

**Statement of Chairman Adam Smith**  
**House Armed Services Committee Hearing:**  
**“FY24 Defense Budget Request”**  
**March 29, 2022**

Good morning.

I would like to welcome our witnesses to today’s hearing on the President’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 defense budget request. We are joined once again by Secretary of Defense, Mr. Lloyd Austin III, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley. I appreciate their insights as we evaluate the President’s budget request and build the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). I’d also like to take a moment to acknowledge that this will be General Milley’s last posture hearing before this committee. Throughout his tenure General Milley has served with distinction, and I have particularly appreciated his responsiveness and candid assessments.

If you have followed my comments over the years, you will appreciate that I have consistently pushed for Department of Defense funding to be linked to overarching strategy – a strategy that sets priorities and establishes a policy for which investments should be based. This year’s budget sets out to do so, perhaps more than any previous budget. This fiscal year’s request, rooted in the National Defense Strategy, seeks \$842 billion for DoD, an increase of \$26 billion over FY 2023 levels. It invests foremost in people, the heart of our defense, and ensures that we meet the need to address the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the pacing challenge, and the acute threat presented by Russia. Doing so means investing in the future through innovation and technology yet also divesting costly legacy systems.

I applaud the budget’s efforts to increase childcare access across the department by expanding full-day pre-kindergarten at DoD Education Activity schools and standardizing childcare discounts for employees. These are just but a couple of examples of how DoD is trying to address this real-time readiness issue. The President’s budget also provides additional funds for commissaries to ensure our service members have access to quality and affordable food options. It asks for \$1.9 billion to provide safe and quality housing for service members and their families. The Department is also continuing to invest in sexual assault prevention and implementing the military justice reforms we passed a couple of years ago. Finally, critically, the budget seeks to address full spectrum support for suicide prevention and includes an investment of \$1.4 billion.

We must prioritize not just our people but the relationships that have enhanced our security – our network of partners and allies. This network strengthens our work to deter the PRC and Russian aggression. Together, our shared security interests are advanced, and the rules-based international order is upheld.

Our partners and allies have come together to respond to Russia’s unprovoked war in Ukraine. The United States and this network have stepped up to meet Ukraine’s needs to defend its sovereignty -

from air defense to tanks and crucial ammunition. Assistance must continue for Putin to understand that he must come to the negotiating table so that peace can be achieved with a Ukraine that remains an independent, democratic country. The rapid response to Ukraine's needs was, in part, due to prior investments via the European Deterrence Initiative. With limited notice, the United States was able to deploy forces and reposition those already in Europe. Importantly forces could fall in on prepositioned stocks of munitions and supplies. The FY24 budget request would continue the investments to the tune of \$3.6 billion in funding for the European Deterrence Initiative, which enabled the response.

We must also reinforce security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The FY24 budget request includes \$9.1 billion for investment in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. This request is coupled with efforts to strengthen our Indo-Pacific partnerships, enhance collective readiness, and improve logistics. One example is the partnership through the AUKUS agreement. This partnership will strengthen deterrence in the region and invest in bold action like the initiative to provide Australia with nuclear powered submarines.

We must keep looking to the future as we evaluate the budget and conduct oversight in the NDAA. What investments are being made in innovation? Technology? Critical munitions? And, we can't overlook divestment of legacy system that don't enable the modern and capable force we seek to build. I'm pleased to see that the budget leverages the multi-year procurement authorities provided by Congress to bolster our inventories. The FY24 request includes \$30.6 billion for munitions for conventional ammunition and precision guided munition. In order to deter adversaries and, if necessary, fight and win, U.S. forces must be able to get to and operate anywhere in the world. Getting survivability right and hardening critical information infrastructure is an iterative process – one that is constantly moving and changing. Artificial intelligence and data management, autonomy, unmanned systems, electromagnetic spectrum warfare, and many other rapidly evolving technologies are going to be crucial. The Department will need to learn to adapt quickly and responsively, especially in acquisition and management.

Finally, a holistic approach that synchronizes and strengthens all elements of national power is essential to our security. Defense is just one leg of the stool that is also upheld by diplomacy and development. An investment in security means also investing in our competitiveness. Science and technology, research and development, and education are all critical.

Thank you and I look forward to today's testimony.