

STATEMENT OF
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ON FISCAL YEAR 2024 STRATEGIC FORCES POSTURE
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Introduction

Chairman Lamborn, Ranking Member Moulton, and distinguished members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me to testify before you on the Department's nuclear, missile defense, and space posture. I am honored to appear alongside Generals Cotton, Dickinson, and VanHerck, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Today, the United States finds itself in a highly dynamic and challenging security environment characterized by intensifying strategic competition, assertive behavior by multiple competitors, rapidly evolving domains of conflict, shifting balances of power, and, as a result, a growing risk of military confrontation. Our competitors have placed nuclear weapons, space warfare, and long-range strike at the center of their strategies to coerce and fight the United States and its allies and partners. They are investing heavily in nuclear weapons that can threaten U.S. forces and territory and our allies and partners. Our competitors seek to create a future operating environment in which they can leverage space and strike capabilities to hold at risk our forces, ports, and airfields, and to deny U.S. freedom of maneuver. As recent events make clear, our competitors are developing a range of capabilities to reach the U.S. homeland, ranging from high-altitude balloons for intelligence collection to nuclear-armed hypersonic weapons. Nuclear, space, and missile capabilities also underwrite ongoing efforts by U.S. competitors to gain advantage in "gray zone" competition, undercut U.S. leadership, and reshape global norms to their advantage. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Russia's ongoing, brutal aggression war against Ukraine.

In October 2022, the Department of Defense released unclassified versions of the National Defense Strategy (NDS), the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), and the Missile Defense Review (MDR). For the first time in its history, the Department conducted all major strategic

reviews in an integrated way, aligned with the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS). Together, these strategic documents recognized that the United States is entering a period of heightened risk and articulated an urgent imperative to strengthen deterrence. In support of this aim, the NDS outlined a strategy of integrated deterrence, which provides a framework for working seamlessly across domains, theaters, and the spectrum of conflict, as well as across all instruments of U.S. power and with allies and partners.

Nuclear weapons, space capabilities, and missile defense are all essential to integrated deterrence. The Department’s efforts in these areas undergird all four priorities in the NDS: (1) defending the homeland; (2) deterring strategic attacks; (3) deterring aggression while preparing to prevail in conflict; and (4) building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem that can sustain U.S. strategic advantage. To ensure we will meet the challenge of the deteriorating security environment, the Department is committed to investing in nuclear triad modernization, homeland and regional missile defense, and a more resilient space architecture. These investments, which will be detailed upon the release of the President’s Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request, are necessary to deter conflict and to prevail in conflict should deterrence fail.

Security Environment

People’s Republic of China

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is engaged in a significant and fast-paced expansion, modernization, and diversification of its nuclear forces, which has resulted in the establishment of a nascent nuclear triad. If the PRC continues the current pace of its nuclear force expansion, it could field an arsenal of about 1,500 warheads by 2035. The PRC’s

intercontinental-range forces are complemented by several theater-range road-mobile ballistic missile systems, and it is developing advanced nuclear delivery systems such as a strategic hypersonic glide vehicle. The PRC is increasing the peacetime readiness of its forces by moving to a launch-on-warning posture. While the end state of the PRC's nuclear force expansion remains uncertain, the trajectory of these efforts points to a large, diverse nuclear arsenal with a high degree of survivability, reliability, and effectiveness, and ever-evolving opaque doctrine. This could provide the PRC with new options before and during a crisis or conflict to leverage nuclear weapons for coercive purposes, including military provocations against U.S. allies and partners in the region. By the 2030s, the United States will, for the first time, face two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries.

The PRC reorganized its military in 2015 to more effectively approach space as a warfighting domain, and it is building a space architecture to enhance its ability to fight and win a modern military conflict. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) owns and operates roughly half of the world's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems. Recent improvements to the PLA's ISR fleet enhance its ability to monitor forces across the globe, including U.S. aircraft carriers, expeditionary strike groups, and deployed air wings. This makes U.S. and allied forces more susceptible to long-range strike and ultimately challenges our ability to conduct joint operations, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

The PRC views counterspace systems as a means to deter and counter outside intervention during a regional conflict. It has developed several capabilities intended to target U.S. and allied satellites, including ground-based laser systems that can disrupt, degrade, and destroy satellite sensors and direct-ascent anti-satellite (DA-ASAT) missiles that can target satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO). The PRC has also launched multiple experimental satellites

to research space maintenance and debris cleanup. These experimental capabilities include robotic arm technology, which could be used for grappling other satellites, as evidenced last year when the Shijian-21 moved a derelict satellite to a graveyard orbit above GEO. The PRC continues to seek new methods to hold our satellites at risk, which could include DA-ASAT weapons able to destroy satellites up to geosynchronous Earth orbit (GEO) and space-based kinetic energy weapons.

While the PRC develops and fields these counterspace weapons, it simultaneously, promotes false claims it will not place weapons in space, and, along with Russia, has proposed a flawed legally-binding treaty on the non-weaponization of space at the United Nations.

The PRC has dramatically advanced its development of conventional and nuclear-armed ballistic and hypersonic missile technologies and capabilities through intense and focused investment, development, testing, and deployments. In 2021, the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) launched approximately 135 ballistic missiles for testing and training. This was more than the rest of the world combined, excluding ballistic missile employment in conflict zones. In 2021, the PRC continued building three solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silo fields, which will cumulatively contain at least 300 new ICBM silos. China's deployment of the DF-17 hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV)-armed Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) will continue to transform the PLA's missile force. Additionally, the PRC has a robust and redundant integrated air defense system (IADS) architecture over land areas and within 300 nautical miles (345 miles) of its coast that relies on an extensive early warning radar network, fighter aircraft, and a variety of Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems.

Russia

Russia continues to emphasize nuclear weapons in its strategy while modernizing and expanding its nuclear forces. Russia's nuclear saber-rattling, displayed throughout its unprovoked and indefensible full-scale invasion of Ukraine, is irresponsible and troubling. Russia is steadily expanding and diversifying nuclear systems that pose a direct threat to NATO and neighboring countries. In addition to New START Treaty-accountable systems, Russia maintains a sizable stockpile of warheads that are not treaty-limited. It continues to pursue several novel nuclear-capable systems designed to hold the U.S. homeland or Allies and partners at risk, some of which are also not accountable under the New START Treaty. While Russia has not withdrawn from the New START Treaty, its purported suspension of Russia's participation in the New START Treaty is troubling.

Russia reorganized its military in 2015 to create a separate space force because Russia sees achieving supremacy in space as a decisive factor in winning conflicts. Russia has a smaller fleet of satellites than China, though it operates some of the world's most capable individual ISR satellites for optical imagery, radar imagery, SIGINT, and missile warning. Russia has integrated its space services into its military, though Russia wants to avoid becoming overly dependent on space for defense because Russia expects the United States to seek to deny Russia access to its space-based capabilities.

Russia is developing, testing, and fielding a suite of nondestructive and destructive counterspace systems to degrade or deny U.S. space-based services as a means of offsetting a perceived U.S. military advantage and deterring the United States from entering a regional conflict. These systems include jamming and cyberspace capabilities, directed energy weapons, on-orbit capabilities, and ground-based DA-ASAT missile capabilities. In November 2021,

Russia tested its DA-ASAT missile, creating over 1,500 pieces of trackable space debris and tens of thousands of pieces of potentially lethal but non-trackable debris. The resulting debris threatens spacecraft of all nations in LEO, including astronauts and cosmonauts on the International Space Station and taikonauts on China's Tiangong space station. Like China, Russia develops and fields counterspace capabilities, while publicly promoting a flawed, legally-binding treaty on the non-weaponization of space at the United Nations.

Russia has used thousands of air, land, and sea-launched cruise and ballistic missiles, including hypersonic missiles against Ukraine mainly as weapons of terror against, striking vulnerable civilian (non-military) targets, including schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure. Battlefield usage has reduced Russia's weapons inventories and export controls are hindering its ability to effectively produce modern precision-guided munitions but Russia continues to strike civilian targets in Ukraine. Russia has retained and upgraded its own missile defense system designed to protect Moscow against a U.S. strike, and it has developed several lower-tier air defense systems for its own use and export.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The DPRK presents significant and growing deterrence dilemmas for the United States and its allies and partners. The ongoing expansion, diversification, and improvement of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities presents a growing danger to the U.S. homeland and the Indo-Pacific. A crisis or conflict on the Korean Peninsula could involve multiple nuclear powers, raising the risk of a broader conflict. The DPRK has ambitions to develop its space program and has placed two satellites in orbit. Under the guise of peaceful use

of space, the DPRK applied data from its space program to aid in the development of long-range and multistage ballistic missiles as well as counterspace capabilities, including GPS and SATCOM jamming.

The DPRK continues to improve, expand, and diversify its conventional and nuclear missile capabilities, posing an increasing risk to the U.S. homeland and to U.S. forces, allies, and partners in theater. The DPRK recently displayed new, larger ICBMs during a military parade, conducted an ICBM test in February, and conducted a variety of missile tests over the last year including what it claims are hypersonic missiles.

Iran

Iran does not today possess a nuclear weapon and we currently believe it is not pursuing one. However, Iran's pursuit of nuclear activities that were previously constrained by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) continues to be of deep concern. Iran continues to pursue a space program, which could shorten the pathway to a future long-range missile capability. Iran maintains the largest regional missile force in the Middle East and possesses a growing Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) capability, which it has provided to Russia for use in Ukraine against critical infrastructure. Iranian technologies are used by its proxies to conduct attacks throughout the Middle East.

Nuclear Strategy and Posture

Nuclear weapons underpin all of our NDS priorities and backstop every action that the Department takes to safeguard U.S. interests. The United States is resolute in its commitment to

deter and defend against attacks on its vital interests as well as those of our allies and partners. Nuclear weapons play a crucial role in safeguarding these commitments alongside the other elements of U.S. military and national power. The 2022 NPR, which was delivered to Congress in a classified form last March and released to the public in an unclassified form last October, adopts a comprehensive and balanced approach. It reaffirms the need to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent, as well as a strong and credible extended deterrent, while also recognizing our continued obligation to identify practical steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our strategy and, by extension, the risk of nuclear war globally.

Although the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack, nuclear weapons contribute to deterrence of all forms of strategic attack; assurance of Allies and partners; and the ability to achieve Presidential objectives if deterrence fails. Strategic attack in this respect includes nuclear employment of any scale as well as high consequence attacks of a strategic nature using non-nuclear means. While retaining a very high bar for U.S. nuclear employment, this approach complicates adversary decision making and reflects a sensible and stabilizing approach to deterring a range of attacks in a dynamic security environment.

The Department is acting along several lines of effort consistent with key findings of the NPR. These include modernizing our deterrent; refining the Department's approach to the challenge of facing two major nuclear powers; examining ways across all domains to address hard and deeply buried targets; strengthening extended deterrence; and exploring arms control and risk reduction initiatives where possible.

As reflected in the President's forthcoming budget request for Fiscal Year 2024, the administration is committed to full-scope modernization of all three legs of the triad as well as those nuclear capabilities that support regional deterrence. This includes full funding of the

SENTINEL ICBM; the COLUMBIA-class submarine (SSBN); the B-21 RAIDER strategic bomber; and the long-range standoff cruise missile. The Department will continue nuclear certification of the F-35A aircraft; fielding of the B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb; and retention of the W76-2 low-yield ballistic missile warhead. The Department will also work to modernize our nuclear command, control, and communications architecture to ensure its effectiveness and resilience in an evolving security environment.

A credible and effective deterrent also requires a modern nuclear enterprise. The Department will continue to work with the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration in its efforts to life-extend and modernize nuclear weapons and the infrastructure required to design, certify, and manufacture nuclear weapons. This partnership supports the NDS guidance to build enduring advantages across the defense ecosystem by modernizing the systems that design and build the Joint Force and making these systems more resilient and agile in the face of a diverse range of threats. Succeeding in these monumental, generational efforts will require sustained effort, investment, and attention, and we appreciate the support that Congress has provided to these programs.

The Department is refining its approach to the challenge posed by the PRC's nuclear weapons modernization and expansion, which presents the United States with the unprecedented challenge of having to deter two major nuclear powers simultaneously. We must prepare for a potential future in which Russia continues to maintain large numbers of warheads on strategic, non-strategic and novel systems, while China continues to expand and modernize its arsenal without constraints.

We are confident that currently deployed U.S. nuclear forces are sufficient to deter and, if necessary, respond to any threats we face today and in the coming years. While the United States

does not need to maintain numerical parity with both nuclear powers combined to achieve its deterrence and other objectives, we are continuously reevaluating the security environment and it may become necessary in the future to consider nuclear strategy and force adjustments to ensure our ability to deter.

Non-nuclear capabilities are also essential to deterrence, and a key priority for NDS and NPR implementation is to better synchronize nuclear and non-nuclear planning, exercises, and operations. As an example of this approach, the Department is actively studying the problem of how to hold at risk hard and deeply buried targets by leveraging existing capabilities and taking an all-domain approach to developing an enduring solution to this problem set.

It has long been clear that any adversary use of nuclear weapons would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict. We must therefore be able to deter both large-scale and limited nuclear attacks. The capability to deter limited nuclear attacks is critical given that some competitors have developed strategies for warfare that may rely on the threat or actual employment of nuclear weapons to terminate a conflict on advantageous terms. Some allies and partners are also particularly vulnerable to attacks with non-nuclear means that could produce devastating effects.

Allies and Partners

Cooperation with our allies and partners is central to U.S. nuclear strategy. The Department is committed to actively pursuing new ways to enhance our extended deterrence commitments, including by fielding flexible nuclear forces suited to deterring regional nuclear conflict, identifying pragmatic steps to strengthen deterrence consultations, and exploring

opportunities for multilateral and trilateral dialogue, exercises, and other activities. Secretary of Defense Austin and Secretary of State Blinken recently hosted the Japanese Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense in Washington where they discussed extended deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. Just last month, the Department of Defense hosted a bilateral U.S.-Republic of Korea table-top exercise focused on the implications of potential DPRK nuclear employment. Following this exercise, the U.S. and Republic of Korea delegations visited U.S. nuclear submarine training facilities at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia.

In Europe, the United States and our NATO allies have stood united against Russian's brutal aggression in Ukraine and reckless nuclear rhetoric. The United States will uphold its commitment under NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept to take all necessary steps to "ensure NATO's nuclear mission remains credible, effective, safe, and secure." This includes modernizing NATO's dual capable aircraft mission, which is now transitioning to fifth-generation aircraft and updated B61-12 nuclear gravity bombs. We are also working to achieve the broadest possible burden-sharing by Allies in NATO's nuclear mission.

Arms Control and Nonproliferation

Deterrence alone will not reduce nuclear dangers. The United States supports a comprehensive and balanced approach that places a renewed emphasis on arms control, nonproliferation and risk reduction to strengthen stability, heads off costly arms races, and signals our desire to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons globally. We pursue these goals with a full understanding that progress requires reliable partners prepared to engage responsibly and on the basis of reciprocity. The Department is committed to seeking mutual and verifiable

nuclear arms control and non-proliferation measures when they can increase our national security interests. However, we cannot ignore the PRC's and Russia's expansions of their nuclear arsenals. Nor can we ignore Russia's unprovoked and unjust aggression against Ukraine, its noncompliance with provisions of the New START Treaty, and its recent announcement of a purported suspension of its treaty obligations. Russia's non-compliance underscores the looming challenges of a world in which the United States confronts two nuclear peer competitors simultaneously. Any future nuclear arms control framework with Russia must also account for the PRC's nuclear expansion. We will continue to seek opportunities to increase transparency and predictability. Developments in the security environment make arms control and nonproliferation efforts both more challenging and more pressing to pursue.

Space Strategy and Posture

Space is essential to U.S. national security and to the U.S. economy. Space-based services are often unnoticed, yet provide integral support to modern life, including the world's financial system, scientific discoveries, and environmental monitoring. Every American uses space every single day.

For the Department of Defense, all U.S. military service force structures are built assuming continued access to space. Space provides our military with indications and warnings of threats or attacks, command and control of our forces across the globe, and monitoring of adversary activities.

The growing importance of space is reflected in the NDS, which highlights how space, along with cyber, empowers the Joint Force. Each of the four NDS priorities requires and relies

on the ability of the United States to operate in space, both in peacetime and during conflict. Space is therefore a key node for integrated deterrence: deterrence strategies rely on combat credible forces, which are underwritten by space.

Our adversaries have seen more than two decades of U.S. military successes enabled by space capabilities. They seek to deny our ability to leverage space, and are developing a range of capabilities to do so. Addressing these threats requires mission assurance of our space capabilities. The foundation of mission assurance is resilience—being able to provide critical space-based services across the Joint Force in competition, crisis, and conflict. Resilience is also the primary way to deny adversaries the benefit of attack. The nascent resilient Missile Warning/Missile Tracking architecture is a good example of the Space Force’s pivot to a series of resilient-by-design architectures that will assure the mission while being both more survivable and more capable. This tracking layer will improve U.S. all-domain awareness globally to increase our warning, tracking, and attribution capabilities, especially as it relates to threats like hypersonic glide vehicles. Systems like these will address emerging threats, expand our warning time and senior leader decision space, and enhance our missile defeat capabilities to negate these threats.

The NDS also highlights the importance of partnering with the commercial sector as part of our integrated deterrence efforts. The Department is assessing how we increasingly leverage commercial space services as one element of our broader approach to building resilience. Commercial services and providers offer innovative solutions across many mission areas at potentially lower cost and with more rapid development cycles.

Even as the Department builds resilience in space as a means to deter aggression, we must also be prepared to defend U.S. interests from the growing scope and scale of counterpace

threats. Consistent with our long-standing policy, the Department will protect and defend U.S. space capabilities, along with those of our allies, partners, and the commercial sector when directed to do so. As in other domains, the Department will leverage a breadth of options across all operational domains to deter aggression and, if deterrence fails, to prevail in conflict. This Committee's support is essential to our ability to defend our systems against counterspace threats and protect the U.S. Joint Force from adversary hostile use of space.

Our allies and partners are also key to our mission assurance, and they provide an enduring strength and asymmetric advantage that our competitors cannot match. They are essential to our integrated deterrence strategy. We therefore must be able to integrate, plan, and operate with our most capable allies in the space domain. Combined operations require us to be able to effectively share information. The Department is reviewing the classification and disclosure policies of space-related information to overcome barriers to integration with our allies and partners.

One example of how we are strengthening military-to-military ties to our allies is through the Combined Space Operations (CSpO) Initiative, which includes defense leaders from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In this forum, we are identifying ways to improve cooperation, coordination, and interoperability to sustain freedom of action in space, optimize resources, enhance mission assurance, and prevent conflict. During last December's Principals Board meeting, leaders emphasized the need to continue to increase information sharing to enable space operations and collaboratively address challenges to the safety and security of the domain.

Upholding and strengthening the rules-based international order, promoting the implementation of existing measures, and leading in the development of new responsible

behaviors that contribute to the safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability of space activities. Because the Department is one of the primary space operators for the United States Government, we play a significant role in the United States' observation and demonstration of responsible space behaviors. The Department's policies and practices, such as the Secretary of Defense's Tenets of Responsible Behavior in Space issued in 2021, serve as a key element for U.S. proposals for international measures that contribute to the safety, stability, security, and long-term sustainability of space activities. Our operational expertise also allows us to participate in United Nations' space-related committees as part of State Department-led delegations.

Most recently, the Department assisted in developing the commitment announced by the Vice President in April 2022 not to conduct destructive DA-ASAT missile testing and establish this as a new international norm for responsible behavior in space, which ultimately led to a December 2022 vote at the United Nations General Assembly giving overwhelming approval of a U.S.-sponsored resolution calling upon all States to commit not to conduct destructive DA-ASAT missile tests. One hundred and fifty-five countries voted in favor, with nine opposing, including the PRC and Russia. The Department continues to engage with allies and partners to urge the widespread adoption of this commitment. This approach to developing nonbinding norms of responsible behavior that garner broad support can directly support the long-term sustainability of the outer space environment. The Department will continue to demonstrate leadership in both the responsible use of space and stewardship of the space environment.

Missile Defense Strategy and Posture

The 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR) establishes the strategic policy framework and basis for addressing adversaries that seek to use offensive missiles and UAS to project

conventional and nuclear military power, making Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) an essential “deterrence by denial” component within integrated deterrence, a theme underpinning the NDS.

Within the integrated deterrence framework, missile defense weaves together all instruments of national power across warfighting domains, geographic theaters, the spectrum of conflict, and our global network of alliances and partnerships. More specifically, missile defense provides resilience to our deterrence and defense posture; complicates adversary attack planning and reduces an adversary’s confidence of success; raises the deterrence threshold for potential conflict; offer assurances to our allies and partners that the United States stands behind its global security commitments; and provides defensive military options that may be less escalatory than employing offensive systems.

Implementation of the 2022 MDR is an ongoing effort that actively takes place through the Department’s existing requirements, budgeting, programs, operational planning, and other processes.

One line of effort on our homeland missile defense that I would like to highlight is the Department’s commitment to strengthen the defense of Guam through a layered IAMD architecture. As stated in the 2022 MDR, Guam is a part of the United States homeland and any missile attack against it or any other U.S. territory would be met with an appropriate response. As such, the Department requested \$892M in FY23 for this purpose. The Department is also in the process of designating, as required by statute, a single senior official to manage the missile defense effort on Guam. We appreciate Congress’s strong support for this important effort as we face growing threats in the Indo-Pacific region from an array of sources.

The Department is committed to pursuing defenses for U.S. forces, along with allies and partners, against all regional missile threats from any source to maintain a credible level of defensive capability. A core aspect of this effort includes developing active and passive defenses against regional hypersonic missile threats; and pursuing a persistent and resilient sensor network to characterize and track all hypersonic threats, improve attribution, and enable engagement.

The Department is also investing in our capacity to sustain extended conflicts. This is most evident in Ukraine where, without missile defense, Russia would have likely achieved air dominance and possibly achieved many of its original objectives months ago. That is why air and missile defense remains Ukraine's top priority. To this end, Secretary of Defense Austin and 54 allies and partners in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group met in mid-February in Brussels to identify options to support Ukraine in its fight back against the Russian onslaught, including through the provision of air defense systems and munitions such as PATRIOT and NASAMs, tens of thousands of artillery shells, dozens of tanks, hundreds of armored vehicles, and many other items.

Looking to the future, the Department sees a growing nexus between our national security space activities and missile defense. Missile defenses perform best when intercept systems receive timely and actionable missile warning, tracking, and discrimination data from sensors in space and on earth. These same sensors can also make valuable contributions to space domain awareness. Given the rapid expansion and evolution of both the missile and counter-space threats, the Department sees the need to add more resilience and capability in space through new proliferated satellite architectures for missile warning and tracking. The Department is expanding the capabilities and capacities of both our space and ground-based sensors networks

to perform existing and new missions to increase our ability to warn, track, and attribute both missile threats and strategic competitors' activities in space.

The Department is also broadening investments in missile defeat, an all-inclusive term for employing the capabilities to reduce the threat of missile attack, in all domains and along all timelines, both before and after launch. This is a full-spectrum approach that incorporates measures ranging from disrupting production capabilities by limiting and denying access to critical technologies all the way to strike options for eliminating follow-on missile attacks. Kinetic and non-kinetic options—as well as active and passive defense and non-traditional solutions such as cyber, electronic warfare, and offensive strike—are all part of this mix.

Let me underscore a point that permeates the NDS and is central to the MDR: the United States' unrivaled network of alliances and partnerships protects and advances our interests around the world and is the envy of our strategic competitors.

U.S. forces and the forces of our allies and partners are working to improve our ability to share sensing and tracking data in real time and support each other in air and missile defense engagements to maximize our collective capabilities. Multilateral air and missile defense exercises gives us opportunities to work together to accomplish these goals.

Missile defense cooperation with our allies and partners is growing rapidly in response to the changed security environment. The Department fully supports these efforts not only because allied and partner missile defense capability offers so much value in peacetime, but because it allows us to plan collectively and to counter missile threats together in crisis and conflict and in ways that reduce the potential for escalation.

Conclusion

I will conclude by emphasizing that U.S. strategic capabilities—nuclear, space, and missile defense systems—are central to our ability to deter our competitors. In recognition of the evolving threats around us, this administration will continue to make critical investments in these capabilities to enhance deterrence and ensure our ability to prevail in conflict should that fail.

Thank you to the Committee for its tireless dedication to the Department and our servicemembers, and I look forward to answering your questions.