

Statement by
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Performing the Duties of the
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Office of the Secretary of Defense

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Introduction

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to be here in the company of General Gregory Guillot, the Commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), and General Laura Richardson, the Commander of U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM).

Since December 2023, I have been Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs. In this capacity, I am the principal civilian policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on a range of matters, including homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities, defense continuity, mission assurance, the Western Hemisphere, the Arctic, and global resilience.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy produces guidance for the Department of Defense (DoD), including the Combatant Commands, to align resources, activities, and capabilities in support of National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy (NDS) goals. This includes developing policy and strategy and overseeing implementation. Importantly, in December 2023 Secretary Austin approved new Homeland Defense Policy Guidance. This classified policy document is the first update to our approach to homeland defense since issuance of the Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities Strategy in 2013. We shared this classified document with relevant committees in Congress, and I am pleased to provide more information in my statement today.

Today, after briefly summarizing the array of national security challenges to the homeland, I would like to highlight the ways in which we are strategically putting the homeland front and center in our implementation of the 2022 NDS. As President Biden has said, we are living in a “decisive decade,” one that is defined by dramatic changes in geopolitics, technology, economics, and our environment. The 2022 NDS sets forth how the Department will meet growing threats to vital U.S. national security interests and identifies four top-level defense priorities, the first, and foremost of which is defending the homeland.

The United States has the most capable military in the world, and the Department is committed to ensuring that advantage is enduring. The cornerstone of the Department's strategy and the approach to advancing our priorities is integrated deterrence. Integrated deterrence entails working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, all instruments of national power, and our network of Alliances and partnerships, including, in the homeland, our Federal, State, local, territorial, and tribal (FSLTT) partners. Tailored to the specific circumstances in the homeland and elsewhere, integrated deterrence applies a coordinated, multi-faceted approach to reducing competitors' perceptions of the net benefits of aggression relative to restraint.

National Security Challenges/Threats to the U.S. Homeland

We face strategic challenges stemming from complex interactions between a rapidly changing global balance of military capabilities; emerging technologies; competitor doctrines that pose new threats to the U.S. homeland and to strategic stability; an escalation of competitors' coercive and malign activities in the "gray zone"; and transboundary challenges that impose new demands on the Joint Force and the defense enterprise. Our competitors are posing all-domain threats to the U.S. homeland to jeopardize the U.S. military's ability to project power and counter regional aggression.

State-based Competitors: In the NDS, the Secretary directed the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge for the Department. Russia, based on its unprovoked, unjust, and reckless invasion of Ukraine, remains an acute threat. The PRC and Russia now pose more dangerous challenges to safety and security to the U.S. homeland. Both the PRC and Russia are already using non-kinetic means against our defense industrial base and mobilization systems to subvert our ability to project power. Both are capable of employing a wide range of tools that would hinder military preparations for and response in a conflict, including actions aimed at undermining the will of the U.S. public and targeting critical infrastructure.

The PRC high-altitude balloon's (HAB) unauthorized incursion into U.S. airspace last year highlights both the challenges posed by nation-state competitors as well as the range of

capabilities our adversaries are employing. While in this instance we were successful in protecting sensitive sites against collection from the HAB, this incident makes clear that our pacing challenge, the PRC, presently has the capability to conduct operations in our homeland. By shooting down the HAB, we sent a clear message to the PRC that we would take the necessary steps to protect the Nation and that activity such as this is unacceptable.

Other Persistent Threats: The NDS also ensures vigilance in the face of other persistent threats, including those posed by North Korea, Iran, and violent extremist organizations. North Korea continues to expand its nuclear and missile capability to threaten the U.S. homeland. Iran is taking actions that would improve its ability to produce a nuclear weapon, should it make the decision to do so. Iran also continues to test and develop space launch technologies potentially informing development of long-range missiles - though it currently lacks systems capable of reaching the United States. Global terrorist groups' capabilities have been degraded. However, the ability of some of these groups to rapidly reconstitute their capabilities demands continued monitoring for indications and warning of potential threats from violent extremist organizations (VEOs).

Rapidly Evolving Domains and Technologies: As the NDS makes clear, emerging technologies pose new challenges to strategic stability and demand that we adapt and adjust our posture, deterring adversaries from employing advanced threats by denying them the benefits of their aggression. Hypersonic weapons, a key component of both the PRC and Russian arsenals, reduce the time decision makers need to assess and respond to potential strikes on the homeland. Advanced systems, capable of delivering both conventional and non-strategic nuclear weapons, highlight the urgent need to develop and deploy enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) with advanced surveillance capabilities able to detect such threats at longer ranges and preserve decision space.

As small uncrewed aircraft systems (sUAS) proliferate in the open market, and their costs decrease as their capabilities rapidly increase, the threat of these sUAS is becoming more prominent. These systems may represent both safety and security threats to our operations in the Homeland. Inadvertent overflights create a threat to the safety of ongoing aviation operations as

well as a national security threat. We must take the steps necessary to protect DoD facilities and assets against all such threats, including the potential increased threats these sUAS may pose if weaponized or used for unauthorized surveillance. The technology to counter these systems have not kept pace with their rapid development and employment.

Climate Change and other Transboundary Challenges: Per the NDS, our nation also continues to face the challenge of natural and man-made hazards, which do not respect international or national boundaries and do not wait for us to resolve other ongoing national security crises or hazards. Last year, the U.S. homeland endured 114 incidents – 24 more than in 2022 – caused by natural hazards, including severe storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. The Department plays a supporting role to our civilian partners at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and State and local governments in preparing for and responding to these hazards. Their reliance on DoD support continues to be high (e.g., in 2021, DoD supported 241 requests for assistance from 14 Federal partners; in 2022, DoD supported 114 requests for assistance from 10 Federal partners; and in 2023, DoD supported 131 requests for assistance from 7 Federal partners). In addition, in 2023, National Guard personnel, operating under the command and control of their State and territorial governors, responded to multiple events, including: winter storms in Arkansas, California, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington; three hurricanes (e.g., Hurricane Hilary, Hurricane Idalia, and Hurricane Lee); Typhoon Mawar in Guam; flooding in Alaska, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont; severe storms and tornadoes in Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Tennessee; and multiple wildland fires, including in Hawaii.

In the Western Hemisphere, our partners have experienced firsthand the devastating and increasing frequency and intensity of hurricanes, sea level rise, wildfires, droughts, flooding, and more unprecedented severe weather events, such as more powerful Category 4 and 5 hurricanes. These disruptions also adversely affect our foreign partners by exacerbating state fragility, fueling conflicts, and contributing to large-scale instability and migration, creating conditions

that state and non-state actors can exploit. These effects exacerbate existing risks and create new challenges for national security and defense.

Homeland Defense Policy Guidance

In December 2023, Secretary Austin approved a classified Homeland Defense Policy Guidance, updating the Department's approach to homeland defense to account for major changes in the global security environment. We have shared this classified document with the Congress and plan to publish an unclassified version by this summer. In the interim, I can offer you a brief overview of key themes in the Secretary's guidance.

The guidance looks to meet the challenges we face today by driving action across the Department to deter threats of aggression or strategic attack to the homeland across multiple domains and the spectrum of conflict. It identifies initiatives that contribute to DoD's ability to project power, defend the homeland, and, in the event of a conflict, maintain continuity of wartime operations. Those initiatives link to the 2022 NDS and ensure that DoD will:

- Deter aggression against the homeland by pursuing initiatives that seek to raise direct and indirect costs for potential attackers and reduce the benefits of possible attacks;
- Improve resilience to an attack, across the spectrum of conflict, to prevent potential competitors from advancing their objectives or severely limiting U.S. response options;
- Focus on defending defense critical infrastructure against attacks in all domains and build resiliency and redundancy to fight through disruptions and maintain the ability to mobilize and respond to crisis or conflict;
- Ensure continuity of operations and continuity of government;
- Build resiliency against the impacts of climate change that impact DoD's ability to execute homeland defense missions; and
- Ensure resilience in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response capabilities associated with homeland defense missions.

I'd like to walk you through some of the ways we view these lines of effort in the Department.

Deter Aggression Against the Homeland: The 2022 National Defense Strategy states that the Department's top priority is defense of the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC. Over the near term, we will improve our ability to defend the homeland, in part, through continuous improvement of our air, space, and maritime-domain awareness within North America and throughout its approaches. I'll outline a few efforts we are specifically undertaking to achieve this.

We are coordinating closely with Canada to support North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) capabilities. This will enable us to deter aggression and be prepared to defend the United States and Canada from airborne threats, while providing warning of potential maritime threats. Achieving these goals within a dynamic and evolving threat environment requires ensuring NORAD's ability to conduct its missions of aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning. NORAD is vital to the homeland defense mission and to our nations' ability to support operations overseas, including meeting NATO commitments.

DoD is working closely with Canada to advance NORAD Modernization in accordance with the priorities set by Secretary Austin and his Canadian counterpart in their August 17, 2021, Joint Statement. They agreed on the need to enhance NORAD domain awareness through investments in capabilities to detect, deter, and defend against aerospace threats and to detect maritime threats to North America.

In October 2022, representatives from both nations worked together to develop a joint implementation plan for NORAD modernization to ensure that national investments are closely coordinated to avoid inefficiency, delays, and unnecessary duplication of efforts. We are grateful for Canada's continued reaffirmation of Canada's commitment to NORAD Modernization along with an announced \$38.6B (CAD) investment in these projects over the next twenty years. We are grateful to the Committee for your continued support of these efforts.

Consistent with the 2022 NDS, DoD has revised its guidance for air and cruise missile defense of the homeland. On September 14, 2023, Secretary Austin issued policy guidance for Air and Cruise Missile Defense of the Homeland. The Secretary's action followed a comprehensive re-

assessment of our approach to air defense of the homeland as currently reflected in Operation NOBLE EAGLE. The revised guidance paces homeland defense air activities to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC while also accounting for the acute threat posed by Russia. It will inform development of future years' budgets and will require revision of Combatant Commander plans for the defense of the Homeland against air and aerospace threats.

We are also working to address the safety and security threats posed by sUAS. We appreciate the support we have received to date from Congress in enacting, expanding, and extending section 130i of title 10, U.S. Code. This authority is vital to the Secretary's ability to ensure the protection of certain DoD facilities and assets in the homeland from UAS. It is abundantly clear that this threat is not going away. Incidents like the PRC HAB in early 2023 highlight the significance of this authority.

Defending Across Domains: It is vital the Department moves quickly to develop and field new sensors that enhance all-domain awareness. Modernizing and expanding the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) is an important step as the PRC and Russia continue to field highly advanced submarines that pose a threat to the homeland.

Additionally, continuing to employ advanced space-based sensors enables our detection of hypersonic weapons and other advanced systems that are designed to evade traditional forms of detection.

Arctic as an extension of the Homeland: The Arctic region is among our most complex national security challenges – with impacts stretching across the Department of Defense. Alaska makes the United States an Arctic nation, creating a nexus between the stability of the Arctic region, and homeland defense. It is a region that “encompasses the northern most approach to the United States,” and is increasingly accessible due to the effects of climate change.

Both the PRC and Russia threaten the homeland by the actions and activities that they undertake in the Arctic. As an example, the PRC—despite its lack of geographic proximity to the Arctic—is acting increasingly assertively in the region and seeks to play a larger role in shaping regional

governance. And while it does not yet possess the ability to project significant military power in the Arctic, the PRC is actively constructing research facilities in the region – which could serve both civilian and military purposes. Additionally, Russia is strengthening its presence in the Arctic by building new bases and refurbishing Soviet-era infrastructure. Russia has also made unfounded claims to regulate certain waters along its vast Arctic seacoast in excess of Russia’s authority under international law.

In the Arctic, we train and exercise, both independently and with our allies and partners. We do so at different scales – from executing unit tactics, to large, combined activities. Doing so improves our capabilities and operability. And effectively messaging these activities demonstrates our capabilities and communicates our resolve to our competitors.

The United States also has treaty obligations to its NATO Allies, which include the Arctic nations of Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, NATO’s newest member, Sweden. This vital Alliance helps deter aggression against the United States and all NATO Allies.

DoD is developing a new Arctic Strategy, which will outline how we will campaign in the region. We expect to release it later this year. It will reflect not only today’s strategic environment, but the 2022 National Defense Strategy and the 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region. This strategy will focus on a “monitor-and-respond” approach, that emphasizes cooperation with our Allies and partners. It also leverages the Joint Force’s ability to deploy globally at the time and place of our choosing. Ultimately, our aim is, working together with Allies and partners, to preserve the Arctic as a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative region, where the U.S. homeland is defended, and our national security interests are safeguarded.

Ensure Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government: DoD continuity ensures the full range of our warfighting capabilities enabling strategic operations, deterrence, power projection, and other key national security outcomes are resilient in the face of any adversary, threat, or degraded condition. Leveraging this resilience, DoD and our partners safeguard the preservation of government under the U.S. Constitution.

Resilience: Foundational to the HDPG is the concept of resilience - the cornerstone of homeland defense. Resilience is the ability to withstand, fight through, and recover quickly from disruption. Resilient people, processes, capabilities, installations, infrastructure, and networks underpin our ability to deter threats and aggression.

Resilience to an attack: DoD continuity emphasizes the uninterrupted performance of our most essential functions of defending the nation. We are emphasizing a posture of distribution and devolution throughout DoD and are deliberately integrating continuity and resilience considerations in our policies, planning guidance, readiness reporting, and operations.

Additionally, Federal partners' efforts to develop their own capabilities and capacity for homeland security missions helps build national resilience, particularly in areas where reliance on DoD may be impacted by large-scale mobilizations required for the execution of core defense missions. DoD will continue to work with Federal partners to identify alternative, non-DoD sourcing options for capabilities needed for domestic incident response and management.

Mission Assurance identifies single points of failure in critical warfighting capabilities and seeks to build redundancy for these where possible or strengthen their resiliency to attack or natural disaster. Mission Assurance operates on an all-threat and hazard basis using Red Team analysis and advanced cyber assessment capabilities at our most critical assets to identify vectors or potential attack by adversaries.

We are also increasing our focus and resourcing for defense infrastructure resilience on Guam, both in the wake of Typhoon Mawar but also to bolster military capabilities in the USINDOPACOM AOR. DoD is increasing participation in our table-top exercises and wargames. We appreciate Congressional interest in and the opportunity, provided by Section 1517 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, to establish a pilot program to assure critical infrastructure support for military contingencies, which will integrate cross-government planning to improve the resilience of Defense Critical Infrastructure (DCI).

Defense Critical Infrastructure (DCI) resilience: DCI resilience is managed through the Mission Assurance (MA) Construct, which is critical to the execution of DoD missions in any operating environment or condition. The MA Construct identifies, assesses, manages, and monitors strategic-level risks to DCI.

Importantly, DCI is both DoD and non-DoD owned. The Department has worked hard to understand its dependencies on the civilian infrastructure required to execute priority missions. We have developed processes and guidance for sharing appropriate results from our analysis with FSLTT stakeholders to collaborate on resilience initiatives and risk-management programs. DoD has created inter- and intra-DoD working groups to prioritize and drive action within the Department and across the U.S. Government, including incorporating civilian DCI risks in internal DoD risk management decisions. Notably, we are working closely with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to leverage their regional relationships to assess and assist key critical infrastructure owners and operators in mitigating vulnerabilities that, if exploited, could be problematic for both the local communities and DoD operations. We are also working with the Intelligence Community to prioritize counterintelligence work around DCI sites and to better inform collection and production requirements.

To get after this, DoD and other departments and agencies are working with the DHS and CISA to shape a risk-management-focused approach. For DoD, this means increased work with DIB partners, building information-sharing mechanisms, facilitating enhanced DIB cyber security, identifying secure supply chains, and working with other Sector Risk Management Agencies to secure DCI in their sectors.

We anticipate a robust implementation effort that will require effort across the Department as the threats posed to the DIB cut in complex ways and involve aspects of cyber, insider threats, information, intellectual property, and contracting with a Defense Industrial Base that has grown increasingly consolidated and reliant upon limited supply chains.

Build resilience against the impacts of climate change: As reflected in the NDS, climate change is increasingly shaping the context in which the Department operates. Rising

temperatures, droughts, and more frequent, intense, and unpredictable storms and floods have already begun to affect military readiness and impose significant costs on the Department. These environmental hazards are affecting basing and access of locations vital for deterrence and warfighting objectives while degrading readiness, critical infrastructure, and capabilities. These challenges place new demands on the Joint Force, with implications for our readiness. Climate change is also creating new potential points of friction in places such as the Arctic, while affecting security relationships with allies and partners around the world. We are determined to ensure that the United States can meet and deal with these challenges.

DoD is investing in programs that mitigate the risk of energy supply disruptions to critical military facilities—whether caused by extreme weather, cyber operations, or kinetic attack. One example of this kind of program is the Defense Operational Resilience International Cooperation pilot program, which allows us to support the climate resilience of the security forces of allies and partners around the world. The budget request also includes funding to improve the energy efficiency of combat operations and platforms while deploying new technology to improve lethality and mitigate logistics risk in contested environments. Throughout, our focus is on building our operational advantages. These are not only essential steps for the climate of the world that we share, but also strategic moves to defend our country and strengthen our military.

In 2023, the Department of Defense held the inaugural International Climate and Energy Security Forum (ICESF) to bring together close defense allies to discuss shared national security concerns related to climate change and energy security. The ICESF served to build relationships in this emerging space and identify actions that Defense Ministries can take to address these challenges from a security perspective. It also provided an important opportunity to exchange views and deepen understanding on respective strategies and national priorities, wargaming analyses, security cooperation related to climate resilience, and energy technology innovation. The meeting included policy discussions, a trade show showcasing innovative U.S. technology companies, and demonstrations of DoD's energy technology programs. Attendees welcomed DoD hosting this first meeting and expressed a desire for more Ministry of Defense-specific dialogue on these topics.

During the past year, the Global Water Security Center (GWSC) at the University of Alabama, funded by DoD, provided education, training, and research related to water, food, energy, and natural disasters. The GWSC continues to build capabilities and produced water and climate assessments in support of the Combatant Commands and in support of partnering efforts. The GWSC has the capability to provide quick looks on countries and regions, as well as more in-depth regional assessments of climate and water security implications in support of strategic planning. In 2023, the GWSC produced El Niño-focused assessments for USSOUTHCOM and focused on food security in Southeast Asia. As GWSC capabilities continue to develop, the Center will be able to provide increasingly timely and tailored assessment to CCMDs and in support of DoD engagements with partners and allies.

The Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorized the Secretary of Defense to establish the Defense Operational Resilience International Cooperation (DORIC) pilot program with the express purpose of supporting “engagement with military forces of partner countries on defense-related environmental and operational energy issues in support of the theater campaign plans of the geographic combatant commands.” In FY 2023, DORIC was resourced at \$3 million, while the authorized funding level is up to \$10 million per year. In its first year, DORIC enabled a range of activities across five of the six Geographic Combatant Command AORs, including analysis of climate change impacts on partner military infrastructure, environmental and operational security forums and courses, climate resiliency field trainings, and support for the new Climate Security Alert Tool (CSAT). The NDAA for FY 2024 amended the DORIC statutory authority to expand the types of engagements from military-to-military activities to engagements with the “national security forces” of partner countries. The change facilitates support to partners without official militaries, which is particularly important in the USINDOPACOM area of responsibility.

Resilience in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response capabilities associated with homeland defense missions. As stated in the NDS, the Joint Force must be able to fight and win in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) contaminated environments. The Department is prioritizing the protection of DoD resources while mitigating impediments to force projection through reinvigorated CBRN training in the active and reserve components,

including the National Guard.

Defense Support to Civil Authorities: In addition to carrying out DoD missions, DoD supports lead Federal agencies in carrying out their statutory missions. This support is referred to as “Defense Support of Civil Authorities” or “DSCA.” As such, DSCA is not a homeland defense mission, but rather a mechanism to support our homeland security partners execute their missions. The National Defense Strategy states that DoD will ensure the ability to respond to small-scale, short-duration crises without substantially impairing DoD’s readiness to defend the U.S. homeland and our nation’s global security interests, up to and including fighting and winning our nation’s wars. Unless otherwise required by law, and with very few exceptions, DoD does not size or shape its forces, or budget for, DSCA.

DoD has a long history of leveraging its military training, capabilities, and capacity, developed to defend our nation and its national security interests, to support our FSLTT partners. This includes supporting partners’ activities in responding to man-made and natural disasters, public health emergencies, securing the nation’s borders, and providing for the safety and security of national special security events (NSSEs). In 2023, DoD provided support in response to 131 requests for assistance – 52 more than the 79 supported in 2022.

At the request of DHS, DoD has supported DHS’s southwest border security mission for 21 of the last 24 years. In 18 of these 21 years, DoD’s support has spanned the entire fiscal year, and, in most cases, this support was provided on a non-reimbursable basis, costing DoD more than \$4 billion. Between 2,500 and 3,000 military personnel currently support the U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Southwest Border, providing enabling support (e.g., mobile surveillance camera operations, remote video detection and camera monitoring, transportation, data entry, warehousing, and aviation support), freeing up Border Patrol agents to enforce border security.

This recurring reliance on DoD support illustrates that, in some cases, providing DSCA has fostered expectations and dependencies on DoD capabilities and capacity, which can pose a risk to our national security. DoD uses the Joint Force to defend our nation’s national security interests at home and abroad, while at the same time our partners request support from DoD –

including the use of the Joint Force – for their homeland security missions. DoD strongly advocates for, and supports, our FSLTT partners’ efforts to become more resilient by developing capabilities and the necessary capacity to carry out their core responsibilities. These efforts should increase the resilience of our nation, especially in scenarios where DoD is needed to execute our national defense mission. Over the last 10 years, FEMA has helped communities become more resilient, and this enhanced resilience has, in turn, reduced reliance on DoD support.

The Domestic Preparedness Support Initiative office is working closely with CBP officials to identify emerging DoD dual-use technologies (e.g., communication systems, surveillance analytics, and common operating picture systems) to increase border security and improve law enforcement efficiencies. The sharing of such technologies not only enables CBP to leverage viable defense assets, but it also enables the Department to reduce manpower at the border and realign military personnel to meet our national security objectives.

Advancing Regional Goals and Campaigning in the Western Hemisphere:

The United States derives immense benefit from a stable, peaceful, and democratic Western Hemisphere that reduces security threats to our nation. We are deepening our partnerships with countries such as Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, and Panama through ongoing engagement under existing arrangements, robust strategic dialogues, key leader engagements, and defense exercises. DoD is also working to fulfill and sustain the Department’s supporting role in Central America and the Caribbean, institutional capacity building, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. In addition, the Department is participating in U.S. Government efforts to support an UN-backed Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti to assist the Haitian National Police.

DoD’s engagements with Western Hemisphere partner nations include particular focus on shared security threats, climate resilience, environmental security, space, cybersecurity, and maritime security. In all our cooperation and interaction, we underscore the necessity of support for democratic institutions, civilian control of the military, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and promoting Women, Peace, and Security initiatives.

Our relationships with our hemispheric partners are the foundation that enables DoD to maintain rapid-response capabilities, ranging from those needed to conduct effective humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions, to the ability to support civilian-led efforts to combat transboundary threats, such as countering organized crime through detection, monitoring, and intelligence analysis support. These relationships also help us to promote climate resilience and to undertake pandemic response.

Threats in the Western Hemisphere

DoD is focused on external threats facing the Western Hemisphere, especially PRC and Russian malign influence. Fortunately, this hemisphere does not face the risk of large-scale armed aggression between major state actors that DoD is called upon to deter in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East – and which motivates U.S. strategic focus. DoD is strategically focused on the security advantages our competitors are pursuing regionally, largely through economic-, technological-, and information-driven malign activity, as well as through military cooperation.

The PRC sees Latin America as a center of gravity in its “Global South” worldview – strategically, helping insulate from international resistance to the PRC’s growing authoritarian influence; pragmatically, offering key sources of energy, minerals, and food; and symbolically, affronting U.S. democratic influence in our own hemisphere, an epicenter of democracy globally. To this end, we’re working to 1) Strengthen regional roles and capabilities to promote hemispheric security and stability (e.g., via capacity-building, training, education, and joint exercises); 2) Deepen our partnerships to expand economic resilience and opportunities, strengthen democratic stability and resilience, and improve citizen security; and 3) Serve as the region’s most valued defense partner while reinforcing the basic tenets of hemispheric cooperation and stability – partner sovereignty; civilian control of the military; respect for democratic institutions, human rights, and the rule of law; while meeting our partners where we can work most effectively together. This means prioritizing efforts to advance U.S. national security and homeland defense – including in the cyber and space domains, and in the maritime sector (for example, efforts to counter PRC presence and risk to key chokepoints).

Our positive agenda promotes the benefits of U.S. security partnership for our partners, and for the hemisphere, and has significant impact in the competitive landscape we face. This work is a part of the “how” of a good hemispheric strategy – i.e., how we maintain our position as the hemisphere’s most valued defense partner. This is because the United States feels the impacts of those crises and competing priorities alongside our partners much more so than do our competitors (i.e., due to shared geography, people-to-people ties, and democratic values); and the strength of our partnerships also ensures we can depend on them when countering threats to our own national security and homeland defense.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished Members of the Committee, in conclusion, the homeland, the Western Hemisphere, and the Arctic all face increased and evolving threats. To address these shared challenges, we will raise awareness and increase preparedness with our partners within and outside of government to prevent, mitigate, and respond to national security threats to the homeland, build resilience throughout the defense ecosystem, and advance U.S. national interests in the Western Hemisphere and the Arctic. Thank you for the support of Congress and for your continued commitment and support of the women and men of the Department of Defense. I look forward to your questions.