I'd like to talk to you about the civilian harm mitigation respond to action plan. As you all know, civilian harm caused by US military operations risks are legitimate overseas legitimacy overseas, including what

we've already seen with the reaction to Russia. So was probably a letter with a bunch of members. My understanding is that the revenue review is still ongoing under the 90 day window that you directed.

Would you share any insight you've learned so far from this process?

Lloyd Austin

I'm not prepared to share insights at this point, I would just the only insight I have is that the you know, the folks that we've assembled to, to work on this are very detailed and very committed to doing this the right way. And these are people from a number of communities to include the the active warfighters and and so we still have work to do. And, you know, the, the at the review is about 30 days out in terms of the the brief out of the review. So once that's done, I'll be happy to share any any insights and lessons learned from this, but and also prescribe a way ahead.

Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.)

Thank you. I yield back my time.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Kelly is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. One of the things that I'm really concerned about Secretary Austin and General Milley is that across the DOD, I continually hear people talk about divesting of things for future for future things future capabilities for current and General Milley. I've heard you say this, I learned this from you. We have to be able to fight today with the things flight tonight with the things that we have right now.

And so I see that we're talking about the Marine Corps says they need 31 amphib sea ups, yet, we're saying we're only going to give you 24. We're only building nine ships. And we're divesting of 24. And capabilities.

It's a sliding scale of where yes, a KC-46 is--are not coming online not providing all the capabilities need in a timely enough manner. But yet, we're talking about divesting of the KC-135. So So we continue to divest in thing, the same thing with a SLCM. If we have another capability that provides that same thing in the same region, then we need to do that.

So listen, I know everybody's hearts in the right place. But I just think we have to be very careful. Now we have a war with Russia and Ukraine and really looking nice thing to see, do we have the capability? Should should the world ask that we fought two wars on two fronts, whether that's ships and current capabilities, are refueling aircraft.

The other thing I'm extremely concerned about Secretary Austin, and I think this is something you can fix is our Merchant Marine fleet, our ability to move ships, troops, equipment, fuel, all kinds of logistics, we keep pushing that that's not just a navy function, it's the army that has to have those goods. It's the Marine Corps. And so we really have to look at this. And we have to invest in our Merchant Marine fleet to be able to get us what we need when we do What are you doing to get our Merchant Marine fleet set at a DOD level, because I can tell you the services are always going to say the other one needs to pay for it.

Mark Milley

We have not invested any money or invested any monies in this budget towards a merchant marine fleet. But you make some good points.

Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.)

But we need you would agree that that logistic chain. I mean, the reason the Russians are getting their tail kick in Ukraine right now is a logistical failure. And if we don't plan to do logistics, I promise you, it will not happen. We're gonna go back with KC-135.

Are you willing, are you willing, General Milley Secretary Austin to relook the divestiture of KC-135s until we have adequate capability to refuel to both INDOPACOM and also Europe are you willing to wait relook at that and not the best until we have capabilities replaced?

Mark Milley

I would be happy to relook anything in the budget that you want me to relook, and I'll take a look at that and give it the Air Force and make sure that I clearly understand the divestiture logic in the in the production rates of the KC-46.

Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.)

And then I just really hope you will relook the ship plant. I mean, the Marines say they need 31 amphibs. Yet DoD says we're only going to give you 24. And I disagree with the Chairman a little bit on this.

We do have the capability to produce those chips. But it's about keeping the workforce engaged and making sure that we have a timeline and we don't change that every year so that they can plan out to having the right industrial base at the right time. So I hope we will get I haven't seen a ship plan and two years from the Navy and that is one of the requirements that they're supposed to do. We need that in order to do our job.

Lloyd Austin

Thanks for that and that's forthcoming. And also they they've done an amphib review And that's forthcoming as well. And once that's done, I think we'll have greater insights into what what the Secretary of the Navy really believes the credit. The requirements are.

I would just point to the fact that I know you know this that we're investing \$2.6 billion in in Amphibs. In this in this budget Amphibs are important. There's no question about it.

Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.)

Mr Secretary and I hate interrupt, but I got one minute, I got one more question I really want to talk about, I really just hope you guys are the adviser to not just the president but to the nation, and making sure that we have the right rest of fighting today versus future capabilities that we have to have to win future wars. And I just hope that we'll relook some of those things. Final point I want to talk about. There's a little bit of movement right now.

And I just asked both of y'all weigh in on this. To make gold star families to include a gold star to make them someone who dies in service. If I die of a heart attack while I'm doing guardrail. My family is not a Gold Star family, I shouldn't get a Purple Heart for having an ATV wreck downrange.

That is not to denigrate anyone from not doing that. We love all our service members, however they die. But I really hope you'll look hard and making sure our Gold Star families are Gold Star families who are lost in combat.

Mark Milley

And I am doing that personally doing that. Today is Gold Star Spouses Day -- Gold Star Family Day, by the way. And there's nothing probably more important and sacred than to make sure that we honor those fallen in combat in the defense of this nation.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. Mr Carbajal is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)

Thank you, Mr Chair.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

I apologize. Hold on. -- The witnesses need a 15-minute break, which we're going to take at 1130. So we'll go to Mr Carbajal and the next Republican then we'll take a 15 minute break after those two questioners.

Mr Carbajal is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)

Thank you, Mr Chair. And thank you to both of you for your exceptional leadership throughout Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine. I want to take a moment to highlight the California National Guard's unique and exceptional support to the Ukraine military through the National Guard State Partnership Program. California has been partnered with Ukraine since 1993.

And since 2000, California and Ukraine soldiers have participated in over 330 military 330 military events, including training exercises that can Robert located in my district in San Luis Obispo County, General Milley how has California State Partnership Program with Ukraine helped improve the capabilities of Ukrainian forces to fight against the Russian invasion.

Mark Milley

I mentioned it I think a prompt about the training effort that's been going on since 2014, the California guardsmen intimately involved in that. What so what's the result of that? So over eight years, the Ukrainian military's reformed itself developed a Noncommissioned Officer Corps, and adopted the the US doctrinal concept of mission command decentralized decision making, at the lowest level that's effective at making the decision. And that's a direct result of the efforts of the California Guard and what they've done with Ukraine.

More recently, it I'll just use this as one vignette as an example of the value of the program. The connective tissue, the the the human connection between the Ukrainian military and the California Guard is proven extraordinary, to the point where the tag of California still maintains almost daily contact with his counterparts even though they're half a world away. That's been an invaluable source of communication, intelligence, development, and transmission of information back and forth. So it's things like that that are intangibles and war, but they prove extraordinarily valuable in the actual conduct of war.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)

Thank you. The men and women serving in uniform are the backbone of our national security. I appreciate the department's increased investment in personnel needs. One issue both of your statements touched upon that I have been working on to address is available and affordable childcare for our military families.

While construction of child care, child development centers is critical. One deficiency that I hear when visiting installations is the lack of qualified childcare providers to meet the demand. Secretary Austin, how's the Department seeking to address the shortage of qualified childcare providers? You need additional authorities in order to hire the needed childcare staff?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks, sir. If we need additional authorities, we won't hesitate to ask for them. This is something that I have my PNR directorate, taking a hard look at and working with the services and canvassing installations. This has been identified as an issue to us as well and we're trying to identify incentives that will help attract the right people and help us train in and equip the right people to to provide quality childcare.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)

Another workforce question, Secretary Austin. your testimony touches on the department's needs to improve its ability to attract and retain and innovation minded workforce for high skilled positions such as those that require specialized skills and credentials to meet digital and cybersecurity needs. How can the Department better compete against private industry?

Lloyd Austin

And the skill sets that you mentioned, sir, this is all--this is tough, because, obviously, you know, we can't compete with with the compensation packages that some of the Big Tech offers. But certainly, that won't stop us from going after the right people with the right skill sets in in. This is a this is a point of emphasis for us, we'll continue to stay focused on it to include bringing on people who are currently employed in by those agents or those companies to serve in our garden and reserve forces as well.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)

This Committee has been very focused on the ongoing audit of the Department of Defense. Taxpayers deserve to know that while the top line funding level for our national security has increased, the Department is effectively executing its funding. Secretary Austin with material weaknesses, has the audit identified that have been the hardest to address Department wide. And how are you working to address those?

Lloyd Austin

Well, you've seen me I think, most recently put another letter out to the forests emphasizing the importance of making sure that we have a clean audit going forward. And in this this is very important to me. This is something that Secretary McCord and I have worked on and will continue to work on. But I'm not satisfied that we're there.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

I apologize -- time has expired. Mr Gallagher is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen. We have limited time. So I'm going to ask for a yes or no question probably unless otherwise indicated.

Secretary Austin last week, General Wolters told this Committee that in the months leading up to February 24, he considered himself part of an interagency effort designed to deter and dissuade Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine. Did you share General Wolters goal, yes or no?

Lloyd Austin

I hope General Wolters' share my goals as I'm the Secretary of Defense. And, and my my objectives were the number one defend this nation. Number two, make sure that we did everything possible to unify and defend NATO if required. Number three, flow security force assistance to to Ukraine.

And then number four, manage escalation.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

So the goal was not to deter Putin from invading Ukraine.

Lloyd Austin

I've just laid out what my goals were and certainly--

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Which did not include deterring Putin from invading Ukraine unless I missed it.

Lloyd Austin

It wasn't an objective of the government to deter Putin. But as General Milley described, it's very difficult to do unless you put forces on the ground.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

It was an objective of the government, you have just reminded us that you are an important person in that government apparatus, the Secretary of Defense, was it the goal of your policy, or the government's policy for which you work the president united states to deter Putin from invading Ukraine,

Lloyd Austin

It was a goal to deter him from invading Ukraine. And if he didn't invade, it was a goal and still is a goal to impose impose significant costs on Putin. And you're seeing that play out in ways that that Putin never imagined.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Totally agree with the grit and determination they've shown, which is remarkable. So the goal was to deter Putin. We did not achieve that goal Putin invaded anyway, on February 24. Do you share the assessment General Milley gave a little bit ago that perhaps Putin was simply undetectable, and therefore our campaign of deterrence was bound to fail.

Lloyd Austin

I do not believe that our campaign has failed. This is still this is still in progress, and not with reason there's a price to be paid by Putin for what he's done.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Got it, but we failed to deter Putin from invading Ukraine. I'm interested in whether you think there's anything we could have done looking back hindsight 2020 In the months leading up to February 24, to successfully deter him from invading Ukraine, and perhaps there isn't. I don't know. I'm just curious to get your opinion.

Lloyd Austin

As General Milley pointed out if you if we put forces into Ukraine to fight Putin, this will be a different story. But we made a decision that we weren't going to do that. And we made a decision for the right reason. And I support those decisions.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

So I, I think that's that's actually a very important point that perhaps if we had put hard power in American Heart power in the path of Putin, that would have been the only thing that could have deterred him. I guess what I mentioned, does the analysis, does that same analysis hold true with respect to Taiwan? Would putting American forces on Taiwan increase or decrease the likelihood that Xi Jinping would attempt an invasion?

Lloyd Austin

Hypothetical, I think that it's, you know, it's, you know, not advisable to make direct comparisons between Ukraine and Taiwan. These are two completely different scenarios to different theaters.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Do you think then that what has happened in Ukraine is not connected, has not impacted? She's calculus with respect to Taiwan?

Lloyd Austin

Now, I have to I'm certain that, you know, I don't want to speculate and with what's in Mr Xi's head, but certainly I think as the world looks at this, they've, they've been impressed by the commitment, the resolve of many countries in the world to resist that kind of behavior.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Would so would it be too far to characterize your view as the commitment and resolve on display by the Ukrainians that our NATO allies has made an invasion of Taiwan, less likely than it was prior to event like then it was on February 23.

Lloyd Austin

It was a commitment of the people of Taiwan

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)

Know that just the gentle the commitment that you just referenced with respect to NATO and Ukraine had any impact on she's calculus in Taiwan, and made an invasion more or less likely?

Lloyd Austin

Well, again, I don't want to speculate on whether or not the invasion and invasion is likely or less likely. But again, I would say that we just need to be careful about making direct comparisons between what's going on in Ukraine and what could happen in Taiwan.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Gentleman's time has expired. We are going to take a 15-minute break. We're going to be back at well I guess that would make it 11:47.

Mr Khanna is next so at 11:47 We'll go to Mr Khanna and we'll proceed from there. We'll be right back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

We will reconvene and get back to members questions. Mr Khanna is up and is recognized for five minutes and he is appearing virtually so he will be on the screen. Mr Khanna, do we have you?

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)

Yes. Thank you, Mr Chairman. I want to use my five minutes for three different parts. One to follow up on the Chairman's comments about the office culture article on Mr Gallagher on China and hopefully on Yemen.

I read the Foreign Affairs article and they said the Pentagon should look more like Apple computers. And I was, of course, struck by that given that I represent Apple computers and Apple part of one of the reasons that I think the article made that point is that for technological change so fast and so rapid, we need to be adaptive in Silicon Valley. You have startups that beat incumbents with huge, larger bank balances because they're innovative. And I guess my question for you Secretary Austin, and Chairman Milley, is, do you agree that critical to leaving China against China in the 21st century is having technological superiority and so have you spent time with Tim Cook and Sundar Pichai and others in Silicon Valley, and are you open to doing that?

Lloyd Austin

I have spent time with the CEO of Google. And while there are parts of us that really seriously need to be more streamlined and more adaptive, which I really embrace that. I would say that Department of Defense turning into Google is probably not something that I would envision.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)

I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting that we take the best innovative parts of the culture. I think that's what the article suggests.

Lloyd Austin

Absolutely. I absolutely agree with that.

Mark Milley

I would second that. Our need for innovation is critical. I think that we are an inheritor of a Industrial Age system that goes way back not only the the building but the process or our programming systems, etc. All date back to the '50s and '60s, that sort of thing.

So it does need to be updated. And I think getting some some of the best practices out of not only Silicon Valley, but all the commercial best practices is definitely worthwhile. I've personally spent some time out there and that helped. When I was chief staff, the army that helped in the concept of army futures command and a few other initiatives we did.

So I do think that's a very valuable use of time squadron. Take a look at best practices in the commercial world, apply them to the defense industry for defensive Department.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, General and if I can be of any help, let me know and I also think tech companies have an obligation to be doing more to assist our military so it's, it's reciprocal. I on Representative Gallagher's point I share of course, his concerns with China's potential invasion of Taiwan.

I guess my question is, wouldn't the situation with Russia actually be a significant deterrent? To China? I mean, the crushing sanctions on Putin, you've got to think if you're Xi Jinping, that the world would be unified, and China's economy would be devastated if they thought of any aggressive action. So wouldn't you say that Xi Jinping would be having?

Second thoughts given that you've seen President Biden rally the world and the economic impact such a move would entail?

Lloyd Austin

I certainly wouldn't. And I certainly think that he also values the economic opportunities that are present there in Western Europe.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)

Let me ask you two questions that you can answer both hopefully with the time a one on Taiwan, is there anything we can do to expedite our arms sales there? My understanding is that they've been stuck because of supply chain issues. And then the second on Yemen. Secretary Austin, one of the reasons I was strongly in support of your nomination to be the secretary and you've done an outstanding job as you were an early critic of the war in Yemen.

You were right. I'm encouraged by the recent ceasefire. Could you comment on what the United States will do if the Saudis violate the ceasefire? And whether we would be willing then to not provide spare parts to the Saudis if they violate it?

Lloyd Austin

We certainly hope that they don't violate it and we don't have any reason to believe that they will. And, again, every situation we'll have to treat on its merits there are but but I think it's it's really a good first step, and we need to we need to continue to encourage our allies and partners to stay focused on the right things here.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)

And on the Taiwan arm sales, are there anything we can do to expedite that or why they haven't slowed down?

Lloyd Austin

Well, thanks, I this is a point of focus for me in making sure that we're doing everything that we said we're going to do in terms of providing the ability to for Taiwan to defend itself.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. gentleman's time has expired. Mr Gaetz is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

Secretary Austin, why should American taxpayers fund lectures at the National Defense University that promote socialism as a strategy to combat China?

Lloyd Austin

It's a--it's--the National Defense University is an academic institution.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

That's surprising because it was widely reported the National Defense University had Thomas Piketty come and this was the title of his lecture: Responding to China, the case for global justice and democratic socialism. So now that you know that they did this, would you agree that embracing socialism is not an effective strategy to combat China?

Lloyd Austin

I certainly don't agree with embracing socialism--

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

I'm sorry, we're not going to do this. We're not going to let the guy say four words and still talk--

[CROSTALK]

but you also have to be fair to the witnesses.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

I got the answer. I wanted to have a follow up. my follow up question is if if we don't embrace it, then I guess why did the National Defense University put out a statement? Again, this is funded by US taxpayers, saying in this talk, Mr Piketty will argue that the right answer lies in ending Western arrogance and promoting a new emancipatory and egalitarian horizon on a global scale, a new form of democratic and participatory ecological and post-colonial socialism.

Lloyd Austin

And we do learn a lot about strategy and about about the military and about joint force development. And so that is our focus in these in these institutions.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

Mr Secretary, I've shared with you the context, the context wasn't better understand socialism so we can defeat it. The context wasn't learned about it so that we can offer countermeasures. The concept was that it's time for socialism. And the reason I know that's the context is because the lecture was pulled from a book written by Thomas Piketty entitled time for socialism and and I just can't help but like notice.

I control the time. Your question, guys. A lot of calls lately on matters of strategy, Mr Secretary, you guys told us that Russia couldn't lose. You told us that the Taliban couldn't immediately win and so I guess I'm wondering what in the \$773 billion that you're requesting today is going to help you make assessments that are accurate in the face of so many blown calls?

Lloyd Austin

You've--you've seen what's on our budget, you've seen how the budget matches strategy. And so I'll let that speak for itself.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

Well, I mean, I've also seen a high number--we're behind in hypersonics. We failed to deter Russia last year.

Lloyd Austin

We were behind in hypersonics. How do you?

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

Who do you who's -- head in hypersonics?

Lloyd Austin

How do you--how do you--how do you make that assessment?

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

I make that assessment is one building hypersonic weapons and we are still developing them. By the way, your own people briefed us that we are behind and that China is winning. Are you aware of the briefings we get on hypersonics?

Lloyd Austin

I am certainly aware of briefings that we provide to Congress.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

It's not just the hypersonic it's all over the world. It's in Taiwan. We're China's last year flew more sorties than ever before. It's North Korea on pace to shatter prior records the number of missiles that they that they are testing and so while everyone else in the world seems to be developing capabilities and being more strategic, we got time to embrace critical race theory at West Point to embrace socialism at the National Defense University to do mandatory pronoun training.

Lloyd Austin

Again this is the most capable, the most combat critical force in the world.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

Not down this path to do that. If we embrace socialism, the fact that you are embarrassed by your by your country but I'm embarrassed by your leader. I am not embarrassed for my country. I wish this thing to China.

You know what the that's you know, that is so that is so disgraceful that you would sit here and conflate your failures with the failures of the uniformed service members. You guys said that, that Russia would overrun Ukraine in 36 days. You said that the Taliban would be kept at bay for months.

Lloyd Austin

Don't occur to you that Russia has not overrun Ukraine because of what we've done, and our allies have done--

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.)

But that was that was baked into your flawed assessment. And so I saw that the Obama administration that we try to employ our military by starving it of resources and it seems the Biden administration is trying to destroy our military by force feeding it woke-ism. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. Mr Keating is recognized for five minutes. I'm sorry. Mr Kim, is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

Yeah, thank you, to you. And I just want to say on behalf of this Committee, you know, we have a tradition of, of respecting the people that come before this Committee in a bipartisan way. Make sure that yes, we may have some disagreements about our policy, but all of us here are committed to our national security, committed to our service members and certainly committed to recognizing that your leadership is leadership across the entirety of our military, not just on terms of and certainly not in terms of any political discourse or political party. So I just wanted to thank you, all three of you for coming for us today.

Secretary Austin, I didn't want to ask you. You know, I was, as well as many others, horrified by the images that we saw coming out of Ukraine over this weekend. You know what we saw on Bucha, our military's had extraordinary abilities to see where the Russian forces have been in Ukraine where they're going so I want to just ask you, do we know what Russian units were in Bucha that that may have committed these atrocities?

Lloyd Austin

We that's a thing that we continue to research and there'll be significant effort going into matching, you know, elements that were present with the time that these events probably occurred, but we don't know for certain but we'll continue to research.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

There's another element too, you know, where we see these units being redeployed. So certainly, we want to make sure that we're doing that the accountability of this, but also I have real fear about where these units may now be deploying whether or not they will conduct similar types of atrocities against Ukrainians in other parts of Ukraine. So I just asked for your attention on that as well.

Lloyd Austin

Absolutely.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

With these horrific attacks, you know, we see there was redeployment of Russian forces as well, their apparent decision to pull away from Kiev, Secretary Blinken this weekend said, you know, we may very well be entering a new phase in this war. I think that's something that I agree with, in my sense, it really does feel like where we're at now is different than where things were five to six weeks ago, but I wanted your thoughts on that. Does that sound right does this feel like a new phase in the war?

Lloyd Austin

I think that's right. I think, you know, as you know, the Russians thought that they could very quickly move into Ukraine capture the capital city and install their their leader of choice, and they weren't able to do that, you know, and so now we see them re posturing and refocusing their main effort in the south and east. And so as a as a, enter this phase, it will probably probably be a lot more deliberate. There'll be able to mass fires a lot more.

And so the violence will will probably go up a notch there in terms of the types of things we've been seeing.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

On the Russian side, they are recalibrating, redeploying, you know, looking through your testimonies to this to this body, you know, you talked a lot about the need for us to be changing and adapting the ways that we operate, adapt and fortify our defense have resilience and adaptability in terms of our defense. So with this new phase of the war waves, these shifting goals that we seen from Russia, does that give us space to reassess? What the Ukrainians need, as you talk about how we may see even greater levels of violence and firepower from the Russians. You know, does this give us a space to reassess what they need?

Lloyd Austin

I don't know if I would describe it as space I would say we are I mean, we consider the Ukraine Ukrainian shows to be in a knife fight and they are, they're working hard every day. We're giving them what they need to continue to be successful.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

Well, you know that they are in a knife fight, but they're in a fight with all sorts of different weapons being directed towards them. I guess my more direct question to you is, if this is a new phase of the war, do you feel like there is space for you and the administration to reconsider, for instance, the fighter jets in the transfer, facilitating the transfer of fighter jets for Ukrainians? Is that something now that we're in a new phase that you would consider reconsider?

Lloyd Austin

If you're talking about the transfer mix? I mean, countries have the ability to do that now. And contrary to popular belief, the United States is not standing in a way of that happen.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

I agree with you on that front, but certainly the countries that we're talking about they've expressed challenges in terms of how they transfer the asking for us to facilitate that is this is time for us to reconsider that.

Lloyd Austin

Well, this is this is a time for us to continue to focus on those things that are that will be effective in this fight, and even amping up you know the the the capabilities that we provide them in terms of those things that are most effective.

Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.)

I'd like to work with you as we enter this new phase to figure out what exactly we can do for the grayness. Thank you for all your help.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Bacon is recognized.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I thank you, gentlemen, for being here. I have four questions, so I'm going to try to get through them rather quickly on my first question is on the budget. The proposed budget has military spending under inflation, which was going to necessitate cuts to a three five production for example.

So our first question is with the overall divers to investment last withdrawal milling. I guess a follow up question. So Secretary Austin, but we're gonna we're gonna reduce our aircraft inventory by 250 and add 75 aircraft. So basically, for every three we're putting out we're putting one in at ships reducing our ships by 24 and bringing in nine ships, so a little better than one out of three replacement.

Are we taking too much risk? General Milley?

Mark Milley

I don't think we're taking too much risk relative to Russia and China, which is the focus of the NDS focus of the budget. I recognize the numbers go down in both shipbuilding in in aircraft. But again, I want to focus focus attention on the capability that is being bought versus just run numbers. A lot of aircraft that are coming out that are for example, A-10s A-10s have very little utility relative to a high-end war fight against China, for example, they may be useful as a FMS article to give to other countries, but for our purposes relative to China No.

So you know, the other systems that are divesting or recouping the monies in order to invest in capabilities that will be much more useful in the future operating environment. Thank you.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.)

I just read about the amount of that we're divesting, I realize some of its going to have to happen. Secretary Austin, when I talked to the Baltic countries on the Baltics, co chair for the security caucus. They said the most important thing to them was a permanent US presence. So maybe your defense got too dogmatic at what type of unit.

But would you commit to at least considering a permanent presence in the Baltics?

Lloyd Austin

And I think you know that I've just recently met with three ministers of defense from the Baltic region and heard their concerns and and will stay focused on their concerns. I heard the same thing from them that they really value, a US footprint. I will tell you, I will commit to you that we'll continue to work with with NATO to assess what the requirements will be going forward. And we will be a part of that of that solution.

And you know, where appropriate, we will, we will commit forces.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.)

Thank you. A question concerning Ukraine when I've worked with some of your leadership, as well as some of the Ukrainian parliamentarian members who came out to visit we provided some very good capabilities to them, but there's one area that I keep hearing that they're lacking, and that's the ability hit tanks and convoys behind the line of the fight. They have the materials at the line They have good air defenses but to hit tanks 1020 miles back Can we have multiple weapons that could do that? Are we committed to helping fill that niche?

Mr Secretary?

Lloyd Austin

We are--there are a number of ways you can do that long range fires. We're working hard. I'm personally working to ensure that that you know we can get them as much as we as we possibly can. The use of UAVs have been very effective as well.

So we'll continue that work.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.)

But I hear is to have some but not enough in that particular area of spectrum of warfare. So thank you. My final question is what Taiwan obviously the the day of an invasion. It's too late for deterrence, I think deter strong capable deterrence for Taiwan starts well, hopefully 10 years ago, but clearly now after Ukraine, it seems to be the need of anti shipping missiles at a large quantity.

Also, long range air defense capabilities. What are we doing to make sure that deterrence is effective in Taiwan? Thank you.

Lloyd Austin

You know, we continue to work to do what we've advertised and that is to help Taiwan provide for its for its defense, help it defend itself.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.)

When I've traveled out out there. Sometimes they're asking for weapons that look like our military, but seems to me there are two for them. They really do need the anti amphibious--excuse me capabilities and long-range air defense those those two capabilities seem to be key to deterring China. And so I hope we're working hard that way, but durability you have anything you'd like to add.

Mark Milley

I think those two systems are important. The other thing I think that's an important lesson to draw from Ukraine as a nation and arms so if your opponent tries to invade you, and every military age man, a woman is armed, and they have a little bit of training. That can be a very effective use and if it's a decentralized operation, where there's local initiative with junior officers, etc. Taiwan is a very complex piece of terrain, lots of mountains, high density, urban areas, and Taipei.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Apologize, gentleman's time has expired. We'll move on next person. Mr Keating is back with us and is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I think are both the Secretary General for their service. Some of the greatest experts, I think, on Russia that I've talked with, over the last several months in particular, were people that have had long term experience with Russia. They include high ranking foreign officials, as well.

And they pointed out to me that that February 17 response by the Russian Federation, to what they termed the bilateral treaty and security guarantees that they had wanted was critical to come back to in that response. They require the US withdrawal of all military personnel and as well as a ban on armaments and related agreements. They cited in particulars realize that CEE countries Central and Eastern Europe and the SEE countries Southeastern Europe, including 12 NATO nations, I think it underscores the fact that this is much larger than a Russian Ukraine conflict. So when I look at this commitment, what I'd like to ask, perhaps, General Milley is what is the timeframe you foresee given that kind of understanding of way Russia thinks and acts?

Could it be something as long as a decade or even longer that we're involved in this type of conflict?

Mark Milley

That's hard to tell. It's a bit early. Still, even though we're a month plus into the war. There as much of the ground war left in Ukraine, but I do think this is a very protracted conflict.

And I think it's at least measured in years. I don't know about decade but at least years for sure. This is a very extended conflict that Russia has initiated and and I think that NATO, the United States, Ukraine, and all of the allies and partners that are supporting Ukraine are gonna be involved in this for quite some time.

Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.)

And Secretary Austin, could you reflect on this as well, you know, the fact that the breadth of what their requests are and their demands are how's that reflected in our policy? Because indeed, this is far more expansive than just Russia and Ukraine.

Lloyd Austin

Yeah. I agree with you. They were very extensive. Having said that, you know, and much of that we couldn't possibly do.

But having said that, we're gonna always look in where we're on negotiating with. With countries we're gonna always look for things where we can find common agreement, and in and work from that build from that. So you are correct that that initial tranche of of demands for lack of a better term was something that was not not acceptable to to Ukraine when most importantly, and to NATO and to and to us.

Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.)

Also, I mean, what could we do in terms of policy for the for our partners right now? Two examples are Georgia and Finland that aren't NATO countries. What can we do to help support their concerns with the Russian aggression that's that taking place?

Lloyd Austin

Well, we can do a lot we can do more of what we're doing in terms of you heard us talk earlier about, about our engagement in in helping them build their forces. And as they look to acquire different types of equipment, to defend themselves, we can do that as well. And I know that, you know, there are aspiring countries who aspire to be part of NATO and NATO should continue to engage them.

Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.)

Given the fact that's one minute left, I just like to ask you to amplify, if you could, some of your comments you made in the opening about undersea warfare and research and making sure we have the proper investments in that regard. What do you see as the specific threats and how can we address them in about 46 seconds?

Lloyd Austin

I think the threats continue to evolve. China does have substantial capability undersea, but Russia does as well. And so we want to make sure that as we look across the landscape, we're able to meet any emerging for.

Rep. Bill Keating (D-Mass.)

Great, thank you, Mr Chairman, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Banks is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

Secretary Austin, The New York Times this morning reported the daily average for COVID 19 cases in the US is at 27,573. Much less than the .0001% of the total US population with COVID cases at all-time lows. Why are we still enforcing the COVID vaccine mandate on our military personnel?

Lloyd Austin

We've seen variants of this--this virus, you know, wane, and then grow again. And so this is a medical readiness requirement and it will remain so.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

General Milley during a moment of increased action from Russia to China. Is it worth it? Is it worth sacrificing our our end strength for vaccine mandates would you rather take have a few extra battalions of unvaccinated soldiers or not have them at all because of this?

Mark Milley

Thanks Congressman. I don't think it's an either-or. I think we're an organization that requires you you're the veteran yourself. We get a lot of vaccinations.

The Anthrax is very, very low and in out there and we still get anthrax vaccination so on so so I think getting vaccinated is part of the readiness issue of the health of the force. The numbers are very low by the way of those that are refusing to be vaccinated, and they're even lower. I mean, it's tiny the numbers that are actually being asked to process out so I think it's manageable and I think that I'd prefer that everybody just go ahead and get vaccinated.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

According to a CNN article on January 18, the Army National Guard missed its goal by over 8000. Adding only 34,658 recruits for FY 21 by the 2023 defense budget request just released by the administration reduces the size of the army by 12,000 soldiers. Is the army cutting their numbers because they know they can't recruit enough people to meet their quotas.

Mark Milley

I've talked to General McConville about it a couple different times, I think two major factors one one is the population at large, the the those those that are eligible to enter the military. Those numbers are actually pretty low. This one point is the it's the sessions challenge that's out there in recruiting on an annual basis. The second piece is that they want to reduce manpower in order to get the save the money and recoup that into modernization efforts.

So those are the two fundamental reasons that the army is doing what they're doing.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

General, is it a coincidence that the army is moving forward with now involuntarily separating our soldiers and then offering a new \$50,000 signing bonus recruits just to who want to join the army? How much additional cost are we going to incur? Because of the increased recruiting bonuses to combat projected losses from vaccinated military personnel?

Mark Milley

I'd have to get back down at cost analysis in terms of the actual dollars relative to the bonus, you mentioned the \$50,000 bonus. But again, I go back to I check with General McConville, just yesterday, the numbers are actually being compelled to depart the military is very, very small in the army. And I think it's likewise in the other services as well. There is a recruiting challenge though for the army.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

General Milley on March 18, the US Army discharged three soldiers the first time it has booted troops for failing to comply with the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. It's projected that 2609 to soldiers the size of a couple of army battalions have not taken the vaccine will likely be separated from the army. Once again, how is this loss of personnel going to hurt the overall strength of the army?

Mark Milley

I think if 2000 are kicked out, I think that would hurt but I think there's a issue of education here and persuasion, and making sure that these soldiers are making informed decisions.

Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.)

As of March 3, army commanders have released a total of six regular Army leaders, including two battalion commanders and issued 3183 General Officer written reprimands to regular Army soldiers for not taking the vaccination. How has this loss of leadership and focus on administrative burdens improved army warfighting, readiness enhanced combat power?

Mark Milley

Well, again, Congressman, I think that the idea of the health of the force the readiness of the force and getting a vaccination as a contributing factor to that, I think is fundamental to the overall readiness of the force. So I regret that commanders are getting relieved for things like that. I didn't know the numbers that you mentioned. I'll go back to the army and get the actual data.

But we are an institution that that has a soul set of requirements in terms of the health of the force and shots and etc. And there's a policy and our job is to enforce the policy. Thank you. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Mr Crow is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank you to all of you for coming in for your service to the country. Real quick under the prior administration. They made a decision to move Space Command from Colorado to Alabama. There's significant allegations of improper process.

The GAO and DOD IG are conducting reviews of that process and if either of those reviews find that the process was not credible, will the Department commit to revisiting that process and starting it over and doing it in a fair and transparent way?

Lloyd Austin

If there have been things that were improperly or illegally done, then certainly we'll revisit that.

Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.)

Next on the Ukraine front of a bunch of my colleagues where I talked about Ukraine and the evolution of of support, but can you just very briefly, Mr Secretary, talk about how should our support evolve, as this goes from a short term fight as providing things that are needed and can be used now on the battlefield to transition to a longer term fight like the National Security Adviser indicated yesterday? How does that change the nature of our support?

Lloyd Austin

I believe that what Mr Sullivan was describing was this fight that's going to take place in the in the south and east of the country. And it will take as he described, it, probably weeks for that to play out versus days. And so we continue to look at what we think. And we don't think we know the Ukrainians will need because we're talking to them on a daily basis.

And it'll be a lot of the same things that we provided already. But we look for things that also can provide them an advantage in this fight. And you've seen us began to deploy some of those things.

Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.)

We appreciate your work very much. You know, this has been a Herculean effort by the men and women of the military and administration, the Department and I thank you for that effort because it is saving lives. You know, this Committee does have a long tradition of bipartisanship. There are people that have served many people have served in uniform, but there are a very small handful of folks they don't understand service they don't understand sacrifice, that attack and malign you and your service, somebody who has dedicated your entire life to service who sometimes will compare our military to other militaries call us woke, make up these contrived boogeyman of socialism or pull out lectures at universities.

But I have known you for some time now and I've seen the pride that you take in our servicemen and women, and the pride that you take in this work and how you've put your entire life focused on this. So if you just take with the two minutes

remaining, could you just paint a picture for this Committee and for the American people about what makes you most proud of the men and women of our military? And what life is like on a daily basis for the men and women that you lead?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks. As you've heard me say a number of times, you know my focus 24 hours a day seven days a week is on defending this country. And I'm proud to be able to serve alongside the men and women who occupy our ranks. They are committed to this and I've been with them most recently in Poland.

In other Baltic in Baltic States and other eastern flank countries. I've been with them in the Indo-Pacific. They are all focused on the task at hand training and being ready to to perform their missions. That and all of those missions contribute to the defense of this country in protecting our interests.

And I just got to tell you, I am incredibly proud of them. Day in and day out, they volunteer to do incredible things in in on behalf of this country, and we owe them a debt of gratitude that we can probably never repay. We owe their families a debt of gratitude as well. But they are they are smart.

They are fit. They are they are focused in and they spend 99% of their time focused on defending this country and developing additional capabilities that they'll need to be successful on the battlefield. So any notion that they're woke, or that our military is woke, you know, I take issue with that. And because it's just not true, it's a false narrative, and they deserve better than that.

Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.)

I couldn't agree more. They do deserve better than that. And they're getting better than that and your leadership and frankly, the leadership and the focus of most people on this Committee who take this work seriously, who are engaged in very difficult policy discussions and know the threats that we face. I appreciate your leadership.

Chairman Milley's leadership and Mr McCord you are more appreciated than this hearing probably indicates we appreciate your work as well. Mr Chairman, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you very much. Mr Bergman is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. One of my colleagues asked General Milley that you would commit to ensuring that the Gold Star family criteria remained the same and I believe I heard you say, yes.

Mark Milley

I am very committed to that.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Okay, secretary Austin, I'd like to hear it from you.

Lloyd Austin

Yes.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

That's very good. That is probably one of the most solemn duties that we have is to appropriately honor not only the men and women who die in service of our country in combat, but also their families as well. Let's talk a little bit about recruiting. General Milley you opened up your statement and I think accurately so by saying we have the best led, best trained best equipped -- military in the world.

Do we have the best recruited military in your estimation?

Mark Milley

The best recruited? I think all militaries are a reflection of the societies they come from. And we have a particularly challenging recruiting environment as a former chief staff of the army that was true then and it's true now and it's been true for quite a long time, in terms of the military has very high standards to get in. And unfortunately, the amount of eligible military aged men and women have gone down in terms of the standards over time.

So I think we're in a very challenging recruiting environment. But I do think those that do get in are the finest and the best. And I do think that we recruit the best of our society.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

So we've got roughly 70, roughly 70% Who are ineligible for various reasons. So we've already knocked that down to 30%.

Mark Milley

There is the there's a lot of data there's a lot of money, there's a lot of research that goes into that very question, propensity to serve. We can get to that I don't have it at my fingertips, we can get to the actual data, each of the services do.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Yeah, well, this Committee, you know, is bipartisan, and I don't think there's a one of us that sit in here that don't want to see the men and women who are eligible to serve Sure, get the right message so that they will get over that hump if you will acquire why not? And you mentioned that that this year the army and the guard is not going to meet their recruiting numbers.

Mark Milley

Army Guard, okay, Air Force, Marines and Navy meeting their goals right now. Army is not both active army and guard.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Okay. So if we're just talking about the army and the Army Guard not meeting their their end strength. Is there any plan if you asked any of the other services who are meeting theirs, maybe up it if they're meeting their goals? Do they have room for more?

Are we looking at increased capabilities? I'm not sure what's going on with the with the army in the Army Guard. But is there Do we have people waiting in line to sign up for the Air Force? Or the Navy or the or the Marine Corps?

Mark Milley

The Navy's actually I think it's the Navy is actually 102% on glide path so they're actually over their objectives. Air Air Force Marines are meeting their objectives and army is about I want to say it's about 10 or 15 points below the objective right now. Now the years not over the years young were four, four months into the year. Typically, this data will change very significantly upon high school graduation.

Come, you know, come June July timeframe. And that's the big months which is a big, huge data correction.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Are we sacrificing any quality to make those?

Mark Milley

No, not at all.

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

And just just for the sake of discussion here, we know, we have a significant number of men and women who are no longer in service because of their refusal to take the COVID vaccine. If for whatever reason, any or all of them decided they wanted to re affiliate with the service. Would they be given an option?

Mark Milley

I'd have to get with the each of the service chiefs in terms of the policies inside the service but I if someone wants to get the shot and come on back in, I don't

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.)

Know we got millions and millions and millions of dollars at training journalists, people that they'll be forced out--

Mark Milley

Want to comply with the rules and regulation--

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Time has expired. Ms Slotkin is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.)

Thanks for being here. I know we're about to start our three of this hearing and I want to associate myself with the comments. The respectful comments on both sides of the aisle for those who made it and apologize for those who aren't respectful as you come up here for these hearings. I think that there's a lot a lot of the issues that are affecting the average American particularly around prices and budgets and supply chains are now we were seeing really affect the US military.

So my questions are going to focus mostly on that and Mr McCord, I'm going to give you a chance to get in the game here. I first first and foremost, actually, I start with Mr Secretary Austin on supply chains. Right I represent a district that's has two GM factories one has been off and on dormant for the past year because we can't get a 14 cent microchip. Myself and Congressman Gallagher led a task force on DOD and sort of highlighting the issues on supply chains that the Department had.

You know, you picked up the rug on some of our supply chains and the Defense Department there was a lot of creepy crawlies. Under there are a lot of dependencies on places like China that even for our US military, we still had, can you tell us we had some prescriptions in the last NDAA but help give us some comfort that like our private sector companies, DOD is is actually kind of getting in the game and looking at this as a vulnerability.

Lloyd Austin

We are in the game as you know, it's it's been an is a an area of emphasis for for the President and for the Government writ large. So DoD is doing its part.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.)

Right because I think the thing that while a GM plant can shut down the US military doesn't have that that privilege of being able to shut down and just taking an economic hit. It's the protection of the country. Mr McCord on the budget. We've had a lot of discussion discussion here about whether the proposed president's budget keeps up with the rate of inflation and you said that you crafted the budget with a 4% inflation rate.

We know that that has largely gone up. I know that, frankly, on a bipartisan basis. People are interested in at least making sure that the Department is keeping pace with the with the with inflation. Would you be willing to consider coming back to us and keying the budget to the rate of inflation?

Very short. Yes or no?

Michael McCord

Congressman? Yes. I think we were going to need to work with the committee's I believe going forward to look at what's actually happening on the ground. And we had as a secretary say that we had to snap a chalk line at some point to finish the budget.

You have to make some assumptions and then move on. And those we normally revisit our own situation internally which generates reprogramming so we send to you we'll do that as soon as as soon as possible this year. as well.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.)

And I think there's nowhere that's more clear where inflation is really kind of a punch in the gut, at least in a district like mine, where people drive 40 miles one way to work, it's the price of gas. And as I see it, the Department of Defense is one of the biggest consumers, maybe in the world of gasoline. And I think you noted it was about \$12 billion. We spend a year on gas.

What if anything, has the Department of Defense done advocating with the White House to do more to try and affect the price of gas?

Michael McCord

Congressman, as you say we consume a lot of gas but we are small compared to the market we cannot drive the market by ourselves as 1% of the of the market. We're about 15% of the jet fuel market. So we are a significant player there. But we we are ultimately at the mercy of the markets the way most other entities are.

And our our view our budget was done before Putin's invasion of Ukraine spiked oil prices of course, that spike may come down slowly make him now quickly.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.)

I would just say is one of the biggest consumers at least in the United States of gas that your voice in the conversation on doing more to try and lower the prices of gas would be--would be helpful. Lastly, Mr McCord, we passed on a bipartisan basis and amendment in the last year's NDAA that helps to try and examine the amount of pork and I mean, congressional pork that is in the Department of Defense budget, the things that you all have tried to kill the legacy weapons systems. You don't want any more the facilities, you've tried to shut down. That amendment required a report.

What is your assessment? I mean, I know the report isn't done yet, of what percentage of the Department budget or things that the US Congress has required you to provide?

Michael McCord

Congressman I again reports, not reports not done, but I think in most years, it averages in the three to 5% range.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

The rest of this we'll have to take for the record. Gentlelady's time is expired. Mr Waltz is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, Secretary Austin a year ago the rise of extremism, particularly white supremacy within the military within our ranks, was a top priority for you. In fact, it was your first memo. Yet the Department released a study this year a year later, showing that 100 members of the military participated in some type of extremism. That's 100 out of two and a half million by my math that shows that 99.996% of our military members have not participated in any form of extremism.

So with that data, now being data driven, that's still a top priority for you, or can we move on?

Lloyd Austin

You made a couple of points here and and let me say that my top priority is defending this country. It has been and it will always be. on the issue of the percentages. of people that have are participating in extremist activities.

You've heard me say that 99.9% of our people are doing the right thing every day. And I'm proud of them for what they do.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

Thank you, Mr Secretary. Forgive me, I have a few questions. I think we have to be very careful. We're also seeing and polling a record drop in public confidence in the United States military.

So I think we have to be very careful about narratives. We even had a hearing here in this Committee on the rising tide of white supremacy within our military and keep those narratives data driven. So I appreciate 99.996% one is too many. Absolutely.

And we always have to be vigilant, but we have to be careful about our nerves. I need to move on. Chairman Milley. We are absolutely providing more sophisticated equipment now to the Ukrainians, counter battery radar, my understanding Puma UAVs and the latest package.

Finally, I would argue that this is belated, they should have had it last year. But we are we do have it in train my concern is that General, the NATO commander General Wolters testified that as a policy matter, we're not conducting any training on this new equipment. So my question is, why not?

Mark Milley

We're not conducting training in Ukraine.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

We're not conducting training in Poland outside of Ukraine.

Lloyd Austin

You said you were not conducting training in Poland, but as you rightly point out some of this gear does require.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

That drives my question that our -- training the Ukrainians outside of Ukraine in any location?

Lloyd Austin

For you some of the gear, you certainly they have to have training in and we're doing that. Yeah. Great.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

That's fantastic.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

On the counter battery on the latest variants on the things that we're providing.

Lloyd Austin

That are already here. Yeah, to to leverage them as well.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

Fantastic. On the Switchblade 600 variant, your assistant secretary for ISA testified last week that there's a memo on your desk, Mr Secretary, to give it the correct procurement authorities that we need or that designation to get that thing moving. is that are we cleared up there? Can we move that?

Lloyd Austin

The switchblade 600 and 300 will move as quickly as I possibly can.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

Okay, secretary. general Wolters also testified that Ukrainians would have been more effective if they had had Stingers. pre-invasion they had had him on day one trained up ready to go. General Milley, do you disagree?

Mark Milley

I think they--their--their defense system, the larger your defensive, SAMs -- hundreds Stingers for the MANPADS but in all the other varieties that the European countries have the more that they had prior to the invasion, the better off they would have been. But I would caveat this. Russia has not even today established air superiority and that's because of the effective use of MANPADS and their S-300.

Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.)

Absolutely. But you wouldn't disagree. What could have been more would have been better. And I do think there's a lot of parallels.

Mr Secretary, to our approach to Taiwan. I respectfully disagree with you there. There are a lot of parallels and there are a lot of things we should be learning the effectiveness of sanctions as a deterrent and having given them the weapon systems they need pre invasion not having a tough response a robust response, post invasion final question. General Milley is the IRGC, a terrorist organization and should it remain so your best military advice?

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

That one for the record because gentleman's out of time. Thank you. Miss Houlahan -- is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

Thank you, Mr Chair. And thank you, Secretary Austin, General Milley and Mr McCord for appearing before us today. I very much appreciate the challenging times that you and the Department are in right now as we are facing and watching the horrific events of the war in Ukraine unfold. I also know that the department's budget request this year is focused largely on modernization and transformation of the force.

And in your written testimonies. You have mentioned how the Department has to modernize and divest from legacy platforms that may no longer meet the needs of the of the force right now here in this country. President Zelensky is repeatedly called on the United States to transfer aircraft and other weapon systems. To Ukraine.

And so here we potentially have supply within known demand. Is there anything that is preventing the Department of Defense from transferring Legacy Weapon Systems? And I'll just give an example as the a 10 and other excess defense articles to Ukraine, or are there any things that are preventing us for the training preventing the training for those? Is there any additional authority that you need to be able to expedite or approve transferring of weapon systems to Ukraine?

Secretary Austin.

Lloyd Austin

If at this point, there are no additional authorities that we need, and certainly if we need additional authorities we won't hesitate to come ask you for them.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

Thank you and with my next question, as we do identify weapons and systems that we can are interested in investing in? Is there a process by which we can conduct due diligence to identify possible items for transfer to Ukraine or to Mr Wolters' point to be more thoughtful about the future of other possible conflicts?

Lloyd Austin

It'll be based upon their request, their request and our assessment of what what we have available also the threat in the environment plays a big part of this the ability to maintain the capability that we give them is also very, very important. Any ability to train on those on that equipment is also key.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

And so using as the A-10 is just an example and knowing that we originally anticipated that this war would be a matter of days and hours rather than now months and possibly years, or using that 810 as an example. Is there a possibility of what is the Department plan for the 21 A-10s that are in the plan right now to divest from Fort Wayne. And what is the condition of those aircraft?

Lloyd Austin

Again, it's not just exporting the A-10s it's also whether or not that aircraft can survive in that environment, which is a key issue. And then number two, whether or not they can sustain the aircraft once we provide it to them. It is completely different for as you know, from any any platform that they have are currently using. And so this is a big step and then training in a pilot's is not a matter of days.

This is a matter of months.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

Yes, sir. And I actually have done some investigation in I think that are that we're on the same page that our understanding is on the order of magnitude of a couple of months. And I know the anticipation was that this would not last that long, but it's clear that it might still and again, the A-10 is just an example of something that we might be looking into. And with the remainder of my time, we are now in the fifth week with no apparent end, and we need to make sure that we're coming to terms with the fact that this could be longer than we anticipated.

I'm interested in the planned reduction of end strength across the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy as we know is already shortage of personnel and sea duty billets the Air Force is suffering from a critical shortage of pilots. How does the Department forecasting and planning for this prolonged war in Ukraine? Maybe General Milley?

We could ask you that particular question?

Mark Milley

Well, first, we are not directly engaged in combat operations in Ukraine. We are conducting deterrence and assurance operations in the periphery countries the Article Five NATO Article Five countries. Having said that in terms of the constraints and the modest reductions and constraints of each of the services, what the services have opted to do is reduce the strength a little bit in order to recoup savings in order to modernize the force aiming towards the 2030 timeframe 2030-plus, and that's where you see these modest reductions in industry. And that's, I mean, what they're trying to do is focus on China and Russia secondarily, as the two principal threats in order to modernize and upgrade their force.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

Yeah, and I think that I think where my--my interest is, is that my understanding is that we don't have it.

Mark Milley

Know that the force posture, the long-term force posture in Europe is yet to be decided. It's under debate right now. It's under review. A NATO plays a big part in that and general Wolters will be making this recommendation as a secretary on that.

But clearly because of the war in Ukraine, there's at least a possibility if not a probability of an increase force presence over a lengthy period of time. That doesn't have to be stationing that can be rotational. It can be done a lot of different ways.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)

I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Mr Johnson is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Mike Johnson (R-La.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Secretary, we need to understand the recruiting. And retention challenges that the Department of Defense faces this year and I'm not sure if all the answers provided thus far clarified it yet. So have a couple questions on that the Army's decided to cut active duty strength by 12,000 soldiers in fiscal year 23.

Under Secretary Gabe Camarillo said last week, he said quote, like every other employer in the economy, we're facing some challenging conditions in terms of our ability to recruit and attract talent, given the particular particular conditions of a very tight labor market, our ability to meet all of our projected recruiting goals. Were a little bit challenged, unquote. Do you agree with Secretary Camarillo's assessment that it's the tight labor market, that's the primary driver of recruitment challenges, at least for the army?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks, Congressman. I think actually there are a number of things that go into this equation. The fact that unemployment is below 4% is a key issue. But also if you take a look at the impact of COVID over the last couple, a couple of years, as you know, our recruiters recruit a lot of kids out of out of high school and those high schools have been in session on an infrequent basis in terms of actual physical presence there so it's made things more complicated.

Chairman mentioned a smaller population to recruit from. So as we as we combine all of those things, then, you know, there are headwinds, and you know, it will be there'll be headwinds for all of the services going forward.

Rep. Mike Johnson (R-La.)

I think that's true. But I want to acknowledge here that the objective facts that we review the objective facts, I think the largest headwind is inescapably the reaction that DOD took to COVID it. Let me provide some stats two years ago, right before the pandemic struck. We had the greatest economy in the history of the world.

There were recruitment challenges. There have been for many years, but we didn't have the budget request proposing to cut 12,000 soldiers from the army like, like this year's budget. So what's changed over the last 24 months? It's the department's COVID vaccine mandate, and there's just no way around it.

I mean, some of alluded to it already today, but requiring young men and women to take the vaccine has disqualified a huge portion of the population from military service. And here's some proof nationwide, more than 40% of males aged 18 to 24 have chosen not to become fully vaccinated, and as a result, they're now ineligible to join the military right off the bat that's 40% of the target demographic that's immediately ineligible to serve. I mean, this is just a fact. And the southeast portion of the country where I'm from that number is even greater.

According to CDC 52% of 18- to 24-year-old men in that region have chosen not to receive the vaccine. So why does that specific geographic region matter so much? What makes the southeast important is that according to Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and readiness, southern states produced nearly 47% of military enlistment in 2019, that's Georgia, South Carolina or Virginia, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, fertile ground for DOD recruiters. But these states send their sons and daughters to serve the nation at drastically higher rates than other states do.

They contain only 38% of 18- to 24-year-olds in America, but they account for nearly half of all the enlistment so I understand what's being said about the tight labor market and the inability to meet fitness standards and all the rest but it's pretty plain. If we look at this, the DoD is having to recruit in a retention crisis because it has disqualified over half of the male population from serving in the military and its best recruiting grounds nearly 40% of men and women aged 18 to 24. Nationwide, and then we're adding fuel to the crisis because there's this charade about the religious exemption process for serving service members and I believe it's blatantly unconstitutional. Let me ask you quickly in the time that remains in light of the obvious impact on recruitment and retention, tension, does the Department have any plans to repeal or modify the current COVID vaccine requirement?

I do not. Let me let me ask you, if you can tell us how many religious exemptions to the COVID vaccine have been granted across all services. And I'll note that in February 15 exemptions were granted out of 16,000 applications.

Lloyd Austin

Okay, I'm gonna take take that question and other COVID questions for the record. As you know, this is an issue in litigation and so I'll I'll take your questions for the record.

Rep. Mike Johnson (R-La.)

Well, in the 40 seconds I have remaining I'll just state the obvious what a lot of people back home are asking me and asking all of us and that is if it's so obvious that a vaccine mandate has is causing this deficit in the number of troops. Then why don't we just change it? I mean, COVID seems to be violently disagree with the premise with your preamble. I know you do.

But I mean, obviously, it's having a direct effect on our numbers of recruitment and retention and readiness, which is of great concern to all of us. And I know you're not going to change your mind here today, but I'm registering the concern of my district and many millions of Americans that we represent, who share this opinion and I hope that you'll take it under advisement. Are you back?

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Ms Sherrill is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, General Milley. Secretary Austin, thank you for your commitment to our armed forces and your service to our country. Gentlemen, both of you briefly touched on long range, precision and hypersonic fires in your testimony, and the important role such a capability would play not only in integrated deterrence, but also in enabling success and multi domain operations as we work swiftly to modernize the joint force, more specifically our long range fires platforms, what ground based platforms can commanders depend on to provide that capability? And how, if at all, has the range displayed by Russian artillery and their war of aggression in Ukraine change that thinking?

How is the Department planning to increase our range without increasing our vulnerability to ground based missile defense systems?

Mark Milley

Nice cars from the we've got a number of Long Range Systems in the inventory today. But what the Army in particular but also the Marine Corps working on our experimental long range fire systems those are rocket, some of hyper hypersonic in some are tube artillery. And these go very, very long range. I won't get into it.

We can have a team come over and give you a classified briefing on some of the experimental things that are going on. But we recognize that long range and long range precision fires that even put that caveat on it are critical to the future operational environment. That's proven true over and over and over again, and the ability for a maneuver based military and for maneuver you have to have fires plus the movement, the mobility of the force, combined gives you maneuver at the lower levels of the tactical level. So we want to make sure that we have dominance in fires.

We are that's that's one of the critical areas of development in each of the services, but particularly the ground services.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

And General Milley Would you consider this strategic long range cannon an asset that would enable combatant commanders to succeed in multi domain operations?

Mark Milley

In fact that yes, it's the basis of what the Army's gone multi domain, Task Force and what the Marines are calling the littoral regiments are those are those is that cannon system so that is if let's use the scenario of the South China seas with those capabilities based off shore based long range precision munitions, they should be able to do a significant amount of damage to any surface fleet, perhaps Chinese surface fleet.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

And as the army modernizes its indirect fire capabilities will the cert contribute to the integrated deterrence model and can you speak on the importance that further developing a capability like that will have towards establishing a modern forest you spoke a little bit about, for example, in China, how important that is.

Mark Milley

So I think this will be a lengthy conversation, but we have to start with the operating environment we're gonna operate in and the changing character of war that Chairman Smith mentioned up front once we fully analyze that and understand that what we derive is a set of attributes that come for each of the services and particularly the joint force combined.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

Speaking of that, would that be appropriate for the Marine Corps as well?

Mark Milley

Absolutely yeah. So what the Marines are doing is upgrading their fleet and I'm aware of the debate that's ongoing with the Marines. But what they're trying to do is tailor the Marines to optimize their capability as part of the joint force in a future operating environment under change character of war. And there's a lot of nuance to that which would be much beyond the time available here.

But the the key is the development of the doctrine, the organization, the the personnel, the training, all of those things in combination to set us up for operations in the 2030s. And that's what this budget is all about, actually.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

Well, thank you. I appreciate that. And with the Army's extended range cannon artillery system that was designed to close the capabilities gap between the US and our adversaries, is there a plan to field a toad extended range version of the M777?

Mark Milley

The M77--well there is a there is already a 155 extended range Toad version so I think the the short answer is yes, but that's not the system we're talking about. We're talking about the long range precision fires that the that the army is developing that that's not fielded yet in at scale. There's some experimental units that are using it right now. They did some recent tests at White Sands, which are proven quite successful.

But that's not yet in the in the field.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

And then as we work to build the capabilities within our within our hypersonics suite, is there not a need for a land based Long Range Surface to surface artillery asset that is more cost effective than the common hypersonic glide body and is readily available to combatant commander seeking to strike critical targets such as headquarters maintenance--

[CROSSTALK]

Mark Milley

Army's developing that.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.)

Thank you.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Mr Green is recognized.

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank Ranking Member and thank our witnesses for being here today. And I want to again echo my amazing opportunity to bump into -- they're in Poland and and see your previous unit that you commanded and any unit that I commanded, I'll tell you, they're doing fantastic work and so is Kevin Sharp, the brigade from a 101st they're just doing outstanding stuff. brief comment, you know, 4% raise for troops in an 8% inflation environment isn't a raise. I wish we could rethink that and certainly, I'm sure there'll be amendments that address it.

Also on the top line number 4%. And an 8% Inflation is is really a cut. Just want to make that comment. Miss McCord a quick comment for you.

I I saw a statement that you had made the budget was written prior to the Ukrainian invasion and could not be adjusted to include that. I want to tell you that I and I'm talking specifically about making adjustments due to what's going on in Ukraine. There's not a company in America where the board of directors would allow the CEO to say that the speed of business is the speed now. And the Pentagon's got to move at the speed of business, the speed now, and so, you know, in the few weeks that this thing's been going on, I would think that the adjustments could be made.

Secretary Austin quick question for you, who is advising the president, that it's a good idea to allow the war criminals in Russia to build a nuclear reactor for Iran in the JCPOA, the current negotiations would allow Russia to build a nuclear reactor to the tune of \$10 billion. These are the guys that, you know, have done these horrible things in Ukraine and we're here to letting them at least right now considering letting them build a nuclear reactor.

Lloyd Austin

Are a number of people that are leading that process, of course, you know, our national security adviser plus, as you know, the State Department is is leading the

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.)

Way let me ask you is I mean, is there somebody at DOD saying that's a good idea? Do you think it's a good idea?

Lloyd Austin

No, that's not we have not provided any Counsel to the President on building and--

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.)

I would ask you to do that. I think it's a really bad idea. Want to talk legacy systems General Milley with you if it's if it's okay, we've had discussions before about phasing out legacy systems bringing in new systems with the capability to overcome those and amplify on them. I'm a little concerned about about J-STARS.

You know, we army guys we love that program. It helps us and there's, I guess talking this budget of the Air Force wanting to get rid of J-STARS. I'd love to hear your thoughts. On and maybe we have to go into a classified setting.

Is there going to be a capability gap if that thing goes away?

Mark Milley

Well, first just like you just shows a great system but this budget and the national defense strategy is optimizing for the pacing threat, the most significant strategic challenge the United States, China and then the acute challenge of the cute threat, which is Russia. J-STARS is not a survivable aircraft in that type of environment against that high end threat. So that's point 1. Point 2, in terms of the capability that J-STARS does bring, which is the ability to battle track movements, etc on the ground.

[CROSSTALK]

That's right. And that capability will exist in a different form and from a different platform, but for that I'd have to take it to a different session.

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.)

There's no capability loss with that, with J-STARS going away.

Mark Milley

I don't--no significant capability lost relative to China and Russia. If you wanted to use J-STARS in a lower intensity environment, then that would be because the J-STARS would be going away but are we're optimizing for China than Russia.

Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.)

I may then ask for that classified discussion. So we can kind of go into that. One quick thought about this legacy fall off and the implementation of the new systems that are five, six years out. I know.

Congressman Wittman has talked about this challenge. I'm aware that there's this strategic deterrence fund that hasn't been used for years. I'd love to get some details on that if y'all have it. Because we could protect the guys across the aisle who don't necessarily want to see massive increases in the budget.

We could fund some of the R&D for these new projects through that and we it would be similar to the way we did -- and sort of put money over there to I would ask that that be considered and even speaking to some of my Democrat colleagues, they think that'd be a great idea about future systems so that that we can maintain the capabilities in that gap period. Keep legacy systems around long enough afford them in the current budget and pay for the new systems in a different strategic fine. And if you could look into that and get back with my office.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Thank you. gentleman's time has expired. Miss Escobar is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for this important hearing. And thank you, Secretary Austin and General Milley for your service and for your time before us today, I have the honor and privilege of serving representing El Paso, Texas, home to Fort Bliss, America's second largest military installation and the largest joint mobilization force generation installation in the army, home to the first armored division. And joint modernization command. I'm so pleased to see \$15 million in the budget for a new fire station at Fort Bliss.

And we'll work to ensure that that funding is included in this year's NDAA Fort Bliss. Its people and infrastructure are critical to our military's readiness from my first day as the congresswoman for this great military installation. I've advocated for the investments needed for our assets and missions. I'm going to do it again here today.

There are two infrastructure priorities that we need to fund critical to our readiness. The first is a modest investment in a rail head. The current rail infrastructure and design is a limiting factor in efficient movement of military equipment in support of deployments. punting on providing funding for the rail head further degrades fort blisses ability to mobilize and demobilize troops that come from every corner of the country because of the installations mission as a joint mobilization force generation installation.

Fort Hood has a similar number of assets and missions, but a larger railhead bliss is doing the best they can but a larger rail head will allow them to better meet the DoD shift to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, namely China. The second is the need for new barracks. I've been in the barracks at Fort Bliss and can tell you they are in poor shape and inadequately cooled in a desert environment like El Paso where we've had more record-breaking triple digit temperatures each year as a result of the climate crisis. The barracks can become so hot I can easily see someone passing out as a result.

I know there's some 3d printing innovation going on but I want to emphasize that degraded living spaces and substandard facilities that are installations, lowers morale, increases health and safety risks, and negatively impacts retention which in turn affects our readiness. I provide these two examples in order to make sure that Fort Bliss remains top of mind to you and also to point out that our readiness is directly tied to the infrastructure we have here at home at key installations like Fort Bliss, Secretary Austin and General Milley could you talk about where you see Fort Bliss fitting into the department's plans for addressing the pacing challenge with China and modernizing our military?

Lloyd Austin

Well, as you as you've said, Fort Bliss has houses some of our most capable forces there with their armed forces and also some air defense capability. So it is an important installation to us. And I I share your concerns with making sure that we have the right facilities for our troops and make sure that our troops are taken care of that's very, very important. To me.

We'll make sure that we go back and it worked with the army to see where things stand in priority and get a better understanding of when and how these things are funded.

Mark Milley

And I would just echo what Secretary said Fort Bliss is a strategic platform for the deployment. Of some really significant combat power in the armored division that's there. And as mentioned, through many previous member comments about the importance of air defense systems, patriot and so on, that's all done at Fort Bliss. Now of course you know as well as I do that Fort Bliss is adjacent to the White Sands Missile Range, a lot of testing for modernization is done there.

So we want to make sure that the real IDs are good so they can deploy the forest. We want to make sure the barracks is squared away to ensure that the forest itself has been taken care of so we can achieve those strategic objectives I'll get with the Chief of Staff of the Army. I wasn't as you know, former Chief of Staff of the Army I wasn't tracking to the barracks at Bliss have deteriorated that bad. But let me let me get back to you on an answer for that.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Appreciate it. And in my remaining 30 seconds, I just want to emphasize as we've heard, some of my colleagues talk about legacy systems. It's really on Congress. It's important to us that we heed the advice that you've given us in classified and unclassified settings, about the need to invest in the right way.

My time is up. I yield back. Thank you both. And by the way, invite you both would be honored to host you at Fort Bliss.

Mr Chairman, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Carl is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Jerry Carl (R-Ala.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Thank you, gentleman for willingness to come in here and speak to us. I've got three quick points and one question. So you know, when you get to me, you're at the end of the line.

So that that's the good news. You know, on this defense budget, I personally am tired of the defense budget process that does not supply our troops or meet our global global defensive needs. For example, reducing our naval fleet in order to stretch insufficient personnel across fewer ships, indicates how backwards our defense spending approach has become. Second point, our withdrawal of Afghanistan indicates a completely avoidable, avoidable failure of leadership and has made the world and our homeland less safe rather than more safe.

And the third point, our refueling capability is essential, especially given the challenges presented by the into the Indo-Pacific last year in the same setting. We had this conversation. I asked you both General Milley. I asked you both where we are on the circumstances with the KC-46.

We were briefed last week that the KC-46 is capable of refueling 86% of our aircraft. Would anyone in this room buy a car with the idea of it working 86% of the time, and not 100% of the time. So my frustration is really with is KC-46. And my question General Milley and and and General Austin.

I asked both of you why are we not moving forwards with a next generation tanker the LMXT, which I understand is serving as quite well in Europe.

Mark Milley

Yeah, thanks for that. I'd more first, on your comment about refueling in general. That is a strategic capability that we've got to sustain improve because the the legs of aircraft, especially over the Pacific, are too short on a single tank of gas to be involved in a Chinese war fight, given that the Chinese do have anti-access capabilities. Point 1.

Point 2 is the survivability of those aircraft is every bit as important as their ability to refuel an aircraft. So those are particularly vulnerable aircraft. So those two things have to be worked on in this particular budget. If memory serves me, right, I think there's 15 KC-46 is as part of this, we are phasing out some KC-135.

And I agree with you on the on the LMX piece. I think that is the next generation. We need to get going with that because that is more survivable, and it handles a greater ability to refuel the fleet. So I'm not in disagreement with any of that, but refueling is a critical strategic capability that we have.

And if you take it back to our American way of war what what makes us so much different than many other countries is our ability to project combat power very rapidly at great distances from continental United States. And refueling along with a maritime fleet, along with many other capabilities are what enable us to do that. So that's a key area of investment that we need to continue to do.

Rep. Jerry Carl (R-Ala.)

Thank you, sir.

Lloyd Austin

I agree with what the Chairman has said. refueling capability is a significant part of our strategic advantage. And we have to make sure that we we maintain the capability to fuel or refuel all of our aircraft and so for a period of time, we'll need to make sure we have a kind of a blend of capability. So until we get some of the problems fixed.

On the on the on the 46. But investing in the next generation, I think it's the right thing to do. So. I agree with what what you've what you've raised her.

Rep. Jerry Carl (R-Ala.)

Thanks, gentlemen. I yield my time.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Mr Golden is recognized.

Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine)

Thank you. Secretary Austin, General Milley thank you for being here today. And thank you for your lifetime of service to the country's defense. You know, sitting here for now, three hours similar to the way that you two have it occurs to me that these hearings obviously are very important.

That's why we do them. That the oversight is critical debate, I think can be a real source of strength in the policy making process when done correctly and done. I think in general act of good faith. We've also seen some examples where perhaps it's not helpful in regards to the message you can send to the world to our friends and our foes, and most importantly, to the American people.

In regards to that, I want to talk about something we really haven't talked about today. And that's a recent opinion piece in The Wall Street Journal. You may have seen, written by a former member of Congress, as well as a former secretary, have a cabinet of a different presidential administration past. And what's concerning about it, I think is the message that it sends to the American people and to others who are paying attention and this has to do with the Commandant of the Marine Corps current force redesign.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions about this. And I'm gonna start with General Milley. It says here that there are people out there who are feeling that it is unclear. Protect particularly for people with experience in military planning what formal review in coordination was required of the common comment on before his words the author of this opinion piece before they comment on unilaterally announced a policy that would alter the Marine Corps.

It goes on to say that the law doesn't give the commandant carte blanche to make significant changes in force structure, but rather, title 10 provides that the commandant performs his duty subject to the authority direction and control the Secretary of the Navy, who also by the way, is subject to the authority direction control of the Secretary of Defense. And finally the President retains ultimate authority as commander in chief. The next paragraph here says that there's a problem in a restructuring of this scale having moved through without full consideration and debate in front of the proper offices within the Pentagon, such as the defense for source board or others, and that a formal approval by the SEC def should have been conducted before it was sent to the White House for further review and then sent to Congress for oversight hearings. The last day I would point out that the opinion piece asserts that this announcement was made during COVID making it difficult for congressional oversight to take place.

And I think perhaps for your General Milley most concerning it asserts that due to the chaos that existed in the Pentagon during the 2020 campaign year and post election turbulence, that perhaps this proposal has just floated through through improper channels. And so I wanted to ask you been around in this position since October of 2019. Do you have any concern along the way, having had this resource this restructure announced in March of 2020 that the proper process has not been followed?

Mark Milley

I read the piece by Senator Webb and I have enormous respect for Senator Webb by the way as a Navy -- Marine veteran, a tremendous Navy Secretary etc. I read the piece and Dave Berger to comment on the Marine Corps Jennifer. He he pretty rigorously thought this through with the Navy, the Navy, the Marine Corps staff and the Navy step and he Brittany debrief it up through various elements within the Department of Defense. I can't say about the White House pace I assume he does hearings as well.

I'm assuming that the Oversight Committee I've heard it many times about the restriction of marine and marine you know 2030 plan but let's take a look just for a second. What what is what are they actually doing materially what are they physically doing? You know, reducing by three infantry battalions, that certainly there's only 31 infantry battalions of Marine Corps. So it's not a large force to begin with.

Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine)

But we're almost out of time. Let me just say I think it's important you are aware that Marine Corps was we were aware that they'd been in front of Congress for oversight.

Mark Milley

We were aware and I'm also aware of the alumni community of the Marine Corps. is quite upset about it.

Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine)

Secretary of the Navy under multiple administration is aware of this and approve it. Obviously it was green lighted to come. I believe the answer is yes to all that and you're committed to ensuring that that proper process is followed going forward. Because my understanding Marines is as they are implementing this, they're also flexible in their learning lessons and making adjustments correct.

Mark Milley

Totally, I have no problem with the process that was followed. And that may not have come clear to the Senator Oh, there's not in the alumni community. But inside the Pentagon. It's my belief anyway, because I saw it and so didn't many members of Department defense and I know the committee's oversights are so I think that part of the process.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Gentleman's time has expired.

Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine)

The important point. Thank you. Thank you.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Mr Rogers.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)

Madam Chair, I ask unanimous consent that all Committee members have three legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials into the record.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Without objection, so ordered. Mr Moore. Mr Moore is recognized.

Rep. Blake Moore (R-Utah)

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ranking Member. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter strengthens national security enhances global partnerships and powers economic growth across our nation. I agree with Air Force chiefs, Chief of Staff Brown, the F-35 is indeed the cornerstone of Air Force modernization remains it remains the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter in the world, giving pilots an advantage against any adversary and then most importantly, enabling them to execute their mission to come home safely.

At Hill Air Force Base in Utah, our 388 fighter wing is the Air Force first active duty combat capable F-35A lightning units right now F-30. Fives from the basis 34 Squadron have been deployed to Germany in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. However, I'm concerned that these fifth generation aircraft have not consistently been accompanied with equally modern and advanced weaponry. The weaponry to accompany fifth generation aircraft must include cyber and electronic warfare capabilities, superior radars and sensors unmanned capabilities and the ability to feed rapidly relocatable targets in an anti access environment for my understanding JASM and LRASM and the -- the tech weapon can help the F-35 reach its full potential as fifth generation fighter Secretary Austin and thank you all for being here and for your service.

Can you provide an update on the implementation of advanced weaponry for the F-35 with battle management capabilities needed to to address an increasingly adversarial adversarial threats?

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, so we're working hard to make sure that that, you know, we do in fact, achieve the upgrades going forward that you mentioned and we are able to integrate the capabilities from cyber in and information that that you mentioned that's a work in progress. We will continue to invest in precision guided munitions because that's really, really important to us. And you've seen us invest in in the upgrade of those precision guided munitions to make sure that they're survivable.

Rep. Blake Moore (R-Utah)

And like to look at it and you know, as I dig into this as my team and and some of my stakeholders back home I like to you make a comparison with an \$80 million plane that we are putting 50 year old weapon weapons technology into important piece especially as we talk about the budget today. Do you think there has been enough attention given to the weaponry available to the F-35.

Lloyd Austin

And one of my priorities is to ensure that we continue to invest in the upgrade of our of our PGM and that we have sufficient quantities of PGMs on hand. So we're going to continue to invest in this.

Rep. Blake Moore (R-Utah)

Thank you my my last question is related to the the number the the number of F-35s the DoD is insistent it's still plans to seek a total of 1763 F-35s. However, at a rate of 33 per year, that would take half a century. How is the decreased F-35 by F-35 by justified to meet the needs of pure competition and you know, the very apparent and obvious adversarial AORs that are increasing across our globe. Just kind of comment on, are we are we doing enough on this F-35?

And by decreasing and are we ready--are we ready for the next fights?

Lloyd Austin

So pure competition is exactly what we have in mind. And we want to make sure that we have the right mix of capabilities in in the inventory as we go forward. And as you look across the fight up. You'll see that we we invest in F-35s in a significant way.

But at the F-35 and the F-22 have specific roles in the in the fight and they are very very capable aircraft but other aircraft are also relevant. And and so we want to make sure we have the right mix.

Rep. Blake Moore (R-Utah)

I've been impressed with you know one of the one of the highlights of this role. I'm in my first term of Congress and one of the highlights is getting be interacting individually with the pilots back on our Air Force Base. I think a lot of us have that that that chance to go in and hear their perspective. And they have such incredible ideas and such closeness to these these weapons systems.

And I know there's a real strong desire for for their voice to be heard and the airmen as they work on these every day and just constantly encourage there's no question here. I just want to constantly encourage our leadership and our Committee to be thinking about what that direct base level input is and how important that is because they have amazing ideas and I've and I just wanted to take this opportunity amidst the turmoil going on the world to thank them for their service and, and really appreciate from from every base but particularly where we have no assets deployed from from from Ogden, Utah right now and Layton. Thank you. yield back.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Mrs. Luria is recognized.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Well, thank you. General Milley, I noticed earlier in a comment to Mr Bacon, you said that I don't think we're taking too much risk with regards to China and Russia. So one of the things that when we look at the budget, we look at what's in it, what's not in it, the things that are unfunded requirements list. There's risk associated with each of those choices that were made based off of the top line and what you've included in the budget coming over to us.

And I know that in title 10 It requires a Chairman's risk assessment, which would normally be submitted annually by February 15. Have you submitted the risk assessment this year?

Mark Milley

Of not typically in sequence that goes national security strategy, the national defense strategy and the national military strategy than the budget than the Chairman's risk assessment? So, but anyway, I have it, it's in draft and it'd be submitted shortly. So talk to us for just a second. So the way we do that the way I do it in the way we have as Department have done it, well the joint staff has done it is take a look at the probability and the consequence of a specific event and then measured against the risk to force risk to mission evaluate against time and the cost to troops.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Can I jump in really quickly? So when was the last time the risk assessment was done?

Mark Milley

It was two years ago. Okay. Right. So August of 2020.

Asking also perhaps why it wasn't done last year, but I've reviewed the previous risk assessments and they don't really follow the format that you're stating. And also, they don't really follow the format as required in title 10 and include all of the elements in them that are necessary, which I think was written that way because that allows us to to make decisions, perhaps adding additional resources to the defense budget. So go ahead, please. I'm sorry.

Mark Milley

Okay. I'll do better on rewriting it in accordance with the format but, but the My point being is the substance of any risk assessment that we do is relative to that, so the probability, we're evaluating risk in this for this budget in this NDS relative to China and Russia, and specific to China. I when I said my comment to Mr Bacon earlier about the I don't think it's too much risk. I think that we've mitigated risk relative to China.

And I think that the probability of armed conflict with China, the consequence will be high but the probability is not high in the near term in terms of this particular budget. Now as you get in the out years, you get in the out years, what do you define? I think that the out years is beyond five years.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Does not concur what we've heard from Admiral Davidson

Mark Milley

And what Mr Davidson, and Admiral Aquilino said was they said that the probability or the capability of China to attack Taiwan is going to be 2027 capability out probability. And that is exactly what President Xi charged his military to do.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Well, I would say that myself and many others on this Committee interpreted Admiral Aquilino and Davidson statements differently, but as we're limited,

Mark Milley

They were interpreted differently. But what they said was the capability to attack Taiwan was gonna be developed by 2027.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Think that they said that there was a high probability within the next six years now five years and so that conversation rapidly increased. But just so that we can get through the question, okay, so, you know, the purpose is to say how the current and future risk changes with regards to the budget that's submitted. And so with the budget priorities, the trade offs, the physical constraints, and so there's some things in here I mean, we're decommissioning 24 ships, we're only building eight, you say nine, we're delaying the laws for the Marine Corps to come to the fight in the Pacific. We're not maximizing our shipbuilding capacity we could build 15 DDGs we're only building 10 We're stopping the LPD production line.

We're pushing out the -- unfunded requirements list, risk, like what are the things that can prevent an invasion of Taiwan? You know, it's the bottom of the unfunded requirements list for offensive mining is the airforce investing in long range anti surface missiles, or LRASM. you know these things that in my mind are priorities to accomplish our goals are some of them not even funded or not funded sufficiently. So you've made decisions there to fund this but put this on the unfunded requirements listed there's a risk so that is what I feel is not being communicated to the Committee, and you're here requesting \$773 billion and I feel like you haven't provided you know the most basic information necessary to to understand what this will or will not do for the defense.

Mark Milley

Well, just 30 seconds left. So as quickly as I can. I don't think that decommissioning ships that are 30 years old that have no relevance to a fight against China. Okay, limited relevance.

Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Va.)

Don't have time in 30 seconds to cover this topic. But I do think that I'm looking forward to reading about that in the risk assessment when it's submitted soon. So thank you.

Mark Milley

I don't think it's excessive risk.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Mrs. Bice is recognized.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Thank you. I want to say thank you to Secretary Austin, General Milley, for spending an extraordinary amount of time with us today. Secretary Austin I understand that the Air Force plans to begin phasing out a number of the three century aircraft in 2023. As you know, this is an important platform for command and control, target detection and battle management.

I am concerned that if we phase out this aircraft without the replacement of the IE seven online, then we will lose critically needed combat capability. I'm also concerned that bases like Tinker Air Force Base would experience a decline in associated institutional knowledge readiness and workforce proficiency if we can't transition this workforce to the IE seven

concurrently. Secretary Can you tell me how the Department plans to fill the gap capability gap of the three aircraft if they are retired without a replacement in hand?

Lloyd Austin

We'll need to manage the transition to make sure that we have adequate capability on hand as we bring on new capabilities.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

But at the current time, we're talking about taking out e threes before those sevens are even being built.

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, so and there are other platforms and ways to to give us the situational awareness that that we need and will will leverage those platforms. But we'll continue to manage, you know, the transition to ensure that we have what we need to be relevant in the fight going forward.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Are you suggesting that there is some other platform that's being considered to replace the capability of the three there are

Lloyd Austin

A number of platforms that will use to create the situational awareness or provide situational awareness that, that you've alluded to,

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

That an aircraft may not be at?

Lloyd Austin

A number of capabilities.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Thank you. Like many of my colleagues, I feel that defense budget, in some cases adequately addresses the threats that we're facing today. I very much appreciate appreciate the pay increases for our service members in the budget. But as has been mentioned, many times over the pay increase does not actually cover the current cost of inflation.

That's essentially a pay cut for our servicemembers and their families. With the recent technological breakthroughs made by China and the growing military budgets of our foreign adversaries. Do you think the President's budget which fails to keep pace with inflation is appropriate and adequate to counter these rising threats?

Lloyd Austin

This is a significant budget and it provides us the capability, the ability to go after the capabilities we need to support our warfighting concepts and our strategy overall, a significant budget

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

I want to piggyback off of Representative Larry mentioned with the risk assessment in General Milley if you'd like to comment on this piece of this, the conversation has really focused on military readiness and or military equipment. How much emphasis are we putting on cyber in space? I think that's a piece that in some cases is maybe being put on the backburner? I remember in the opening testimony, I think there's \$2 billion that's being invested.

But But how much are we really focused on ensuring that we have the proper capabilities from a cyber and space perspective?

Mark Milley

This budget is putting in 27 billion I think it is into space. That's the space Pacific and then there's probably additional monies throughout the Air Force, Space Command and Space Force beyond that, 27 and then I think it's 11 or 12 billion into cyber. So I think that's pretty significant investments in both of those domains.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Any comments, Secretary Austin?

Lloyd Austin

Chairman's got it exactly right. 27.6 billion in space, and over \$11 billion for cyber.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Do you think that 2 billion for AI is adequate?

Lloyd Austin

I do. I do.

Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-Okla.)

Thank you. I yield back.

Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas)

Mr Panetta is recognized.

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.)

Thank you, Madam Chair. Gentlemen. Good morning. Thank you for your service.

And, of course, of course, thank you for being here. Obviously, I think the invasion of Ukraine is pretty much I believe it's revitalized democracies, and as the administration and President said, it strengthen our NATO's resolve. And we've seen that basically, in the fact that you're seeing other NATO countries beefing up their force their forces, and that includes what we're doing in regards to the defense budget that you submitted. The 813 billion, very, very large on its face.

However, when you look at it compared to this year's budget, it's just 2% more. Also, you take into account inflation and the 2.5% of our budget. Which is sort of an optimistic number. Some are actually saying that it's going to be a real terms cut in regards to defense spending, and that Congress is going to have to do what it did this year and add probably close to \$30 billion.

Moreover, the budget does not take into account what spend on nukes, what spent on resettling of Afghans and or help with Ukraine at this point. Additionally, the release of this budget is before the release of the national security strategy. So just quickly, combined with the inflation rate one, do you think this is a cut? This is going to be a cut in defense spending in two, because it doesn't take into account the National Security Strategy.

Will we need to review this budget at a later time?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks, Congressman, we actually built this budget based upon our national defense strategy in a national defense strategy, as you know, has been released. And And again, we made significant effort to ensure that this budget gave us the capabilities that we needed to execute that strategy. So So to answer your question, yes. And I do think, again, this is a substantial budget, and it gives us the ability to go after those capabilities.

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.)

Just in regards to and thank you for that. Mr Secretary, in regards to NATO looking at the Diana project, which I'm sure you're very aware of which, you know, I believe will will reinforce the transatlantic cooperation in important areas like

hypersonic weapons and of course, Space Technology. Secretary Austin, do you believe that the Diana project offers the type of framework that we need to improve and refine NATO's capabilities to design build and validate or missile defense programs?

Lloyd Austin

I do. It's one of a number of things that that will provide NATO the ability to be forward looking and of course, you know, we'll go in and NATO will go in and review its requirements and concepts going forward. So, but in terms of us, the United States of America, we routinely work with allies and partners to and as we develop additional capabilities, and I pointed to orcas earlier on, that not only is focused on development of a submarine, but also working with our partner in developing technologies in AI and in in hypersonics, and other things.

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.)

Great. And in regards, obviously, you've heard a number of questions in this hearing and another hearings or at least I have heard many of my colleagues talk about the deterrence.

Lloyd Austin

Will help us most going forward is our ability to remain united and, and committed to defending excuse me, NATO territory. Again, there are a number of things that go into this equation. sharing of information for example, is one of those things, which which enabled us to create transparency and, and bolster confidence and lead to what we're seeing in excuse me and NATO right now. And that's largely apart and largely a measure of what the President is decision early on, to do things to help us be able to share insights and information with our partners.

And that transparency has, has really has really been helpful to us.

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.)

Great. Thank you, Mr Secretary. Thank you, gentlemen. Mr Chair.

Mr Chairman, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Ms McClain is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. And thank you all for being carrier. I really appreciate it. I want to follow up on Miss Lori's question.

When it pertains to risk. When do you think we'll have the risk assessment piece done?

Mark Milley

Yeah, that's my responsibility to get that done. Get it submitted to the Secretary and the President. Probably my guess is in the next couple of weeks. Okay.

If you go through the packet submitted to you as well, it's not just to the sector in the prison.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Thank you. If in that risk assessment, we find some glaring risks that maybe we didn't foresee at that time. I'm assuming we will make some changes to the budget.

Mark Milley

That's part of the idea is for to submit it to the Secretary and the President and to the Congress.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Errors or not errors, significant risks, because it's time to wrap my head

Mark Milley

Over again, risk has to be covered by the mitigating factors of the budget.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

I'm trying to wrap my head around how we put together a budget but we don't really have a good risk assessment. Am I Am I not understanding that correctly?

Mark Milley

No, we do well, I participate in in in the budget and my staff does as well.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Throughout so we have a general idea. Okay, thank you, sir. Then I need some clarification from both of you on the President's budget request for combat vehicles. Can you explain the Army's rationale for the precipitous drop in vehicle procurement, specifically the Abrams tank and what risks are we incurring with that drop in procurement of the Abrams tanks?

Mark Milley

Well, first we've got about four or 5000 tanks in the inventory. So again, it's relative to the national defense strategy. And and we are optimizing the military for a fight that'll occur sometime if it occurs at all hopefully never does in the 2030s. And tanks may or may not probably not play a very significant role in a war against China in the 2030s.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Ground war with China.

Mark Milley

The ground will have a ground forces, marine and army will play an important role, but the dominant role we played by the air and maritime forces with that

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Than the Air Force is the oldest, smallest and least ready in its entire history. The Air Force leadership has repeatedly explained that they need to procure at least 72 fighter aircraft. However, in 23 dod budget cuts the Air Force new tactical combat aircraft, only two by 57 So with the future being an air in space where we really need why are we not fulfilling the 72? Why are we only procuring 57 if that's the future?

Mark Milley

Thought it was, well, maybe I'm on a point of those 61 but--

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Even say 61 It's still less than one -- right? Yeah.

Mark Milley

The Air Force opted to want to buy and purchase and return that money for to build the block for F-35, which is the most advanced of the versions, right? So the ones that are being chosen not to buy, those are block threes, so we want to get the most advanced versions of these aircraft of the F-35 is gonna be the quarterback of the joint force in a fight in the western Pacific. That aircraft is critical. We want the most modern capabilities and that's what that's what we're purchasing.

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

So we're just we're taking the same money, we're just deferring it to a different

Mark Milley

That's that's the idea behind what CQ Brown and Secretary the Air Force I decided to,

Rep. Lisa McClain (R-Mich.)

Okay, it's just an overall question in my in my last minute is, it appears with inflation being you know, 8% in our budget being less than inflation, you know, we've all talked about it, we're not keeping up with inflation. One of the risks that I'm assuming that we're assessing is the risks on how we look to our adversaries and our allies in terms of our our budget, weakness, and I say that is if I look at China, for example, which is one of our major adversaries, right? They are spending maybe even overspending some could argue we are cutting back what message do you think that sends to our allies and adversaries, sir.

Mark Milley

So I don't think I don't think we're cutting back I think this is substantial budget 700, 3 quarters of a trillion dollars a lot of money.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Apologize, lady's time has expired. Mr Horsford, is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

Thank you so much, Mr Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses. Secretary Austin. It's my understanding that the Air Force intends to submit a legislative proposal this year requesting expanded usage of the Nevada test and training range located in my district. This new proposal would come amid the ongoing effort by the Navy to reach an accessible compromise with local stakeholders regarding modernization of the Fallon Range Training Complex.

I am deeply concerned and I want to bring to your attention that the Nevada delegation has still not been consulted on the Nevada test and training range proposal or been given details regarding the Air Force's plan. So my question is, When will the Air Force share their proposal with the Nevada delegation in our constituents and can you commit to ensuring that the Department works collaboratively with our delegation as well as our local, state and tribal leaders to develop an accessible proposal for joint use in the Nevada test and training range?

Lloyd Austin

On the first part of the question in terms of when they intend to share? I'll take that for the record and get back to you on what what their plan is doing?

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

Thank you, sir. I look forward to working with you. I'd like to shift now to the small community of remotely piloted aircraft crews shouldering the burden of over the horizon operations in the Middle East and around the world. As the air force works to identify ways to improve quality of life for RPA crews.

I want to ensure that the Department is leveraging all available tools already at its disposal.

Lloyd Austin

In terms of expanding that combat zone, that's, that's a thing that's, you know, is relevant to the area that we're actually fighting in and that's, that's physical space on the ground as to whether or not we provide credit to the troops that are engaged in activities there. It's a different issue. I know it's one that the Air Force has taken up before. I certainly support, rewarding and awarding those those Airmen, soldiers, sailors that have participated in meaningful ways appropriately.

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

Thank you. General Milley given the unique burdens and stressors faced by RPA crews, would you commit to exploring the expansion of this program? The Special Operations Command preservation of the force and family program to include RPA crews flying in support of combat operations.

Mark Milley

I'll absolutely take a look at that along with Secretary. Absolutely.

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

Thank you. Changing subjects in recent months we've seen a concerning rise in attacks on LGBT rights and state houses across the country. These include efforts to deny life saving medical care to our most vulnerable youth and a range of other potentially deadly policies. Secretary Austin What steps is the Department taking to shield active duty service members and their dependents from these hateful attacks and our state laws denying or restricting gender affirming care considered during the PCs process for service members with impacted dependents?

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, there so there, there are some there is some litigation ongoing with respect to a couple of states here and and this particular issue. And so I won't comment on that. What I will say is that, and you've heard me say this and demonstrate this before, that all of our troops are important to us. They're at the top of my priority in terms of their health and well being and we want to provide opportunity for everybody who's qualified to serve in our military, and everything that we've done, you know, up to this point reflects that.

We'll continue to do everything within our power to take care of our our population.

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

So just related to that in my final moments, it's my understanding that in 2021, DOD issued only about 4000 prescriptions for PrEP. Despite the fact that HIV infection rate among active-duty service members has nearly doubled. So what steps is the DoD taken to improve access to prep to our service members?

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, I can't answer that question. But I will take it for the record. I'll get back to you on on what we're doing or not doing and DOD. Thank you.

Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.)

I yield. My time expired.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Mr Wilson is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. And thank you for being here today. As a 31 year Army Veteran myself as a grateful father of four service members who have served in Iraq, Egypt and Afghanistan. I want you to succeed and that's why I'm concerned as Sean Hannity has pointed out that correctly identified that we're in J 234 cents the murder of 13 Americans, servicemembers and Afghanistan as we left American personnel.

Americans behind I hope that you both can, by immediately providing help to Ukraine, now, the most advanced military equipment for a victory for the people of Ukraine we need to show our resolve and show our success. For the very brave people of Ukraine who are just remarkably pushing back against Putin. With that in mind, General Austin, the front page of the Washington Post, and provided on February 28. It's speaks for itself that Putin is threatening.

He said welcome and I believe the families of America and our allies with nuclear weapons, modernization of our strategic nuclear stockpile should be a top priority moving forward. We cannot expect to deter Putin when the nuclear capabilities are lagging behind there's Putin's recent invasion of Ukraine, which included threats of first strike nuclear attack toward America and our allies elevated nuclear modernization on the department's priority list. Can you explain the importance of modernization for deterrence?

Lloyd Austin

Thanks, sir, it's absolutely critical, as you've heard me say before the triad has served us well over the years.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.)

In indeed which is saying peace through strength works and and also general in May 2018, NNSA announced that it would pursue a new approach the Tonia pit production split between the facilities at Los Alamos and the Savannah River site. The war criminal Putin has the ability to produce plutonium pits yet the United States currently lacks this ability. Does the Department of Defense continue to support the two sites solution for Tony and pet production? How can we reasonably expect that this vital program will be adequately supported when the department's budget request does not even exceed the rate of inflation?

Lloyd Austin

I can assure you that we're gonna, we're gonna make sure that that we have the capability that we require to make sure that our triad remains functional and safe. And so this is a thing that we'll continue to invest in.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.)

And the two sites solution to with the capabilities of Los Alamos and Savannah River, that that's critical that it'd be two sites,

Lloyd Austin

Right? What's critical as we maintain the capability that we need, and again, as we look at things going forward, you know, we'll make or make the right decisions. But my my commitment to you is that we will cook we will make sure that we have the right capability, adequate capability to be successful.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.)

And the American people need to know many other pits that we have are 60 years old. And so this is something that's just got to be done in the two sites solution wouldn't really work to the benefit of the American people. And a final question, general gruesomely, our treasured ally, India, the world's largest democracy is choosing to align itself with the Kremlin by choosing Russian weapon systems over American and Allied options. What weapons platforms could we offer, through the point military sales program that will incentivize Russian Indian leaders to eject Putin and align with its natural allies of democracy?

Lloyd Austin

Well, as you know, we have the finest weapons systems in the world and the most advanced weapon systems in the world and so we have a range of capabilities that that we can provide offer we continue to work with, with them to ensure that they understand that, you know, it's not in their best we believe that it's not in their best interest to continue to invest in Russian equipment and our requirement going forward is that you know, they they downscale the types of equipment that they're investing in and, and look to invest more in the types of things that will make us continue to be compatible.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.)

Well, I look forward to continuing to work with the great people of India and what a great ally they can be if we eliminate some of the restrictions on sales. Thank you. I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Miss Jacobs is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.)

Well, thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you Secretary Austin and General Milley for coming to the Committee to talk about the FY 23 budget request. You know, I know there's been a lot of conversation about the budget and whether it's what we need in my initial assessment. I believe this budget is more than adequate. And I look forward to working with you on what an adequate budget looks like moving forward.

So you know, we've talked a lot about what how much money we're spending. And, you know, I want to talk a little bit about what we're spending money on. I think it's clear that so many of our doctrines and our policies and our weapon systems were designed for threats and challenges that happened in the past but not necessarily the ones that we're facing now and into the future and so, you know, I actually think the current war in Ukraine has shown the utility of low cost weapons over large, expensive legacy systems. And so Secretary Austin, what do you think the main lessons are for the US and how successful Ukraine has been in fighting back a Russian force?

And how do you think that should impact the way God does business? I know Chairman Smith touched on this in his opening, but I really want to drill down on if in light of Ukraine, you think the Department should focus more on low cost weapons and less on new expensive and often overly complex platforms that are often not even survivable in high end environments?

Lloyd Austin

Many of the weapons that have been effective, you know, are not necessarily low cost, but but we have been able to provide them in sufficient quantities to make a significant, significant difference. A lot of credit goes to the Ukrainian people for you know, their their will to fight, their determination, their willingness to sacrifice, but given all of that, you know, that they had when the time came, you know, the elements, the right kinds of equipment to be able to make a difference on that battlefield. And and we've been pouring it in on a daily basis, and increasing the court not only the quantity but the quality of capability that we've been providing. So there are some lessons to be learned in terms of commitment, leadership, tactics, techniques and procedures, logistics, integration of different types of platforms, in a number of lessons across the board.

But a key lesson is that, you know, if you pay attention to the right things and do the right things armed with the right equipment, you know, a smaller forest can be very, very effective. And that's what we're seeing today.

Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.)

Thank you. And I do think they're low cost relative to some of the high end alternatives that we're talking about here today. And I think it shows some of the real limits of the high end systems that for instance, Russia had. So moving on to the next topic, Secretary Austin, I and many other members of Congress are looking forward to reviewing the report on civilian casualties, and I'm very appreciative that you've called for a thorough review and have taken this very seriously.

So just two quick requests related to that review. First, a few of my colleagues sent you a letter specifically focused on questions related to the Strike Force reported by the New York Times which took place in both Syria in 2019. Can you commit to us today that we can expect a prompt response to that letter given the seriousness of the questions raised by public reporting? Yes.

Thank you very much, and secondly, general McKenzie a few weeks ago, mentioned a list of 10 concrete steps CENTCOM has taken to reduce civilian casualties. General McKenzie personally promised me at the hearing that he'd be transmitting that report to my team shortly but we have not received it. So can you please assist in urging CENTCOM to promptly provide that list to the Committee?

Lloyd Austin

Good. I certainly would like to see it as well, but I certainly will do that.

Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.)

Well, thank you. And finally, based on information from NGOs in the media, such as the New York Times civilian casualty files, is DoD planning to revisit cases that were likely prematurely dismissed as a result of faulty in initial assessments.

Lloyd Austin

At this point, we don't have an intent to to re litigate cases or that from before over.

Rep. Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.)

Okay, well, I think that it's important that you do so since we know in so many of these instances that we've seen some really horrific cases that the initial assessment was declined, and so we were never able to get more information on that. And with that, Mr Chairman, I yield back.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you. Mr Fallon is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

Thank you, Mr Chair. Thank you, General Milley, Secretary Austin. This record, you know, inflation is at 8%. And the President's proposed budget at \$813 billion is a 4% increase year over years, which means in real dollars in purchasing power, of course, it's a production maybe as much as \$30 billion.

And then a world ruled you know, with the televisions ruling in Afghanistan after humility and withdrawal were witness to the largest land invasion we've seen in Europe since World War Two and they a saber rattling of the Communist Chinese over the last over the last year, where they increase their defense spending by 7% and are also using evermore increasing and aggressive rhetoric when it comes to as they see it. They're renegade province of Taiwan. And given these and a host of other threats that we're facing in this real world, to embark on a path to reduce the number of operational ships in our Navy by 24 vessels over the next five years to reduce our active duty Army. To the smallest size since World War Two and overall to reduce our active duty force by about a point percentage and a half.

I just don't think that's the right path and it's concerning to me, Secretary Austin, at the beginning of November last year, ranking members Rogers and Turner led a letter that myself and a total of 15 members of this Committee sign it's this letter right here. We signed on urging the President in your administration to do two things, considering the massing that we saw of troops in the open source reporting of the sizable Russian presence on the Ukrainian border and their equipment, and I think any level headed fair-minded observer would have seen that. If invasion was an imminent it was highly likely. We asked for two things one, to send a significant amount of lethal aid to the Ukraine immediately and to to deploy a military presence in the Black Sea.

So tech Secretary Austin, what was the total dollar amount of new lethally that was said, because I know we sent the administration sent 60 I think was \$60 million in September of last year. What was the total of new lethally that was sent to the Ukraine in November of last year.

Lloyd Austin

I'll just tell you that over you know prior to the invasion, the total amount over time that we provided to Ukraine was a billion dollars.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

Don't know in November of what that number was.

Lloyd Austin

Know how it breaks out in November versus any other any other month.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

But my concern is that that letter wasn't heated and we dragged our feet and exclusively for no reason. Secretary what is the total number of ships we currently have in the Black Sea?

Lloyd Austin

Current US ships?

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

Because we historically have kept a presence in the Black Sea. Is that correct? Fair to say?

Lloyd Austin

We have--I mean presence has ebbed and flowed over time, but there has not been a permanent presence in the Black Sea.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

But in 2021 Is it true that we had 12 ships in the Black Sea for a total and accurate of 182 days?

Lloyd Austin

We were rotating in and out on various exercises working with partner nations. Yes.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

So my concern is simply that we see this mass build up, you know, the Russians, and we had a presence in the Black Sea now we have no presence at all. And it's almost as if we're cutting tail and running rather than trying to deter very evil man and the actions that he's taken. And you know, our worst nightmares from last November have, you know, come to come to pass? Please?

Lloyd Austin

You would expect--

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

I don't think your microphone I don't think your microphone is on. Mr Secretary.

Lloyd Austin

Yeah, if I could--

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

I'm not saying you know because we I think in a large measure, we're allowing Putin to deter us and not deter him.

Lloyd Austin

So what what you've seen, you know, in, you know, the day after he invaded, you know, we had forces flowing to the Baltics, states to the eastern flank. You know, within 24 hours to reassure and deter. We had aircraft, flying police and policing missions and in Romania and Poland, right away within 24 hours. And so, Putin, his best estimate was that it was going to take months for NATO to, to react to respond to move forces to the eastern flank, but we were there within within, you know, 24 hours.

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-Texas)

And Mr Secretary just through the little time I have remaining, so we have no presence right now in the Black Sea. That's the bottom line though. I went on a CODEL just recently and one of the I found it interesting that the Romanian Prime Minister said that when I asked him should we keep a basis in Eastern Europe permanent. He said he didn't think we had any choice.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Gentleman's time has expired. So we've got one more question or I have some questions I want to give before we get done here and then we're done. Mr Moulton is going to be the last question. So we'll be done short shortly after two.

So if anybody's looking around out there, we're done after Mr Moulton. I want to follow up on the sub launched cruise missile, because we're probably going to have an argument over this and I understand that you know the general position is

more is better, but I don't. Mr Courtney made some I think pretty well thought out comments about the impact of turning our attack submarines into nuclear launch submarines and how that would undermine other other missions would complicate the ability to get in there. For them to do what they're they're designed to do.

It also potentially has an impact on the orcas deal because the the Australians are pretty clear on the fact they don't want to be launching nuclear weapons off of the submarine. So and we are building the long range standoff weapon. Granted, that's up in the air not under under the sea, but it has a very similar capability. So other than just well, what the hell, we may as well have more.

How do we overcome those concerns about the impact it would have and what the attack submissions already are in the wisdom of building this missile? And General Milley you sort of staked your position that you want the missiles so how do those arguments not undermine that?

Mark Milley

Was there 50, 50-some-odd attack subs in the system as we're talking about is building or developing a piece of ammunition and ammo. Granted, its nuclear but so the the weapon itself wouldn't be necessarily on each of those subs. So some of those subs a small percentage may have a mission change the others would not. So I think it's a fair comment from Congressman Courtney about it, but I don't, I don't buy that is in terms of the overall I think that presenting the President this present or future president with options, but it's also a moot point.

I'm here to defend the President's budget. The President's already made a decision.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

I mean, this is not actually a moot point. I mean, we're still gonna fight about it up here. So okay, so that's why I'm trying to make sure we have the argument.

Mark Milley

But but look at I support the NPR which is part of the NDS and, and we have a lot of nuclear capability. So no foe of the United States should underestimate our capability because of a SLCM decision to to produce or not produce. SLCM. Our nuclear capability is much much bigger than that.

It is as you know, triad and the amount of throw weight we have the money yield we have in all kinds of different weapons systems and nuclear weapon systems is enormous. And so no adversary of the United States should underestimate our capability. Will is a different matter whether you use it or not. It's a different matter.

Those are political decisions. But our capability our nuclear capability is significant. It's assured it's capable, and then this budget and a future budget or past budgets, we are continuing to recapitalize that system. So I wouldn't get overly hung up on SLCM because our nuclear capability writ large to try it is very capable to defend the United States.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

And that's good. I will point out this you can tell there are members of this Committee who will get overly hung up on it. So we're trying to work through that and to make sure we have the arguments clear and in front of us. And I you know, I'm not submarine person by any stretch of the imagination, but from what I understand if you're talking about handling nuclear weapons on a submarine, that is an entirely different thing in terms of how you have to train the crew and prepare the crew.

Mark Milley

Have to be certified moment. And that only point is I'd like all presidents to have as many options as possible.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

That's all fair enough. Mr Moulton is recognized for five minutes.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.)

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you very much for your continued service to the country and your stamina. You have the weight on your shoulders of protecting freedom around the globe, while avoiding a nuclear war every single day. And that's not a weight that many would be able to bear.

I was quite critical of the administration's handling of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. But I have to tell you, I think that the last two months of Putin's war in Ukraine, you've handled brilliantly and so I want to sincerely thank you for your leadership that's been so critical to our priorities and to the success of the Ukrainian people. So thank you.

The only consistent criticism that I've heard in a bipartisan way on the effort in Ukraine is just simply the speed at which things are moving. You've done all the right things. Some people have said it could move more quickly. And I think that reflects just a broader concern I have with his budget that we're transforming the force.

We're modernizing, you're investing a lot in research and development. My question is, are we moving quickly enough? So I just have a couple of questions on that. Mr Secretary, you've testified about the various innovation efforts in the and the duties investment in technology but defense innovation university, DIU, which has leveraged 25 billion in private R&D introduced 100 new suppliers to DOD from 37 states has been cut in its budget for FY 20 to two.

Why is that? And is that a wise move for the future? I think they've been incredibly successful.

Lloyd Austin

Well, we, as we look across the landscape, we want to make sure that, you know, we're putting out dollars where we're going to get good return and Diu has done amazing work for us over time. And we want to make sure that we're also using other means to encourage initiative and bring new new capabilities. On board and get the input of of entrepreneurs and small companies and that sort of business. But the IU is important to us it will remain important to us.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.)

We're missing i It's hard for me especially as the co chair of the future Defense Task Force from a couple of years ago, to imagine not increasing the budget for DIU given their returns. So I'd really like to I'd like to have a more detailed answer for the record, please on that. And if there's an opportunity for us to increase the budget, that's something we'd like to do. In China.

Gentlemen, we've seen heavy divestment from the traditional land army. It was a good thing for us that China wasted a lot of time and effort on their billion-man army because it was not very effective. They've been pretty dramatic and taking money out of that downsizing their force and putting it into other capabilities. As you think about the overall structure of DOD and the balance among the services.

Are you adapting that balance to meet the threats from China and Russia? Or does the surface within your budget essentially still get the same amount of money?

Lloyd Austin

I can assure you that each service does not and that's always a an issue of great debate. But we're really going after the capabilities that we need that are relevant to this fight that we could have in the future. And so you've seen significant investment in naval forces and also air forces. If you look across a fight app that that trend continues, but it's not a excuse me, it's not a cookie cutter approach by any stretch of the imagination.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.)

They say on this on the same theme. Can you just I know that the Chairman asked this question at the beginning of the hearing, but can you give me two specific lessons that we have learned from Ukraine and explain how those lessons are reflected in changes in this budget? So, you know, are you changing the amount of money that we're investing in artillery or armor or drones or something like that, given the lessons we've seen on the ground the last several weeks?

Lloyd Austin

The lesson again, it's still early and this is our month into the fight and there will be lessons that that we take away from this. But in terms of how it impacts our structure, and our warfighting capabilities are we don't. There are no changes that we would desire to make at this point. And again, we'll see how this plays out over time.

Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.)

The seven that ask you the same question, do you think that we should be making changes in our budget based on what we're seeing in Ukraine? I might add the conflict Azerbaijan gave us a lot of lessons along the same lines.

Mark Milley

I would say two things, though, not necessary changes to the budget, but one is the fundamental significance of air defense systems in order to deny an opponent the ability to achieve air superiority, a supremacy that's been done by the Ukrainians and it's been done with a huge amount of help from the United States with Stingers etc. But also because of our intelligence feeds. So the second big lesson here is intelligence. We have and I'm not going to go in open hearing about the intelligence we've collected how we did and all that.

But this Wars has arguably been the most successful intelligence operation in military history. And it's really tremendous and someday that story will be told. I guess the third thing is the is to reinforce the United States doctrinal methodology of mission command, power down decentralized decision making to the lowest level possible. The Ukrainians have been trained on that over the last six years.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Fired. Me sorry, good answer. Yeah, this good place place. To close, I think, because the President's budget is President budget, president's budget, but it's the starting point, not an ending point.

So a lot of the things that we've talked about here, and as we try to react to the lessons learned from Ukraine, conflict, you know, we we have a number of months here to work our will legislatively and in cooperation with the Department of Defense and the President did get to the right answer on this, but I think what Mr Moulton and a number of other people are talking about is is really important. modernizing the force. We've talked about it for a long time. How do we, you know, be put ourselves in a position to take advantage of innovation more quickly, and recognize how the battlefield has changed within the Pentagon budget, as you know, big process sort of like painting the Golden Gate Bridge, it's constant, you know, budget, get introduced requirements get locked in, you know, and Pentagon has built a system around the five plan and one of our frustrations on DIU.

DIU does great research on ideas. And if they find something that works, then they got to wait two years before they can buy it. In many instances. I know there is some fungible money to do that.

But the length and the process involved undermines our ability to rapidly react in terms of procurement acquisition in terms of you know what, how we're going to prioritize things. We are working to try to help you speed that up. And that will be a lot of what we do in the next process. Of course, single most important things if we could get this done by October 1.

That would help you as well. Gentlemen, you have anything to say for the for the good of the order. I will allow you closing comments if you happen.

Lloyd Austin

My only closing comment, Chairwoman is I want to thank the Committee and and all of your colleagues writ large for the tremendous support that you've given us the speed at which you've moved to to support our efforts, especially here in with Ukraine here in the recent past and will continue this work. This is not this is something that Chairman and I talk about every day. And so this is not something that's been passed off to a staff officer at a lower level. This has our continued focus and we remain in contact with our with our counterparts in Ukraine.

They're, they've they've performed in magnificently and I think they'll continue that work. I would also point to the fact that the, you know what you're seeing with NATO right now is no accident. The president in an all the Cabinet members have really leaned into the to making sure that we are transparent with NATO. We do everything we can keep NATO unified.

And and I think, I don't think I know that our colleagues in in Europe, really appreciate our leadership and what we've done to help them. Thanks. Sure.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

Thank you very much. I'm sorry, Chairman, no, go ahead.

Mark Milley

And you know, ditto, I would like to thank the Committee for your continued support, as well. And, and I want to re-emphasize what I said in the opening statement, we are at literally, in my view, a pivot point in the geostrategic history of Europe, for sure, and perhaps the globe, but this invasion of Ukraine and we've got to do everything we can that's possible, without going to war with Russia, to ensure that the Ukrainian people remain free and sovereign that's really critically important to to global security. And third and last point is I'm enormously proud of what this joint force is all about every single day these guys come to work. They work hard to defend their country, and they're they're doing a selfless service for the defense of this nation in support of the Constitution and nothing made me prouder than what our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians do every single day day in and day out.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.)

We emphasize the last few points the Secretary and Chairman Milley made. You know, one, that the hard work that has gone in from Secretary Austin and the entire administration to pull this coalition together to have the response. And then second, what you're seeing in Ukraine, we have been working to train the Ukrainians for a very long time. It shows so we should be very proud of that.

I do also want to thank the Committee, I think with with one notable exception, this was a very, very good discussion of the issues and what we're looking for. And as far as that notable exception goes, I looked it up sadly, I don't have the power to simply take a members' time away. So if there go on there, go on. But other than that, I think this Committee did a really good job of analyzing the issues.

As I said, this is the start of the process. We have a lot of work to do between now and when we produce the final product and look forward to working with all you to get that done to the best of our ability. And with that, we are adjourned.

[END]