

[H.A.S.C. No. 118-9]

**U.S. MILITARY POSTURE AND  
NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES IN  
NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA**

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

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HEARING HELD  
MARCH 8, 2023



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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

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## **U.S. MILITARY POSTURE AND NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

*Washington, DC, Wednesday, March 8, 2023.*

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Mike Rogers [chairman of the committee] presiding.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROGERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

A couple of housekeeping matters before we begin. First, we will adjourn the public portion of this hearing at 1:00 and immediately move upstairs for the classified portion.

Second, as we noticed last week, we will run questions in reverse seniority for those present at the gavel. We try to do this every year to give our members at the bottom of the dais the opportunity to participate earlier in the process. That's right. I have heard many objections.

Today we kick off our posture hearings with NORTHCOM [U.S. Northern Command] and SOUTHCOM [U.S. Southern Command]. I want to thank our witnesses for being here and their service to our country.

In recent weeks, the American people saw firsthand that China's aggression knows no geographic boundaries. China's spy balloon violated U.S. sovereignty and challenged U.S. homeland defense.

Unfortunately, this should come as no surprise. The Chinese Communist Party [CCP] has long been expanding its influence in North and South America. 25 of the 31 countries in SOUTHCOM AOR [area of responsibility] have welcomed infrastructure investment from the CCP. Twenty-one have formally joined the CCP's Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]. The CCP is backing projects to build new or operate existing seaports in Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Jamaica, Argentina, Panama, Mexico, and the Bahamas. This is concerning because the CCP is leveraging these investments to gain strategic footholds in our hemisphere.

Many of these countries host port calls, buy military equipment, and receive training from the PLA [People's Liberation Army]. Sadly, the number of South and Central American countries willing to enter into partnerships with the CCP is only growing. We need to take action to reverse that trend.

Unfortunately, the CCP is not the only malign influence in the Western Hemisphere. Russia recently deploys troops to Nicaragua,

Venezuela, and continues to prop up Cuba's communist regime. Now even Iran is getting presence in South America.

Just 2 weeks after President Biden welcomed Brazil's new president to the White House, 2 Iranian warships were allowed to dock in Rio. We must stop being so complacent about our adversaries' growing influence in our hemisphere. We need to do more to build and enhance partnerships in the region.

Beyond the growing presence of our adversaries, many areas of South and Central America continue to be havens for transnational criminal organizations. These brutal criminal gangs prey on thousands of vulnerable men, women, and children. They steal their money and endanger their lives with perilous attempts to gain illegal entry at our borders. They are also the main source of fentanyl and other dangerous drugs smuggled across our border. We are seeing the consequences on streets across America. Over 100,000 are dying each year from fentanyl overdoses alone.

At our southern border, a record 2.7 million migrants illegally crossed into our country in 2022. That blew away the previous record by over one million individuals. Communities in our border states and throughout the country are struggling as a result.

NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM are doing their best to provide support to civilian authorities to address the border crisis. But the real solution rests with our President. He needs to stop with excuses and secure our border.

Finally, I am very concerned about the Secretary's decision to go along with the Commerce Department's plan that will lead to the auctioning off of critical DOD [Department of Defense] spectrum. This spectrum is used for the vast majority of our military radar systems, including our early warning homeland and shipborne missile defense.

I am having a lot of trouble understanding the rationale for his decision, especially when Russia has suspended the New START [Strategic Arms Reduction] Treaty, North Korea is launching more ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles], and China is sending hypersonics around the globe. I expect the DOD to explain to this committee how it is in our national security interest to auction off this vital spectrum.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and getting their best military advice on how to overcome the security challenges we face.

And with that, I yield to my friend, the ranking member, Mr. Smith.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

And I want to welcome our witnesses, General VanHerck, General Richardson, and Ms. Dalton. I appreciate your leadership and appreciate you being before us today. I think the Chairman laid out, you know, a pretty good analysis of the threats that we face in your two AORs. And I just want to agree with that.

Starting with, in the North American domain, as General VanHerck put it, the domain awareness issues are significant. We

need to know what is coming at us. We need to be able to see what the threats are. And certainly, publicly we saw what the threats could be at high altitude from apparently balloons. But some of the bigger threats are cyber. Do we know how well protected our systems are?

So, when it comes to protecting the homeland, that is where it starts. Are we aware of the threats that are coming at us in all possible domains? And this is not an easy thing. We certainly have radars. We have systems to pick up on things coming at us. But those radars can't see everything all the time. How do we prioritize or how do we improve the systems so that they can see more?

It seems like the Chinese became aware of a vulnerability that slow-moving objects at high altitude were things that we tended not to see. Well, now we are seeing them. But we will look forward to a further explanation of how we can make sure that we have a robust domain awareness.

And again, even though it was very much in TV about the objects moving across our airspace, the real threat is in the cyber domain. And the real threat is whether or not we can make sure we protect our systems. So I would appreciate an update on how we can make sure we do that.

And then certainly, I think the Chairman emphasized exactly the point that we are, you know, becoming aware of, and that is Russia, China, and Iran are incredibly active in the Western Hemisphere. They are building relationships throughout Latin America.

We need to better understand that and figure out how to deal with it. It is a challenge that we had not seen for a while but is very much present and that we need to be aware of and need to be ready to deal with. And I look forward to General Richardson explaining to us a little bit more about how we are doing that.

And then, lastly, of course, the issue of transnational criminal organizations engaged in drug and human trafficking, an enormous problem, which we are all very much aware of, that we need to better understand how that threat is coming, again, from your AOR and how we can better deal with it.

Again, I look forward to the testimony and the questions from our panel. And I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the ranking member.

Now I would like to introduce our witnesses. The Honorable Melissa Dalton is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs. She previously served as a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy Plans and Capabilities.

General Glen VanHerck is the Commander of United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command. He previously served as the Director of the Joint Staff.

General Laura Richardson is the Commander of United States Southern Command and previously served as the Commanding General of the U.S. Army North.

I welcome our witnesses. And, Ms. Dalton, we will start with you for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MELISSA G. DALTON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HOMELAND DEFENSE AND HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS**

Secretary DALTON. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I will highlight how we are putting homeland defense and other interests across this hemisphere front and center to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy [NDS].

Per the NDS, the People's Republic of China is the pacing challenge for DOD, while Russia remains an acute threat. In addition to building conventional and nuclear capabilities, we are concerned that the PRC [People's Republic of China] in particular is using non-kinetic means to subvert our ability to project power.

The NDS also ensures vigilance of other persistent threats. North Korea is expanding its nuclear and missile capability to threaten the homeland. Iran is testing space launch technologies. And global terrorist groups require continued monitoring.

A range of fast-evolving technologies could disrupt U.S. supply chain and logistics operations. For example, small, uncrewed aircraft systems could pose a threat to domestic DOD facilities.

Last year, the homeland endured 90 incidents caused by hurricanes, severe storms, wildfires, and floods degrading our readiness. In the Western Hemisphere, these hazards contributed to instability and migration, creating conditions that state and non-state actors can exploit.

We are doing more than ever to deter, defend, and defeat aggression from competitors. We are using an integrated deterrence approach to harness conventional, cyber, space, and information capabilities to raise costs for our competitors, while reducing their expected benefits of aggression.

Per the 2022 Missile Defense Review, our missile defense systems offer protection for the U.S. population while reassuring others that we will not be coerced by threats to the homeland. Nested within our missile defense approach, integrated air and missile defense enables freedom of action by negating an adversary's ability to create adverse effects with air and missile capabilities. We also rely on strategic deterrence for large intercontinental-range nuclear missile threats from the PRC and Russia.

Investments in modern sensors and infrastructure are vital to homeland defense against airborne and maritime threats and to our ability to project forces. We are grateful for the committee's support of the Over-the-Horizon radars. We are working with Canada to maximize NORAD's [North American Aerospace Defense Command's] coverage of the approaches to North America.

It is also vital to extend the Secretary's authority under section 130i of title 10 to protect certain DOD facilities and domestic assets from UAS [unmanned aircraft systems].

By virtue of U.S. sovereign territory in Alaska, the Arctic is an extension of the U.S. homeland. We are working to implement the national strategy for the Arctic region. We are leveraging the Ted Stevens Center for the Arctic Strategic Studies in Alaska. We demonstrate combat credible forces in the Arctic by training and exercising, including through Arctic Edge with Canada and through

bomber task force deployments with the United Kingdom and Norway to support NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization].

Our competitors' gray zone activities threaten key domestic assets, networks, and infrastructure that DOD and the American people rely on. DOD is enhancing the resilience of U.S. systems working within the interagency with Federal, State, local, tribal territorial partners, and the private sector. We work the defense industrial base to enhance cyber security and resilience. To operate through disruption, we are increasing DOD's ability to operate in a more dispersed manner and from alternate locations.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities, or DSCA, is an important activity supporting the American public and our partners, responding to disasters, public health emergencies, and securing our borders. Today, approximately 2,500 military personnel are deployed to the southwest border. DOD has supported DHS's [U.S. Department of Homeland Security's] border security mission for 18 of the last 22 years. Per the NDS, DOD is prepared to support DSCA activities that do not impair warfighting readiness. Our domestic partners should be resourced for their mission requirements, preserving DOD's warfighting capabilities.

We are also strengthening our ability to withstand and recover from extreme environmental events and to build a resilient Joint Force. We intend to use the new Defense Operational Resilience International Cooperation Program to build our partners' early warning capabilities to reduce the need for DOD assets for disasters and other emergencies.

We are deepening partnerships with Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, while reinforcing democratic institutions, civilian control of the military, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Secretary Austin highlighted the importance of integrated deterrence at last year's Conference of the Defense Ministers of the Americas in Brazil. Later this week I will travel to Mexico to discuss defense issues.

Our relationships in this hemisphere help ensure we are able to conduct humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, bolster cyber defenses, promote climate resilience, and conduct pandemic response.

To conclude, the Department is committed to defending the homeland and pursuing U.S. interests across this hemisphere.

Thank you for your support of the Department of Defense. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dalton can be found in the Appendix on page 59]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Dalton. The Chair now recognizes General VanHerck for 5 minutes to read his statement.

**STATEMENT OF GEN GLEN D. VANHERCK, USAF, COMMANDER,  
UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN  
AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND**

General VANHERCK. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today and represent the men and women of United States Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

NORTHCOM and NORAD are distinct commands united by a common purpose, to defend the United States and Canadian homelands in what is clearly the most complex and dynamic strategic environment that I have experienced during more than 35 years in service.

In my role as the commander of NORTHCOM, I am responsible for homeland defense, Defense Support of Civil Authorities in the United States, and security cooperation with our military partners in Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas. As the commander of NORAD, the U.S.-Canadian binational command, I am responsible for aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning in the approaches to North America.

Despite the complexity of the strategic environment and recent erosion of military advantage, the United States military remains the most powerful and professional force in history. However, we must take action now to stop the erosion of our military advantage.

Our competitors' actions and ambitions are global and all-domain in nature. And our competitors have the capability and intent to hold our homeland at risk, above and below the nuclear threshold and in multiple domains, to achieve their strategic objectives.

The PRC and Russia have fielded cruise missiles, the delivery platforms, non-kinetic capabilities that hold at risk critical infrastructure and civilian infrastructure in the United States and Canada and with the capability to strike with limited warning with significant consequences, including reducing our capability to project power from a secure homeland. Limited warning due to a lack of all-domain awareness inherently limits the risk and decision space options available to national leaders, which increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation.

Today I assess, as I have for nearly three years, that the homeland is a potential limiting factor to ensuring rapid and effective implementation and execution of global contingency plans due to my lack of domain awareness, timely access to forces that are ready to operate throughout my area of responsibility, including in the Arctic, and a lack of resilient infrastructure enabling the Joint Force to fight in and from our homeland while ensuring forward power projection.

To address today's strategic environment, for nearly three years I have focused on four key priorities, domain awareness or the ability to see and detect potential threats in all domains, information dominance, which is the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to process data more rapidly for strategic advantage, decision superiority, which is the dissemination of data and information to the right leader at the right time from the tactical to the strategic level, and finally, global integration, addressing today's environment with a global and all-domain approach vice legacy, regional approaches and practices.

Those priorities are critical to successfully defending the homeland and to providing our national leaders with the only thing I can never give them enough of, and that is time to create deterrence options and, if required, defend and defeat options.

Our competitors' actions over the last several years have shown that regional crisis often take the Department to have global implications which the—and also the potential for rapid escalation. And

it is vital that the Department adopt globally integrated plans and policies that fully reflect competitor capability, capacity, and intent, including the intent to threaten our homeland.

While we have work to do, there has been some notable progress towards these key priorities. I am grateful to the Department and Congress for your support of the Over-the-Horizon radars that will significantly improve domain awareness and the ability to detect and track threats well before they reach North America.

But we need to go faster. An acquisition plan based on over a decade is too long. Both the Department of Defense and the Canadian Department of National Defense have committed to funding Over-the-Horizon radar. And I respectfully urge both governments to ensure this vital and proven capability is fielded as quickly as possible.

Likewise, the Space Force's investment in advanced space-based missile warning sensor capabilities and the Navy's commitment to modernizing integrated underseas surveillance are vital to my homeland defense mission. Yet again, we can't wait a decade or longer to field these capabilities.

Our commands and the Department of Defense need your continued support to outpace the rapid gains made by our competitors. Continued progress will require the Department and Congress to accept some risk by prioritizing rapid modernization and innovation over maintaining obsolete platforms, organizations, and infrastructure, and occasionally accept failure as part of the process.

The generational challenges ahead of us will require the best minds and expertise we can find. The Department also must invest accordingly in civilian and military personnel recruiting, hiring, and retention. And we must continue to build the enormous advantage working with our international alliances and partnerships.

I believe the greatest risk that our nation faces right now is our inability to change and adapt at a pace required by the strategic environment. Homeland defense must be recognized as essential to contingency plans at home and for power projection abroad. And it is vital that all military planning account for that reality. In an area of incredible innovation and technological advancement, inflexible, outdated processes are a greater impediment to success than many of our competitors' advancements.

Finally, I would like to comment on recent events, including the incursion of the PRC high altitude balloon into our national airspace. The PRC high altitude balloon was obviously a significant event that shined light on PRC's brazen intelligence collection against the United States and Canada. It was the first time in NORTHCOM's history we conducted an engagement over the United States. And it made clear that our competitors have the capability and intent to reach our homeland.

It also clearly demonstrates the limitations of our domain awareness and the impediments we face in getting information into the hands of decision makers quickly. Candidly, the internal discord of this event caused—it just showed one of the ways our competitors target us each and every day in the information space. And they are becoming increasingly adept at driving wedges between the American people.

As for NORAD and NORTHCOM, I commit to you that this event has already generated critical lessons for my commands and our mission partners. And I can guarantee you that both NORAD and NORTHCOM are going to continue to learn and do whatever is necessary to keep our country safe.

On behalf of all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardians, and civilians at NORAD and NORTHCOM, I would like to thank the committee for your steadfast support as we defend our nation. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General VanHerck can be found in the Appendix on page 77]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General. The Chair now recognizes General Richardson for 5 minutes for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF GEN LAURA J. RICHARDSON, USA,  
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND**

General RICHARDSON. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today with Assistant Secretary Dalton, General VanHerck, who are my teammates in keeping this Western Hemisphere safe.

I am honored to represent the men and women of U.S. Southern Command to discuss the challenges we share with our neighbors in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As stated in the National Security Strategy, no region impacts the United States more directly than the Western Hemisphere. Last year I testified before the committee and stated this region, our shared neighborhood, is under assault from a host of cross-cutting, transboundary challenges that directly threaten our homeland. This is still true today and is a call to action. In the last year, I have spent traveling in the region, meeting with leaders to better understand these challenges and the threat they pose to our mutual interests.

The world is at an inflection point. Our partners in the Western Hemisphere with whom we are bonded by trade, shared values, democratic traditions, family ties are feeling the impacts of external interference and coercion.

The People's Republic of China, our pacing challenge, continues to expand its economic, diplomatic, technological, informational, and military influence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The PRC has the capability and intent to eschew international norms, advance its brand of authoritarianism and amass power and influence at the expense of these democracies. The PRC has expanded its ability to extract resources, establish ports, manipulate governments through predatory investment practices, and build potential dual use space facilities, the most space facilities in any combat and command region.

Russia, an acute threat, bolsters authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and continues its extensive disinformation campaign. These activities undermine democracies and challenge our credibility.

Both China and Russia exploit the presence of transnational criminal organizations and amplify their destabilizing impact on democratic governments. TCOs [transnational criminal organiza-

tions] spread violence and corruption throughout the region and beyond. Their fentanyl-laced cocaine contributes to the deaths of Americans in cities and towns across the country.

The good news is that working with our very willing partners leads to the best defense. And we must use all available levers to strengthen our partnerships with the 28 like-minded democracies in this hemisphere who understand the power of working together to counter these shared challenges.

Our partners look to us to lead in the hemisphere. We have an obligation to meet them where they are and commit to aggressively address our common security challenges. We must continue to maximize the effectiveness of important tools like security cooperation, programs to train and equip our partner militaries and public security forces, and conduct multilateral exercises to build interoperability, and to increase the State Department's international military education and training, foreign military financing, and foreign military sales programs to educate, train, and build the capacity that our partners put to immediate use to stand shoulder to shoulder with us.

As the National Defense Strategy states, the U.S. derives immense benefits from a stable, peaceful, and democratic Western Hemisphere that reduces security threats to our homeland. U.S. SOUTHCOM is putting integrated deterrence into action every day using innovative methods to work seamlessly across all domains with the other combatant commands, the Joint Force, allies and partners, Congress, the U.S. interagency, NGOs [non-government organizations], and the private sector to help build a hemisphere that is free, secure, and prosperous for our generation and generations to come.

I call this team democracy. And we need to build and field a resourced team.

Thank you. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Richardson can be found in the Appendix on page 103]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The Chair recognizes himself.

General VanHerck, can you speak to the importance of the DOD's current spectrum to radar, sensor, interceptor systems and the risks of losing that spectrum would pose to homeland defense capabilities?

General VANHERCK. Yeah, Chairman, so the specific frequencies you are talking about, multiple DOD platforms operate in that to include some of our maritime homeland defense capabilities and our airborne capabilities to detect threats here in the homeland. I think going forward the best way to look at this is make sure that we understand exactly the impact to national security and homeland defense and the broader impact of any sell off of those capabilities or the frequencies going forward.

The CHAIRMAN. So, if you lost access to those, that spectrum, would it have an adverse impact on your capability to defend the homeland?

General VANHERCK. Chairman, it absolutely could have an impact to those capabilities, maritime, homeland defense radar capabilities, along with airborne capabilities.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

General Richardson, your testimony outlines the extent to which China's pervasiveness in the region is taking place in recent years. What tools and resources do you need from this committee to improve partnerships and stop China's gains in the territory?

General RICHARDSON. So my main levers to get after the problem set and the challenges and help our partners in the region is security cooperation. That is my main lever. That is the training, the equipping, also our exercise program. We have eight large exercises. That is the ability to be able to bring over 20 partner nations together to train, to work through challenges with translation, interoperability, our doctrine, our tactics, all those kinds of things. That is one thing that PRC cannot do is bring nations together to conduct exercises, so a very, very powerful program.

But the security cooperation, we got to be there with our partners on the field, with our jersey on, with the training and the equipping that we bring to make them stronger. Their challenges and their security challenges are our security challenges. They turn right around and put the security cooperation to use in order to counter those challenges so they don't end up north and on our southwest border.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. The Chair now recognizes the ranking member for any questions he may have.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

General VanHerck, on the domain awareness issue, which I did not explain as clearly as I would have liked to in my opening statement, but what do we need to do to make sure that we are aware of the threats that are coming at us in our air space and in cyber space? What are the most important steps? And I am assuming that you believe there is a vulnerability there, and we need to do more to protect ourselves from it.

General VANHERCK. Yeah, Ranking Member Smith, absolutely there is a vulnerability there.

The first thing I would say is field as soon as possible the Over-the-Horizon capabilities the Department has already funded in last year's budget. So we need to go faster.

Same thing with NORAD and the Canadians, we need to field those capabilities. Right now, we employ a legacy 1980s Cold War-era system. We need to ensure that the radars besides Over-the-Horizon radars, such as our FPS-117s that we have, are fully modernized and integrated with the Federal Aviation and also DOD and other domain awareness capabilities.

I am grateful for the funding for underseas surveillance with the IUSS [Integrated Undersea Surveillance System]. I think we need to go forward modernizing that, though. In the Pacific, it will be different than what we do in the Atlantic due to the vast reaches. So, in the Pacific, I think laying cable on the Pacific will be a challenge. We need to get more mobile capabilities and also consider going to space-based kind of capabilities for that.

And finally, the cyber is the most concerning for me, Ranking Member Smith, candidly. We don't know what we don't know. And many of the cyber threats operate outside of DOD authority and also Federal authorities, such as CISA [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency] with Jen Easterly. And that creates a vulnerability.

I rely on municipalities, industry, commercial capabilities to project power from our homeland and defend our homeland. We need to make sure we understand those vulnerabilities.

Mr. SMITH. Yeah, and I think that is something this committee really should prioritize as we are looking at the authorities and the systems that we need to fund. I mean, a lot of it is just a matter of upgrading what we have. I mean, we have a lot of great systems, but they have been around a long time. We haven't upgraded as technology has moved forward, enabling us to better protect ourselves. So I think we really need to focus on that. Yes, sir.

General VANHERCK. Can I add one thing? I think it is crucial to point out that the FISA [the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act], the [section] 702 authorities, expire later this year. Those authorities have been crucial for us maintaining awareness on potential threats to our homeland and around the globe. And I would tell you that allowing that to expire could increase the threat to the homeland.

Mr. SMITH. That is a very fair point.

And the spectrum issue is also a challenge, as the Chairman alluded to. I mean, part of the reason on the spectrum is we are trying to keep up on the commercial side. And I think everyone here would agree that in terms of our national security the degree to which the U.S. can be the leader in communications technology and make sure that we have access to that spectrum, even on the private side, is important. We just have to figure out how to do it in a way that doesn't jeopardize our national security interests. And I have been toiling away at that issue for a while. It is not an easy balance to strike, but it is one we need to pay attention to.

General Richardson, we have talked about China, Russia, and Iran. Just in a nutshell, why are we struggling so much on that with some of our Latin American countries? When you and I met, we talked a little bit about how Brazil was basically cozying up to Russia and a number of other countries down there as well. What is it that Russia and China are bringing to the game down there that is making these countries so willing to embrace them? And what could we do to get a better balance there? And understanding, we are not going to keep China or even Russia out of Latin America. But how can we make sure it doesn't jeopardize our national security interests?

General RICHARDSON. Thank you for the question. I think the, just to go back a couple of years into COVID [coronavirus disease 2019] and create a picture of the landscape, I think COVID has had a devastating impact. More proportional than 8 percent of the world's population in this region, they suffered 29 percent of the world's COVID deaths. 170,000,000 people in this region put into poverty. Their economies are struggling.

And so, as they are trying to dig out of the hole, all of them, and you have the PRC showing up with the Belt and Road Initiative, the billions of dollars that they advertise available for these big projects, all these projects that they do, highways, electrical dams, it looks like investment but it is all in critical infrastructure amazingly enough, and space and telecommunications and deepwater ports, one has to ask themselves why. Why with the largest military buildup on conventional and nuclear forces in mainland China

are they investing, looks to be investing across the globe in Latin America and the Caribbean?

And so this is very concerning. And I would say because of the status of the economies of these countries is that they have to look at whatever they can get their hands on to deliver for their people. The leaders in the region are in there for a short period of time, generally one term. And that is about 4 years. They have got 4 years to deliver.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I apologize. I am out of time. I yield back. Thank you.

General RICHARDSON. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. [Inaudible]

Mr. MILLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Assistant Secretary Dalton, General VanHerck, and General Richardson, I have to say, General Richardson, you are probably one of the first to actually, in my opinion, properly address what China and Russia's real desire is there in Latin America.

For a long time, I have been talking about this geopolitical alignment, for many years, on Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. This Road and Belt Initiative Chairman Xi has launched, which was really an effort to try and expand out the Eurasian borders, take Africa, take Oceania, take over the portage and railways, creating almost a maritime silk route that would cut off and choke Western Hemisphere supply chain, but also taking over and helping to try and increase tariffs and other things through the Panama Canal and then the Russians actually creating almost a faux iron curtain utilizing Chavez in Venezuela, Petro in Colombia, as well as for utilizing the Darién Gap to print fentanyl by the Mainland Chinese to utilize to poison Americans.

It nearly seemed as if it was an entrapment to try and go ahead and encircle America to choke off the Western Hemisphere supply chain, because what we are really facing is the economic resource cyber warfare against China and his malign activities.

So, in knowing this, what exactly is NORCOM and SOUTHCOM doing to work on countering this additional ground that China is gaining within Latin America?

General RICHARDSON. So I will go back to the—and thank you for the question, Congressman. I will go back to my main levers. And that is security cooperation for SOUTHCOM, also the exercises. And then in my opening statement, talking about the education, the foreign military financing, foreign military sales is crucial to help them achieve and obtain the hardware that they need in order to counter the malign activity.

The ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], to be able to see the domain awareness, to see the threats is really important. There are a lot of legacy systems that are out there that our partners have, radar systems. And they need to be advanced.

But the thing is, as I said earlier, our partners are our best defense. And working with them, everything that we do with security cooperation is based in the human rights, the rule of law, the professionalization of their militaries. And we have seen over the past few years the challenges that they had but how they have maintained a professional military. I am really, really proud of them. But the security cooperation is really important for us.

Mr. MILLS. And kind of staying on topic and realizing that China has continued to utilize economic coercion, as opposed to kind of the U.S.'s cash diplomacy efforts, how do you see a way that we can combat what they are doing from an economic perspective that would enable us to weaken them in that area?

General RICHARDSON. So, in terms of from the military side, that is being able to deliver in that short period of time. Those leaders are in the seat for like 4 years. They are on a stopwatch. They are not on the calendar. They are trying to deliver in 3 to 6 months.

Our foreign military sales is really built for long term. So we are really trying hard, and Secretary Dalton has been very helpful in that, speeding up those processes, working with the interagency, within our own Department of Defense to speed those up, because our partners do see how quickly that we can get equipment to Ukraine. So we have got to be able to not take 2 and 3 years to get one coastal patrol vessel or one maritime patrol aircraft, a King Air 250, to a country to help them be able to see and counter the malign activity.

And we can do it. We can compete with the PRC. We don't have to outspend them to compete with them. But we got to meet our partners' needs where they need it. And a little goes a long way in this region.

Mr. MILLS. We talk about some of the older equipment that we utilize and the importance of ISR capabilities in these areas. And I recently visited Florida Atlantic University, who is working a lot on quantum linkage and as well as for AI [artificial intelligence] autonomous drone capabilities and capacities.

Do you feel that—and this is a concern obviously that Chairman Xi has as well, because he has said that he is outpacing us militarily and economically, that innovation is really the area that he needs to pick things up. Do you think getting those types of innovations into the field and into the hands of the military would actually help us in being able to combat some of these efforts?

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely. And so I advertise the SOUTHCOM region as an area, bring your tools for innovation, laboratory tests, whatever you want to do. We will put it to real-world use in a real-world mission, get hands on in the military, be able to use it, test it, see what works, what doesn't work. And we have been pretty successful with that. But I advertise that to all of the services. And we have a lot of folks that are really taking advantage of that.

Mr. MILLS. Thank you so much. With that, I yield my time back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Veasey, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Secretary Dalton, General Richardson noted in her testimony that China's trade footprint in Latin America and the Caribbean is going to increase by about 4,000 percent by 2025. I was curious how the Department is part of the response to address PRC's expanding influence in the region.

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you for the question. And it is deeply concerning, the trendlines in the region, and it reflects, I think, this broader approach by the PRC leveraging all tools of its national power to extend its reach really globally and

to compete with the United States. That comes through gray zone tactics. It comes through economic linkages in the Caribbean and Latin America, as you noted.

In terms of what DOD is doing, I think General Richardson's laydown of the security cooperation levers that we have is quite right. Our ability to bolster our defense relationships, empower the leaders that are aligned with our interests and values in the region, and accelerate our security cooperation activities to them will enhance our relationships and crowd out the possibilities for the PRC to make further inroads.

I do think there is also more that we could be doing in the region, building upon great work that SOUTHCOM is already doing to expose the predatory nature of some of the PRC's activities through information operations and public affairs.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you very much. I wanted to ask General VanHerck a question on China also. When the previous administration put in trade restrictions on China, one of the things that the Chinese did was that they just upped their investment in Mexico, one of our NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] trading partners. As a matter of fact, we saw record high investment in Mexico around 2020–2021 time period. And the DEA [U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency] is saying that China is still the primary source of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances that come into the United States.

Can you talk a little bit about, as trade continues to increase with our partners to the south, particularly Mexico, how important it is that we get a hold of this?

General VANHERCK. To make sure I understand your question, get a hold of the Chinese investment?

Mr. VEASEY. How concerned should we be about the Chinese investment and it being correlated with them being in control of so much fentanyl coming into the United States?

General VANHERCK. Yes, we should be very concerned about Chinese investment in the entire Western Hemisphere, not only in Mexico. There is significant Chinese investment in Mexico. About 80 percent of their telecommunications is provided by Chinese companies, such as Huawei. Their border detection and their security, going back and forth, we work closely with Mexico to ensure the Chinese aren't allowed to provide the capabilities that look at vehicles and processing, go across the border as well.

As far as the fentanyl piece, let's be clear. When we say, "China," it comes from individuals and companies in China, but the PRC themselves is turning a blind eye. So, it is crucial that we expose that. We name and shame their activities, the fact that they aren't taking advantage of stopping that, and we shouldn't expect them to. But we should do more. It's coming not only from China, but other places in Asia as well, and we need to work closely.

I'm working very closely with SEMAR [the Mexican Secretariat of the Navy]. They have been charged—SEMAR is the Secretary of SEMAR—the Navy in Mexico—in providing information to enable them to, basically, go after some of these precursors, as they provide port security.

I would also expand that it is not just in Mexico and the Western Hemisphere and Latin America. It is in the Bahamas as well. And

so, they have the largest mega-resort built right on top of our Navy's test and training ranges and where our cables come ashore.

So, things that we could do is we have to continue to educate, declassify, and let these nations see what is actually going on as well, and continue building the relationships. It would vastly help to have an ambassador in the Bahamas. We haven't had one since 2011.

Mr. VEASEY. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

General Richardson, in short, based on that, what sort of platform should we be investing in for the future, particularly now that we know that China is going to continue to want to have this large footprint in our Southern Hemisphere?

General RICHARDSON. So, I think the challenges that our countries face in the region is the cyber is at the top of their list of the challenges that they are dealing with. Ransomware attacks, cyberattacks are very, very prevalent. And building their capacity and capability to, one, harden their networks and be able to do that very, very quickly, and harden critical infrastructure, and having the ability to be able to do that.

And, again, I go back to the struggling economies of some of these countries. They are having a hard time doing that. So, we are helping them to identify their vulnerabilities in order to put a focus on that and be able to fix that.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Alford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and our witnesses here today. I am proud to say that both of our generals today are Missouri natives. Thank you for being here today.

I, too, am increasingly concerned about the threat China poses, not just in the Indo-Pacific region, but us here at home, here in America. With the recent Chinese spy balloon flying over the U.S. homeland, China's surveillance of America through TikTok on their phones, new reports of Chinese-made cranes operating at American ports, including cranes used by our own military, being used for surveillance by the CCP. It makes me wonder, what part—what part of our society, what part of our country, our precious Nation, has not been infiltrated by the Chinese community government?

I'm also concerned that we do not have the capabilities in place to protect our homeland from a non-kinetic threat; for example, electromagnetic or cyberattack. And that leads to my first question for General VanHerck.

Concerning the recent Chinese spy balloon that flew unchecked over most of the continental United States, including near White-man Air Force Base, can you talk a little bit about the resources and capabilities that we do have in place to defend our homeland from non-kinetic attacks, such as electromagnetic and cyberattacks?

General VANHERCK. So, that is a great question, Congressman. As far as resources in place, General Nakasone primarily has the responsibility for DOD and defense from the non-kinetic effects that you are talking about and being aware. As far as being aware

of EMP [electromagnetic pulse], I would say that it is not a specific capability, but, more broadly, that is our strategic deterrent that defends against that, any kind of an electromagnetic attack on our homeland.

And it is also my capabilities to defend against any platform that may deliver that, such as an airborne platform, a high-altitude balloon which could effectively utilize an EMP attack on our homeland. So, I think I have the capabilities to do that if I have the domain awareness to see that more broadly and defend against an EMP kind of threat.

As far as specific EMP, for DOD facilities and key critical infrastructure, much of that is already hardened from EMP attacks. So, the way we deliver our Emergency Action Messages, the way we look at our command and control that is critical to nuclear command and control, much of that is already EMP-hardened.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you, sir. Another concern I have is that we may not be focusing enough on the Army's domestic role as it relates to NORTHCOM. Can you talk about the Army's role with NORTHCOM? Do you believe that the Army has the resources it needs to support our Nation during a Federal disaster?

General VANHERCK. Yes. So, I believe that question would be best asked by the Army, or to the Army. But my concern is access to forces that are organized, trained, and equipped in a timely manner to conduct both defense support to civil authorities and, also, defense of the homeland.

I'm the only combatant commander that doesn't have a threshold force day-to-day to defend my area of responsibility. I have to gain access to that through a request for forces who are just in time, and those forces, then, have to come from somewhere else, either retained by the Service or somebody else's OPLAN [military operation plan]. I'm confident the Army has what they need from a capacity-wise to get to it. My question is access to it.

I would also point out that I do have concerns about the Arctic. Fifty-two percent of my AOR is in the Arctic. Okay? And we need to ensure that forces are organized, trained, and equipped to operate day-to-day in the Arctic, and I'm less confident there that the Services are organized. They all have strategies; they have not funded those strategies. I look forward to seeing the budget for 2024.

Mr. ALFORD. So do we. Thank you. Our last question for you, General: could you please explain what NORTHCOM is doing to counter Huawei? You mentioned their involvement in Mexico. We know that the Chinese communist government has their tentacles spread throughout with Huawei and ZTE [Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation] hardware, in particular, near military installations. Please address that.

General VANHERCK. So, we work closely with General Nakasone and Jen Easterly at CISA to address those. And this is an ongoing topic that you see in the media right now. It is about the investment of Chinese corporations, companies of the Chinese Communist Party itself into our Nation.

So, this is an education aspect, that we have to ensure folks understand the risk as they sell off properties around military installations. Primarily, that responsibility would fall outside of my au-

thorities, but I am significantly working with those who have that responsibility, [the Department of] Commerce and others.

Mr. ALFORD. We had a good conversation in our office yesterday and we talked about not just domain awareness, but the awareness of the American people. How do we get America to wake up to the actual threat the Communist Chinese government poses?

General VANHERCK. Yes, I think this is an education in understanding. We are so economically intertwined as well with China, that it is hard to set policies in place that could have an impact on ourselves. And so, we have to understand the threat. We have to be willing to declassify and expose that threat a little bit more, so folks fully understand what China is actually trying to do, the PRC.

Mr. ALFORD. Thank you, General. Thank you to all of our witnesses.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Panetta, for 5 minutes.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. Sir, gentleladies, good morning and thank you for being here. I think the Chairman did a pretty good job in setting the scene, at least in regards to the question about I am about to pose to you, Ms. Dalton, first.

Obviously, we have heard about the horrific reports about the killing of two American people and the kidnapping of two more, I guess this group of four that was going down there for a medical procedure.

We are hearing about the explosion of illicit drug deaths here in our country. We are hearing about people, thousands upon thousands, just disappearing in Mexico. The Washington Post did an excellent expose about the amount of fentanyl that is coming into our country.

And now, you are, obviously, hearing more and more public officials—attorney generals, former AG [Attorney General] Barr; you are seeing a House Resolution; you are going to see a Senate bill, I think, by Senator Graham—about what we can do to designate cartels as terrorist groups and authorize, quote-unquote, “select military capabilities.” Obviously, Ms. Dalton, there is a lot of policy challenges in regards to this, but I think we understand why people are asking for this, based on what we are seeing.

If you could, go into some of the challenges that there could be for this type of policy to be put in place, especially when it comes to Mexico.

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you very much for the question. And, first of all, to acknowledge the tragedy of the killing of Americans over the last week, and this is, of course, a priority for this administration to look out for the families and to ensure that the persons affected are returned home.

And I would say, from a policy perspective, certainly, concerning the levels of violence; the flow of irregular migrants to our Southwest border; the prevalence of fentanyl coming through our ports of entry—these are all deeply concerning trendlines, and we need a holistic approach to address it, not only with Mexico, but, as discussed, more upstream in terms of the sources, whether that is

PRC's connection to fentanyl or working closely with partners upstream in the region as well.

I think to your question, in terms of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of some of the steps that are under consideration, in terms of use of force or certain designations, I think we need to be clear-eyed about what some of the implications might be for the lines of cooperation we do have with Mexico.

And I will speak from a defense perspective, as that is my primary line of oversight. So, I am going down to Mexico, actually, tonight to engage Mexican partners on intelligence cooperation, cyber cooperation, a whole host of critical defense cooperation activities. They are important from a national security perspective. And I do worry, based on signals, very strong signals we have gotten from the Mexicans in the past—concerns about their sovereignty; concerns about potential reciprocal steps that they might take to cut off our access if we were to take some of the steps that are in consideration. So, I think we need to be really clear-eyed about weighing those tradeoffs.

Mr. PANETTA. I mean, it planned that I will be in Mexico as well next week speaking with the President. And obviously, you had a Wall Street Journal editorial—excuse me—op-ed recently that said, basically, the chief enabler is President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Would you agree with that statement?

Secretary DALTON. I believe these are really complex challenges that are going to require engagement at all levels, to include with the head of state.

Mr. PANETTA. Okay.

Secretary DALTON. And, you know, there is cooperation that we need to further when it comes to counter drug efforts and countering irregular migration as well.

Mr. PANETTA. In the last 40 seconds, General VanHerck, I realize that there is a lot of discussion about the Chinese surveillance balloon over America. There was also reported, and to be assessed by the Pentagon, a surveillance balloon over Latin America at the same time. Whatever happened to that?

General VANHERCK. Well, I will speak for what I know, and General Richardson can talk about it.

What I understand is the PRC actually terminated that balloon in the Atlantic Ocean off the east coast of South America. That is what my understanding is.

Mr. PANETTA. And, General Richardson, is that correct?

General RICHARDSON. That is what I understand as well, yes.

Mr. PANETTA. Okay. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. LaLota, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Status of Forces Agreements [SOFA] are the compacts the Department of Defense has in place with friendly foreign nations who host U.S. troops overseas. Among other things, these agreements assure that, when deployed U.S. forces are accused of crimes by our allies, our troops are afforded the proper protocols and American civil rights, such as the right to counsel of their choice, an interpreter, a bar against pre-trial confinement when accused of a nonviolent crime.

And for decades, United States forces have been stationed in and deployed to Japan, one of our greatest allies in the Western Pacific. And our nations' military cooperation has been a strong source of stability for the Western Pacific in the face of real threats from China and North Korea.

Also for decades, military men and women stationed in and deployed to Japan have operated with the understanding that, if they were accused of a nonviolent crime in Japan, they would be afforded basic civil rights.

Contrary to that understanding, Ridge Alkonis, who is a United States Navy Surface Warfare Officer stationed in Japan, subsequent to being involved in a vehicular accident where everybody agrees no drugs or alcohol was involved, was arrested, confined pretrial, denied access to his own attorney, and denied access to a translator. And subsequent to the denial of these rights, and while sleep-deprived, Ridge Alkonis was coerced to confessing and forced to personally pay about a million dollars in restitution. Ridge Alkonis is now serving a 3-year sentence in a Japanese jail.

General Richardson, you command forces in and around 32 different nations. And, General VanHerck, your command reaches three foreign nations, from what I understand. Can you each describe the importance of valid, enforceable Status of Forces Agreements? And what does the lack of them do, especially with respect to operationally and otherwise, for our forces' morale and effectiveness?

General RICHARDSON. So, thank you for the question.

I think it is very important. And for the few countries that—

The CHAIRMAN. Would you pull the mic a little bit closer? We can't hear you.

General RICHARDSON. Yes, sir.

So, very importantly in terms of the Status of Forces Agreements, and for the few countries that don't have the SOFA in place yet, that is one of the first things that I bring up when I meet with the leaders, when I travel to the region. And explaining the importance of it and what it really means, right? I think that, in some cases, that is not fully understood. And so, being able to describe it and explain it helps a lot, and so much so that that enables, then—we have had a couple cases where we have been able to get that across the goal line, as I would say, where we have been able to get a SOFA put in place that wasn't there previously.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you.

General VANHERCK. Yes, it is crucial to have a good SOFA in place. We just have a new one in the Bahamas put in place. Without that, our folks are at risk serving there to what we would expect for due process here in the United States as well. And this puts us in a common place to negotiate, when we start with any country where we are serving, to have a foundation going forward, when there are instances as you described.

Mr. LALOTA. And, General Richardson, of the 32 nations in your AOR, about how many do you not have Status of Forces Agreements with?

General RICHARDSON. So, the exact number I will get to you for sure, but it is we have more than we don't. And as I said, we will continue to aggressively work that to protect our service members

and ensure the countries that they know that this isn't just a way to, you know, allow our service members to be able to do something, and then, not be held accountable. We hold our service members accountable when appropriate, and we will take care of that and make sure that that happens. And so, that education piece is really important.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you.

And, Ms. Dalton, what is the Department of Defense doing to get a valid, enforceable Status of Forces Agreement in place with Japan, so that our troops can operate with the confidence they deserve?

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you for the question. I will have to take that back to our team that works the Indo-Pacific. Thank you.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 141.]

Mr. LALOTA. Ms. Dalton, will you commit to bringing this issue to Secretary Austin and express to him how important this committee thinks it is?

Secretary DALTON. I will.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Alabama, Ms. Sewell, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank all of our witnesses.

I'm particularly concerned about the People's Republic of China's Belt and Road Initiative and their footprint in South America, in particular. Twenty-one of the 31 countries within SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility have Belt and Road projects in their countries. Moreover, China has become South America's top trading partner.

While the United States spends our time decoupling our defense industrial supply chains from China, I think we also have to think about how our allies and neighbors in the Western Hemisphere are responding to this Belt and Road Initiative. In fact, I have a bill called the Leveling the Playing Field Act which would counter the PRC's cross-border subsidies and other anti-free-market economic tools which are at the core of the Belt and Road Initiative. Ultimately, I believe we have to take a holistic approach to deepening our military, economic, and humanitarian ties in the Western Hemisphere.

General Richardson, in your testimony you discuss the PRC's use of the Belt and Road Initiative to promote trade and investment in South America. Can you talk a little bit more about how that is being used to undermine existing and emerging democracies in South America and what our approach should be with respect to that? And how should we all, as lawmakers, view this threat?

General RICHARDSON. So, it is definitely a threat. It is all the instruments of national power that are coming to bear that the PRC brings to the table. And I think that, with Team USA, we had a lot of investment; we have a lot of things that are happening in this region and in this area of responsibility, the AOR.

And I think that we have got to show that; we have got to showcase that, because there is a lot happening, but we need to put Team USA's flag on everything that we do. And we don't.

Ms. SEWELL. Absolutely. But do you think that these countries actually understand, like, for example, in Africa, that the PRC is using their Belt and Road Initiative to actually have state-owned enterprises in their ports running military operations? And so, I want to know, I want to understand. I know that these countries have serious economic problems that the Chinese prey on, but do they understand the magnitude of allowing those projects to go on in their country?

General RICHARDSON. I think that they understand, but they are desperate. They are desperate for their economies. They are struggling to deliver in a short period of time, and they can't make up the difference and dig out of the hole fast enough.

Ms. SEWELL. Right.

General RICHARDSON. And so, when there is nothing else available, we don't have Western or international investment or bidders on the tenders that come out. When there are big projects for the critical infrastructure, and there are only PRC and Chinese bidders for those tenders, they have got no choice.

And so, I think that we have got to pay more attention to this region. The proximity matters. They are on the 20-yard line of our homeland. We are in a neighborhood. These are our neighbors, and we have got to pay attention to them.

Ms. SEWELL. I know that we have America's Partnership for Economic Prosperity.

General RICHARDSON. Mhm.

Ms. SEWELL. And it has a lot of initiatives on that, and I fully support that.

In my time remaining, I wanted to talk to General VanHerck about the 702 authorities. I sat on the [House] Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence for 8 years. And I grew to understand the importance of the 702 authorities. I do know that the average American hears about warrantless surveillance, and they get quite concerned about it, but I understand that there are, obviously, guardrails that are in place to protect American citizens from such surveillance.

Can you talk to us, as we are embarking upon reauthorizing FISA?

General VANHERCK. Yes. So, I'm very confident that the American society is protected under our right to not have our own people spying on us. Okay? And 702 gives us access to foreign entities utilizing U.S. infrastructure for their benefit, which puts our homeland at risk, puts our people at risk. General Nakasone is very confident that he can maintain the separation of our people's rights along with our national security that FISA 702 gives us.

Ms. SEWELL. Thank you.

And can you talk a little bit about what we have discovered and how we use it to our own homeland, defense of our own homeland.

General VANHERCK. We should talk about that in a classified environment.

Ms. SEWELL. Okay.

General VANHERCK. I will just tell you that it has given us insights into potential attacks on our homeland or intent by personnel to attack our homeland.

Ms. SEWELL. Thank you very much.

I yield back the rest of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Virginia, Ms. Kiggans, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIGGANS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you so much to the three of you for being here with us today and educating us.

Over the past decade, we have seen our world become more unsafe and our adversaries are becoming more aggressive and assertive. And we see Russia's actions in the Ukraine, and we know that China is waiting and watching with Taiwan. And we see China's behavior specifically be more aggressive, like you all mentioned, on creating civilian ports, and not only growing their navy, but on the economic and civilian side as well. They are in places such as important chokeholds in Djibouti. And now, we are seeing them spread to the Atlantic side of the Horn of Africa.

So, with your AOR specifically, General Richardson, if you could address, I know there are deepwater ports that have a potential for dual use for China with commercial/military activities, including both ends of the Panama Canal. And we have seen recent attempts for the Chinese securing those rights to build maritime installations in southern Argentina, which would provide China with direct access to the Straits of Magellan and Antarctica.

So, given the strategic location of those two sites, do you have any concerns that in a potential conflict with China these sites could be militarized by the PRC and limit our ability to reinforce supply lines and move key assets to the Pacific?

General RICHARDSON. So, the Belt and Road Initiative and all of the companies that go in, the state-owned enterprises by the PRC that I worry about could become dual-use and used for military purposes. And so, the five Chinese companies along the Panama Canal—obviously, I need to keep the Panama Canal open, as well as the Strait of Magellan and the Drake Passage. That connects the East and the West, not just for our militaries, but the global economy. We have got to keep those things open. And so, yes, I absolutely worry about the state-owned enterprises and the dual-use nature that they could be used for.

Mrs. KIGGANS. And you spoke before about security cooperation and how important those relationships are with especially the SOUTHCOM and within the SOUTHCOM's AOR and the training and equipment that we are providing. Aside from our defense relationships that we have in this AOR, what else are we doing? Is there diplomacy exchanges, economic partnerships that we are creating? Or what else are we doing and what else can we be doing to strengthen some of the security cooperation that you spoke of?

General RICHARDSON. So, as I spoke about earlier, the exercises are really important. I have eight exercises at the SOUTHCOM level, and then, my five components underneath me, one from every Service, including Special Operations Command also has several exercises that they do.

And so, the resourcing of those exercises is really important because that is what really brings the nations together that the PRC can't do. They don't convene exercises. They are not able to bring those, that number or that level, from the entire region together to work together during exercises.

Panamax, defense of the Panama Canal, we just had that. We have that every other year, and we have over 20 partner nations that participate in that.

The Chinese are using our playbook against us. They do all-expense-paid training to Beijing, professional military education, but they are not able to do the exercises yet. And that is why I think that that is such a crucial important program for us.

Mrs. KIGGANS. And so, why are we so successful? Is it our reputation? That is disheartening to hear that the Chinese are using our playbook, as you said, because I think that is a concern. Is it just we do well because we are—or what is our strength there that we can do even better because we are owning that space of creating those partnerships? It is a matter of trust I am assuming and reputation. But what else can we do to kind of fortify what we are doing right there?

General RICHARDSON. I would say, also, trust is an issue. It becomes an issue when they feel like they have been ignored and we haven't paid attention and looked south enough. I call it "south blindness" sometimes. Because we do, we have a lot of things going on east and west right now and we have been. However, they want to make sure that—they don't want to be taken for granted. Very, very important countries, sovereign nations, but they are very willing partners. Their first choice to work with as a partner nation is the United States. So, it is ours to lose.

And so, I really appreciate Congress' support for that. I appreciate the congressional delegations that go into the region to visit these key leaders; when they come to Washington, that you give them time. And I want to really thank you for that, that you see them when they ask for an office call, and things like that, because that really matters. A little goes a long way. And so, I really appreciate the support,

Mrs. KIGGANS. I agree with you; it is the little things that count. So, please continue to let us help in that regard, and thank you for all you do.

General RICHARDSON. Thank you.

Mrs. KIGGANS. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Davis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. Oh, good morning, and thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to each and every one of you for being here today. And I also want to personally thank you for your years of service to our country. Thank you.

General Richardson, my first question, can you please just discuss a little further the PRC's growing space footprint in your region and the security implications for the United States?

General RICHARDSON. So, out of any geographic combatant command, we have the most space-enabling infrastructure by the Chinese in this region, and the planned space facilities will continue

to grow, from what we see. And I will be able to talk about that more in the classified setting.

But the Chinese have three deep space stations. Two are in mainland China and one is in Argentina, the Neuquén space facility. And so, just the increase, the very aggressive increase in space-enabling infrastructure is very concerning—the telemetry and tracking, the uplink/downlinks, the ability for the PRC to track their own satellites, but then, also, those surveillance sites to be able to surveil other partner nations, allies, our own satellites as well, and eventually, be able to use that apparatus for targeting, is what a concern is.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

Let me ask this: you have shared so many different steps that you are currently taking right now within the region. My question would be, right now, broadly speaking, what is the greatest priority regarding any new ways that we should be partnering with our allies and partners within the region to outcompete our strategic competitors and to address these transnational challenges?

General RICHARDSON. Right. So, they are just continuing to—some of the new things, all domain, I would say, being able to help them increase their capability and capacity with cyber.

As we talk about space, cyberspace, they are trying to tackle cyber issues. But, then, when you bring cyberspace into it, all domains, the exercise program to be able to exercise the interoperability, the communications, the ability to talk securely with our partner nations is very important.

And so, the sharing agreements, we talked about SOFA before, but there are all kinds of intel-sharing agreements. We have got to be able, with the investment of the PRC into the telecommunications, 5G, five of our countries have the 5G backbone; 24 have PRC 3G or 4G backbone, and I'm sure they will be offered a discount to upgrade, to stay with Huawei or ZTE.

And so, very concerning because we want to be able to continue to share intelligence and share information with our partner nations to make them stronger, to counter the threats that eventually end up in our homeland.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

General VanHerck, I'm concerned about—I'm sorry. You noted in your testimony that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea tested more missiles in 2022 than any time in its history—prioritizing their military capabilities at the expense of other essential items. Can you please discuss the dangers this regime possesses?

And Assistant Secretary Dalton, I would also appreciate any insight as well.

General VANHERCK. Thank you.

DPRK, or North Korea, has absolutely continued to develop additional capacity and capability with their ballistic missile and their short-range missile program as well. And we saw far more tests this year than any other year in the past.

We should take them at their word. They say they will use them. We should ensure that we understand that and we operate as such.

Today, I remind confident in my ability to defend against a limited attack from an ICBM from North Korea on the homeland. I am concerned going forward, based on what we saw in their parade

on the 8th of February and what we have seen on their capacity and capability, that they could exceed my ability to defend against a limited attack.

Secretary DALTON. Thank you.

And completely agree with General VanHerck's assessment. You know, the NDS makes clear that North Korea is expanding its nuclear and missile capability to threaten the homeland. This is a space that we are watching quite closely, and through a combination of our strategic nuclear deterrent and our missile defense systems through an integrated deterrence approach, we are looking to meet that challenge.

Mr. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Luttrell, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank the panel for coming and speaking in front of us today. And, Generals, thank you for your distinguished service.

General Richardson, could you tell us about the ISR capabilities that you have? And are they sufficient? And if not, what upgrades can we help you with?

General RICHARDSON. So, I get about two percent of the DOD ISR in U.S. SOUTHCOM, and it meets about 17 percent of my requirement for the ISR. I want to thank the Department and thank Congress for the support of the government-owned and contract-operated and the contract-owned and contract-operated ISR that I am able to get as well. That helps build that requirement a little bit more.

Domain awareness is really important for the region. It is a really big region. And being able to see the threats, counter the threats, also, expose the malign activity to our partner nations. Because when we expose it and say where it is, they go right after it. They will go out with their coastal patrol vessels to the semi-submersibles or go-fast vessels that are in the maritime domain to counter that.

But the ISR is critical and the domain awareness is critical. And so, we don't have—as I said, 17 percent of the requirement.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Seventeen percent?

General RICHARDSON. Right.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Where is your comfortable operating zone? Eighty?

General RICHARDSON. It would be more towards that end, yes.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Okay. What authorities do you have in combating transnational criminal organizations and what authorities would you like to have on top of that that you do not?

General RICHARDSON. So, I say that I have Joint Interagency Task Force South, which is JIATF South, based out of Key West, that has the detection and monitoring mission. And then, we turn that information, that intelligence, over to law enforcement or to our partner nations, depending on which is closest and who is able to go after it and be able to disrupt it or interdict it.

And in terms of the authorities, I have the authorities that I need right now in order to do what I need to do, based on the missions that I'm given in SOUTHCOM.

Mr. LUTTRELL. Looking forward, just at the narrative of globally right now, is there anything that is on your radar that we may need to be briefed on?

General RICHARDSON. So, in the classified session, I can expand more upon all the activities that we are doing in the region. Certainly, I am very thankful for all of the exercise funding and resourcing that I do get. I could do more. I would like to get more into the Southern Cone and have more presence, more persistence presence, not just episodic where we visit and, you know, do maybe an exchange on cyber for a week or 2 weeks, or an exchange with our Special Forces. I would like to change up to more persistent.

Mr. LUTTRELL. My next question may be for the classified setting. As a former SOCOM [U.S. Special Operations Command] guy, is the SOCOM footprint in SOUTHCOM what you would like to see or is that something that we could increase? And is their capabilities beneficial or continuing to be beneficial?

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely beneficial. The TSOC that I have, the Special Operations, the Theater Special Operations Command, SOCSOUTH, as they are called, out of Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida, fantastic, huge enabler to what we do. And the presence and the activities and the training and enabling that they do with our partner nations is absolutely essential, and it really contributes to making our partners stronger.

Mr. LUTTRELL. As a border state, the SOUTHCOM footprint, how is that handling the drug trafficking? And is there anything that we can do? Is there, again, any authorities that you might need in that space?

General RICHARDSON. So, I would say we are not going to be able to interdict our way out of the drug trafficking. That is really, I think, going after the labs and going after the money laundering. And getting after that follow-the-money piece of it is really the hard part, but that is really where we need to focus. Because by the time that we are interdicting it, whether it is in the maritime domain, it has already been broken down one or two times already. It would be better to get it at the lab where it is being made and cultivated, and things like that. But the interdiction is not going to solve the problem.

Mr. LUTTRELL. I have 30 seconds left. Is there anything that we haven't asked today that you could speak about that would help us help you?

General RICHARDSON. Well, thank you, Congressman. It is really just the attention and the focus on this region and show that this region matters. This region is full of resources. And I worry about the malign activity of our adversaries taking advantage of that, looking like they are investing when they are really extracting.

We have the Lithium Triangle in this region. Sixty percent of the world's lithium—Argentina, Bolivia, Chile have this. And it is taking resources away from these countries and from their people that are trying to deliver, these democracies that are trying to deliver for their people. And they are having a hard time doing it because of the malign activity of transnational criminal organizations, the—

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 140.]

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Deluzio.

Mr. DELUZIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And good morning, Assistant Secretary Dalton, General VanHerck, General Richardson. Hello.

I want to focus my questions, as many of my colleagues have today, on how NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM are playing in the strategic competition, deterrence with China. Frankly, I think—and I think most of my colleagues agree—whether it is trade, hollowing out of our industrial and manufacturing base, theft of IP [intellectual property], so much of this conduct has been commonplace in the last however many decades with the People's Republic of China.

There was a New York Times article released yesterday, "The Daring Ruse that Exposed China's Campaign to Steal American Secrets," highlighting efforts among communist Chinese officials to undermine our country—preying on scientists, academics, engineers, and others.

Of course, we have our own struggles, as, General Richardson, you were just mentioning, you know, around critical materials and other pieces of our own things here at home.

I want to turn to the Western Hemisphere, though, and efforts from China closer to home. General Richardson, I will start with you. Latin America has seen significant investment and diplomatic outreach from China. You have talked about it today.

In your written testimony, you highlighted communist China's investment in critical infrastructure in the Hemisphere. So, tell me, if you could, what are your concerns here and what do you propose that we in this committee, or the government generally, should and can do about it?

General RICHARDSON. I think we need to—definitely concerned with the aggressiveness of that, the Belt and Road Initiative with 21 of 31 countries. And we have four additional countries that aren't signatories of the BRI [Belt and Road Initiative], but actually have PRC projects that are going on in their countries. And so, quite a bit.

So, they are taking advantage of that, but, then, there is also the debt trap associated with it, the multiple loans. They don't invest, as I said, they don't invest in the country. They extract. They bring their own host nation workers. They have got an unemployment problem. So, they bring their host nation—their own workers, Chinese laborers, to the country and build these high-rise apartments. And so, you know, the investing, you don't see the investment in the country. And then, sometimes those projects aren't done well.

And so, what we try to do is capitalize upon that—again, meet the partners' needs where they are. We will bring the Corps of Engineers in, who is very prevalent in my region, and fix the project. But the capability of those funds is a sliver compared to what the PRC has.

But I would say, in terms of our instruments of national power from our United States, we need to showcase that more. We have a lot of investment from our big companies that are in the Amer-

icas investing. We just don't advertise it. We are too modest, and we don't need to be modest anymore. We need to put our American flag/Team USA on there, and we need to speak about what we are doing and make sure the countries know how much, actually, the United States is involved.

I would say trade is also very important. South America's No. 1 trading partner now is the PRC. The region is still the United States, is still the No. 1 trading partner, but we are losing. We are starting to lose and we remain flatlined with our trade.

Mr. DELUZIO. General, thank you.

I want to also talk a bit about domestic critical infrastructure. Ms. Dalton, Assistant Secretary Dalton—excuse me—you mentioned gray zone activities in your written testimony, describing them as “largely non-attributable, coercive means that fall below perceived thresholds for military action.”

Give us some sense, folks watching at home or who might hear about this later, what are we talking about? What do those activities look like?

Secretary DALTON. Absolutely. Thanks so much, Congressman, for highlighting this.

The NDS makes quite clear that central to the PRC's theory of victory is coming after our critical infrastructure at home, to subvert our ability to conduct force flow mobilization and project power, in the event of a crisis or contingency. So, what they are doing today is getting into our systems, whether that is through cyber means, through counterintelligence, and really, across the gray zone spectrum, to get a better understanding, a lay of the land, of where potential vulnerabilities are from a critical infrastructure perspective.

What makes this so complex—and General VanHerck alluded to this earlier—is the interdependencies that defense-critical infrastructure has with other sectors, whether that is water, telecommunications, or power. We are going to have to work across our Federal family. We are going to have to work with state and local and tribal and territorial governments, and we are going to have to work with the private sector, to understand where those risks lie and how we close them.

Mr. DELUZIO. Well, my time has just about ended, but I am glad you mentioned the private sector piece of this, too, given how much of our critical infrastructure is not publicly owned or controlled. So, thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Strong, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

Secretary Dalton, General VanHerck, General Richardson, thank you for coming before us.

Last year, General VanHerck, last year during your Senate posture hearing, you testified that you were concerned about the ability to pace North Korean missile production capacity and capabilities. Just yesterday, we saw Kim Jong-un's sister warn that any attempt by the United States to intercept a missile test would be considered a declaration of war.

As I have shared before, Redstone Arsenal is the center of gravity for Missile Defense Agency's testing, integration, and field activity. They are also a key player in fielding the Next Generation Interceptor.

General, can you share why it is important that the Next Generation Interceptor reaches initial operating capacity as soon as possible?

General VANHERCK. Absolutely, Congressman.

So, the Next Generation Interceptor will give us 20 additional ground-based interceptors. It gives me additional capacity to pace with the DPRK that you are talking about. But, more importantly, it gives you capability. It gives you capability to distinguish between their capabilities to deceive our systems, if you will. We should talk more about that in a classified environment. That is crucial.

Also crucial is the Service Life Extension Program for the GBIs [Ground-Based Interceptors] that is ongoing, that creates additional reliability for me and gives me the ability to adjust my shot doctrine, which gives me additional capability or capacity as well.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

How can the program be accelerated to meet IOC [initial operational capability] faster?

General VANHERCK. Yes, that is a great question for MDA [U.S. Missile Defense Agency]. I think they have a great structure in place. The two companies that are competing and the structure for the contract reward is going faster. We just need to make sure that we don't have bureaucratic mechanisms in place that slow down the testing, the fielding, those kind of capabilities.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

General VanHerck, I have noticed that you have been requesting greater sensor coverage over the homeland for a while now. Please know I support you in this effort. It is clear that, in addition to being able to see various threats, we need the ability to defend against them also.

Would you assess that the U.S. should provide better homeland defense against most pressing missile threats, cruise and ballistic?

General VANHERCK. I would assess that, based on the taskings I am given, that we do need additional capability for cruise missiles and, also, the ballistic missiles that you reference, sir.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

The Missile Defense Agency doesn't have the cruise missile responsibility. The Air Force does. Isn't that right, General?

General VANHERCK. That is right, the way it is structured right now.

Mr. STRONG. Thank you.

Part of the reason for that is the threats to the U.S. homeland are many and they are growing. Yet, we have kept the Missile Defense Agency's budget, essentially, capped at about \$8 billion for years. This is concerning to me. I hope my colleagues will join me in enacting the proper budget and policy investments this year to properly address what capabilities our Armed Forces need to protect America's people abroad, but also at home.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Escobar, for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And many thanks to you and the ranking member for this very important hearing. Thanks to our witnesses. And, General Richardson, thanks so much for ongoing conversations.

You know, I have long been a believer—I represent El Paso, Texas, a community that is home to Fort Bliss, a key military installation. But, also, we are the community that is at our Nation's front door. And so, we frequently see, and we have seen for decades, that what happens throughout the Western Hemisphere ultimately ends up at our doorstep. And I am a big believer that we can't continue to just obsess about the border; we have got to obsess about the Hemisphere.

And so, the work that is being done, especially around targeting criminal organizations that prey upon communities south of us and prey upon vulnerable migrants who are fleeing their homeland, it is really critical that we do everything possible to attack the challenge south of us, and that we provide the resources necessary, especially.

At the same time, we have to realize what we do, living on the southern border and seeing the long lines for southbound checks. For all of the weapons from the United States that are going south, we have to acknowledge as a country the role that we are playing in creating instability and access to weaponry that creates more violence and instability south of us.

So, I want to thank you all so much for consistently shedding a light on all of that, but also for using what I consider not enough resources and trying to make them stretch and go a long way. It really is on Congress, and on all of us. If we want to address much of what we are seeing as a country at our southern border, we have to provide the resources to all agencies and groups that are doing the incredibly hard work in our Hemisphere.

With that, I would like for Secretary Dalton—and actually, all of our witnesses—to respond, if you can. A critical aspect of addressing and combating the threats across the Northern and Southern Command AORs is acknowledging the infrastructure and networks that TCOs are using to traffic persons, weapons, and narcotics that make their way in and out of our country.

Can you all speak to the efforts in support of the interagency and our partners and allies to assess the size and complexity of these networks? And how are you working to dismantle them?

Secretary DALTON. Congresswoman, thank you so much for the question. And I completely agree with your framing in terms of the need to look holistically and leveraging all the tools of national, state, and local power to get after this challenge and with partners in the region.

And I actually had an opportunity to visit El Paso just a couple of weeks ago to meet with some of our local DHS and DOD officials doing some great work on this challenge.

To answer your question, Congresswoman, DOD provides detection and monitoring support and intelligence support through our counternarcotics authorities to key partners in the region. And this fits into the administration's broader approach of addressing the

root causes of migration and challenges in the region that have a bit of a Venn diagram overlap with the challenge of TCOs. You know, they are not one and the same challenges, but, certainly, the TCOs are creating conditions that fuel migration, and the broader context of governance and development challenges are stressing to economics in the region and compelling not only the flow of irregular migration, but creating opportunities for the TCOs to thrive. So, that is the DOD piece in this broader framework, but I know General Richardson will have more great amplification on this.

General VANHERCK. Thanks, Congresswoman. JTF [Joint Task Force] North, which is in your district as well, has a big role here.

First, I couldn't agree more; it is not about the border. It is about the Western Hemisphere. And we need to think much broader.

TCOs are a global problem as well. General Sandoval and Admiral Ojeda from Mexico often tell me that we also should focus on what comes south, not what comes north. And so, JTF North has been instrumental in developing support to the interagency partners that we work with, providing intel to go after money that is going south, weapons that are going south, which are just as crucial. We are not going to interdict our way out of this problem. We need a broader, holistic strategy that gets after that. And so, I look forward to continuing doing that.

General RICHARDSON. So, as you said, Congresswoman, the TCOs bring violence and corruption, and then, the PRC comes in and is able to exploit that. So, it all connects together.

But the violence, it is off the charts. These organizations are getting more powerful, \$310 billion revenue annually. They have diversified the portfolio. It is not just counternarcotics. It is human trafficking. It is illegal mining. It is illegal logging, fishing, whatever they can get their hands on.

And then, the Chinese money laundering with the seven PRC banks, 275 branches in the region. It is just a vicious cycle that continues.

So, the work that we do with the security cooperation to help our partner nation militaries and public security forces deal with these challenges internally and be able to secure their borders, and work cross-border with their neighbors, enable them to handle these situations, so it doesn't again just—

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady's time has expired.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 139.]

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Gimenez, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Thank you very much. And I want to expand on what you just said, General Richardson, about the banks, the Chinese banks, and the branches that they have in South America. Do any of these Chinese banks do business in the United States?

General RICHARDSON. Congressman, I'm not for sure.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Okay.

General RICHARDSON. I can't answer that, but I—

Mr. GIMENEZ. Is there any way you can find out if they do? Okay?

General RICHARDSON. Yes, sir.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 140.]

Mr. GIMENEZ. So that we can take some steps against them, okay, and these activities.

General RICHARDSON. Right.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Because they seem to be, what, the money laundering arm of these enterprises are these Chinese banks? Is that what you are saying?

General RICHARDSON. Well, they are a piece of it.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Okay. All right. Fair enough. And thank you again for the briefing you gave me in SOUTHCOM.

For those of you who know, SOUTHCOM is about a mile away from my district and it is a very important part of my district.

And some of the things you told me you have said here. But you said that 60 percent of the lithium in the world, the world supply of lithium, comes from South America. What percentage of that 60 percent is actually controlled by the PRC?

General RICHARDSON. I don't have the answer to that, but I could try to get that for you from one of our interagency partners.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 140.]

Mr. GIMENEZ. Would you say it is a significant amount?

General RICHARDSON. When you talk to the U.S. Ambassadors for Chile and Argentina, and then, the companies that are there, the aggressiveness of the PRC and the ground game that they have with the lithium is very advanced and very aggressive.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Look, I don't think that combating China, I mean combating the PRC in South America—I do believe that is our greatest threat. It is just going to take military. It is going to be a military—although you all do a great job in the partnership, it is actually an economic. And I believe that, for far too long, we have ignored our own backyard and allowed Russia, China, Iran, adversaries of the United States, to actually make great footholds into our region. And we need to do something about it.

And it has to be a holistic approach, an economic approach. How do we help our neighbors? Because the PRC is not helping our neighbors. They are building the infrastructure with their own people, their own material, and then, getting those countries to actually pay for their own people. So, it is actually a pretty good gig. Okay? It is a great racket what they are doing right now.

General VanHerck, we talked about your cooperation with Mexican authorities dealing with the cartels. Do you think they are doing enough?

General VANHERCK. Do I think the Mexicans are doing enough?

Mr. GIMENEZ. Yes.

General VANHERCK. I think everybody can do more than we are right now to look at this problem. They are doing a significant amount. They have tens of thousands of forces applied to the problem. The problem just continues to grow, though. So, I think that is a better policy question than it is for the military. I stand ready to support, if directed to do more or directed to plan more, et cetera.

Mr. GIMENEZ. It wasn't a policy question. It was a question. Are they doing enough? Do you think that, if we in the United States

were allowing our organizations to flood Mexico and kill 100,000 Mexicans a year, do you think that they would be happy about it?

General VANHERCK. I don't think they would be happy about that, Congressman.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Would they be asking us to do more?

General VANHERCK. I would ask them. I would assume they would.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Okay. Do you think they should do more?

General VANHERCK. I think we all can do more.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Okay. Fair enough. One other question, and I have about a minute and 30.

I live in Miami and I have a bunch of friends in Miami. And there are a bunch of them coming and saying, "Hey, you need to see what's going on in the Bahamas with the PRC." So, what is going on in the Bahamas? And by the way, the Bahamas are 15 miles away.

General VANHERCK. Yes, Congressman, I couldn't agree with you more. The PRC is aggressively pursuing their economic coercion in the Bahamas. They built the biggest embassy around the globe in the Bahamas. They have a very aggressive ambassador. He uses the information space to undermine us each and every day.

The resort that they built on top of our cables that come ashore there, which are crucial for command and control, which are crucial for economic prosperity, those kinds of things as well, they are right over that, as they gain additional access to land. And right on top of the Navy's test and training facilities in the Atlantic as well. So, they are very aggressive in the Bahamas.

After the hurricane in Abaco Island, the Chinese financed and ensured they built a port there. That port is not being used for military purposes right now, but it is another indicator of their aggressive nature to coerce and use their economic influence around the globe.

Mr. GIMENEZ. And we don't have an ambassador since 2011 to the Bahamas?

General VANHERCK. There is currently an ambassador that is nominated, but not confirmed, and it has been since 2011 since we have had an ambassador.

Mr. GIMENEZ. Fair enough. That is very concerning to me because, obviously, you know I live in Miami, and that is only 15 miles away. So, thank you very much.

And my time is up. I yield my time back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Houlahan, for 5 minutes.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. And thank you to the panel for coming and speaking to us.

General Richardson, my questions are for you at first. The TCOs are very much a large part of the reasons why we have concerns about the security of the southern border. And you spoke about that here and, also, in your testimony, about the flow of drugs that they are generating. These guys are super well-funded, \$310 billion annually, as you also noted in your testimony.

Can you talk a little bit about, if you are able in this setting, these criminal organizations and how they are receiving support

from the PRC-connected criminal organizations and what SOUTHCOM is doing to prevent that?

General RICHARDSON. So, the connection, what the TCOs do with the violence and the corruption, it cracks the fragility. You know, these democracies, again, are trying to deliver for their people. It creates insecurity and unstable environments. It causes people to have to move and get on the move. It feeds into this irregular migration, when people and families don't feel safe.

Ms. HOULAHAN. But what are the mechanisms that the PRC is exercising to deliver funding or support to these organizations, to these criminal organizations?

General RICHARDSON. So, through the money laundering, in terms of the transnational criminal organizations being able to provide the money to the PRC, who, then, sell it back to the countries through the goods, is one way to do it.

We have law enforcement agencies within that work as part of the liaison officers within SOUTHCOM. We try to connect those dots, work very closely with the Department of Treasury, Justice, Commerce on following this money. Because I think, as I said earlier, getting after how you follow the money, and what is actually enabling this piece to clean the money and be able for these organizations to flourish—we have got to get after that in order to counter it.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And then, real quickly, you mentioned you felt like you had the authorities that you needed in those particular areas.

You also mentioned twice today that we are too modest; that we should put our flag on more things that U.S. companies are doing; things that we here, you know, with Federal money and taxpayer money, are doing. What do you mean by putting your flag on it more, when you are speaking about industry or private industry? How can we advertise more explicitly? What is your idea?

General RICHARDSON. And I'm gaining this perspective when I meet with leaders in the countries, and they don't seem to be aware of a lot of the United States investment. The tenders that come out, the project bids for big projects within these countries, only have Chinese bidders. So, it is all this information I am receiving from them that we are not.

And then, when I meet with the companies—I met with the Atlantic Council, the Council of the Americas—and these companies have an opportunity to tell me what they are doing, there is a mismatch in what the country sees and what our companies say they are doing.

And so, that is why I said it seems to me that we need to bring all of our strengths together and advertise it, say what we are doing to talk about Team USA and the investment in this region, and how important it is, because it absolutely is.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. And, General VanHerck, with my remaining time, I wanted to drill down on something that you talked about. I just recently led a delegation to Finland and to Norway, a bipartisan delegation. And we spoke a lot about the Arctic. And I know this hearing is not necessarily about that, but you brought it into play.

Can you talk a little bit about your insights into the impact that climate change is having in the Arctic; what it means for national security vis-a-vis Russia, and even China as well?

You also mentioned that you are worried about being ready to train and wanted more resources in that area. We are hoping that the budget would reflect that. If you could be more specific about what you are looking for when the President's budget is released, that would be great.

General VANHERCK. Thanks. Environmental change is absolutely having a significant impact in the Arctic. It gives access to resources, which is going to definitely challenge nations; there will be friction. So, competition is important. That is what the National Defense Strategy tells us to do, is go after competing in the Arctic.

As far as the importance and the capabilities we need, so persistence is one thing. So, the jobs and infrastructure bill provided \$250 million for the Port of Nome, which will help me with persistence in the Arctic.

Communications capabilities as well. When you get north of about 65 latitude, it is a very challenging environment. So, the commercial, such as SpaceX through Starlink, has given the opportunity for us to take advantage of that. I need more funding for terminals to use that allow us to access those kinds of capabilities.

Infrastructure is crucial for campaigning. It is also crucial for crisis and when we defend our homeland. Infrastructure is severely limited, both in Canada and the U.S. And access to infrastructure, such as in Thule, Greenland as well.

So, when you only have a day's worth of fuel or limited building, those things will prevent me from doing what I need to do to defend the homeland.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. I have run out of time. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Fallon, for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this hearing. It is vitally important.

General VanHerck, in January, there were 1400 pounds of fentanyl seized at the southern border. I mean, I found that to be startling.

So, I would like to start, if we can dial it back a minute, and, Ms. Dalton, do you believe that national security—that border security is a national security issue?

Secretary DALTON. It is a Homeland Security issue.

Mr. FALLON. Do you think it is a national security issue?

Secretary DALTON. We have national security issues.

Mr. FALLON. Yes or no?

Secretary DALTON. It is a secure border.

Mr. FALLON. It is a really simple question. Yes or no?

Secretary DALTON. We have national security interests and a

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Mr. FALLON. So, yes? You are not going to answer yes or no?

Secretary DALTON. We have national security interests and a secure border.

Mr. FALLON. Okay. All right. Thank you.

So, General VanHerck, the same question. It is real simple. Is border security a national security issue?

General VANHERCK. I'm on the record as saying that border security is national security.

Mr. FALLON. See, it is not that hard. Yes. Thank you.

You know, it is interesting because I had an amendment to the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] in 2021 and it simply said that. And I was very careful in crafting it—it was one page—because I wanted it to be a unanimous vote. And it did pass. And we were, the Republicans were in the minority at the time. It was 31–28, and it passed 33–26, which meant that five Democrats voted for that and agreed with the statement that the General just made and I made. But 26 Democrats said no. They voted no, which was shocking to me.

So, we laid out that securing our southern border against transnational criminal organizations and drug dealers and human traffickers, weapons smugglers, terrorists, and various other criminals, is a matter of national security. And what we really, ultimately, have to decide is: is the United States Federal Government going to control our southern border or are we going to let the Mexican drug cartels do it?

Because we have seen in the last couple of years—we have never had a month that we over 200,000 illegal border crossings, and then, we had 10 months in a row of over 200,000 illegal border crossings. We caught over a hundred people that were on the Terrorist Watch List. We had 160 countries represented by folks that were crossing the border illegally. Twenty-five thousand pounds of fentanyl has been seized, and even more now over the last couple of years, which is enough to kill every man, woman, and child dozens of times over. And we lost 108,000 Americans to fentanyl overdoses last year. And as we mentioned, General, about the 1400 pounds.

So, earlier this year, I cosponsored legislation to author a military force against any foreign nation, organization, or person responsible for trafficking fentanyl in the United States. Specifically, there are nine cartels that have used violence and intimidation to wreak havoc in our country and in Mexico and Central America.

So, General, do you believe that the Mexican drug cartels present a clear and present danger to the United States?

General VANHERCK. I believe that transnational criminal organizations are a global security problem, which would include here in the homeland.

Mr. FALLON. And, sir, what are your thoughts on authorizing military force against the cartels to stop the deadly flow of narcotics into our country?

General VANHERCK. I think that is a policy decision. If directed to plan and execute and use military force, then I would do that. Posse Comitatus prevents me from enforcing our laws. I believe that inside the United States this problem is a Homeland Security/Department of Justice problem, not a DOD problem. And they need to be fully resourced to execute their missions.

Mr. FALLON. And what else do you think, in your opinion, we could use to effectively confront the cartels and to protect the country?

General VANHERCK. I think information-sharing, helping our interagency partners, which is what we are doing, is crucial. I

think information-sharing with Mexico and other Western Hemisphere nations, as General Richardson has discussed, is crucial to enable them to address the problems that they have on their soil. Their problems on their soil are a problem on our soil as well. And so, we need to work together.

Mr. FALLON. And, sir, I really quickly, too, want to get to the fact that you stated in your testimony in front of the United States Senate—I found this fascinating—that “most GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate] members”—we would probably know them colloquially as KGB [Committee for State Security]; that would be their predecessors. That “most of the GRU members in the world are in Mexico at the moment,” which I found startling. That those Russian intelligence personnel, you know, they are keeping a close eye on their opportunities for influencing the United States.

And in fiscal year 2022, Customs and Border Patrol Officers encountered 21,763 illegal aliens from Russia. And then, in this fiscal year, it has been 17,000 already.

And, you know, you think about that, and even if 1 percent of those are Russian intelligence agents—and that is the ones we caught; never mind the ones that we didn’t—I mean, we could be looking at a battalion of, essentially, KGB officers in our country.

So, is it a reasonable assumption that adversarial intelligence services, such as the Russians, and hostile non-state actors would take advantage of the vulnerabilities at the southern border to serve their interests?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I would say that potential adversaries would take advantage of any opportunity to gain access here, whether it is the southern border, whether it be through cyberspace, the information space as well. They are going to take advantage of any loops or gaps—

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman’s time has expired.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 140.]

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Carbalal, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

General Richardson, you highlighted significant investments from the People’s Republic of China into the SOUTHCOM AOR. I agree with you that strengthening partnerships to help partner democracies deliver for their population is imperative in helping counter the PRC’s influence. Do you think we can strengthen relationships with countries who are sympathetic to the PRC through this strategy? And what other strategies are being implemented to encourage alternatives to cooperation with the PRC? And how can Congress help to further that support?

General RICHARDSON. So, thank you, Congressman.

I think that the work that we do with—the answer is yes. And the work that we do with security cooperation, building those relationships. I would like to highlight the IMET, the International Military Education and Training, as well as the Professional Military Education.

When you are talking about building that trust, not just at the leader level, but all the way down at leaders—because they grow

up to be in charge of their militaries and their services. And the investment that we make in that program, I would say that we really need to look hard at it and continue to fund that, and maybe even a little bit more, because it is so important.

When I can pick up the phone and we can have our conversation, the folks that have been—the military leaders that have been to school in the United States speak English. There is no translating. We have already built the trust. We are already across the bridge and we are building the relationship already, as opposed to not. And so, just a shout-out for that education/training program because it is just huge. It is a huge enabler for us.

But the security cooperation; the train and equip; understanding the challenges from their perspective; being able to link the leaders together from the different nations, we have been very successful at that. And they can do cross-border operations because the borders a lot of times between our partner nations are very porous, and they are not wanting to cause an international incident. So, there might be some scenes and gaps there. Closing those gaps, and having those leaders work together, and I have many cases where they have been able to do that over the past years.

But those levers that I have in order to make our partner nations stronger are really where we succeed as partners. And our partner nations succeed, and we succeed as a Team Democracy.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, General.

General VanHerck, as you noted, the administration funded Over-the-Horizon radars, allowing us to better detect potential threats to the homeland. Can you elaborate on how this enhanced detection capability; will create more time for military leaders, allowing for the creation of better deterrence options, and on how the Over-the-Horizon radar will affect NORAD's capabilities?

General VANHERCK. Yes. Thank you.

So, today's radar systems, designed, basically, and implemented in the eighties, only allow me to see, based on the curvature of the earth, a distance that is, I would say, is a couple of hundred miles. Okay? Over-the-horizon capabilities will bounce off the ionosphere and give me the ability to see potentially a couple of thousand miles or beyond, and not only that for airborne objects, but maritime objects, as well as space objects, and depending on how you prioritize them.

So, it gives me the ability to see further in the future; to anticipate what may come our way, and create options for me, as an operational commander, by positioning forces, or at the strategic level, with the President or the Secretary, the option to pick up the phone and have a discussion with a nation and create deterrent types of options ahead of time.

As far as NORAD, it is crucial to field these to give us the ability to not only see, like we said, airborne objects, but to be able to provide my threat warning for NORAD, which is crucial to strategic stability—to be able to see hypersonics; to be able to see objects that could potentially emanate through space as well.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, General.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs. McClain, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being here today.

General Richardson, you have warned about China's constant attempts to invest further in the SOUTHCOM AOR. General, would you agree that several of the countries in your AOR adopt socialist or communist regimes? It is even more important than ever for the United States to be involved in South America?

General RICHARDSON. Absolutely, Congresswoman. We need to be more involved, pay more attention to what is so close to our homeland. This is our neighborhood. This is a shared neighborhood, and neighbors watch out for each other; we are good to each other; we help each other. And so, absolutely.

But I would say that they are paying attention to the PRC, not because they want to; it is because they have to.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. And in the past, you have raised the specific issue of the Port of Cartagena in Colombia. The Chinese have been attempting to gain a majority stake at this vital port in South America. If they are successful, they would have access to a deep-water port, but, more importantly, China would have a significant ISR asset.

I want to know, specifically, what tools do you have to counter Chinese investments in SOUTHCOM.

General RICHARDSON. So, in order to counter the investment that they have is to talk about it, which is what I am doing. I am bringing awareness to the fact that, when there are tenders and projects that come out from the countries, and there are only Chinese bidders on there, we have got to get our international community, our Western investment, our Team USA investment focused on these countries when these bids comes out, so that they have a choice; it is not just all Chinese state-owned enterprises. And we have got to pay attention to that.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Would you agree that we could use a little more help in this task?

General RICHARDSON. I do. I think it is the awareness and talking about it, and making it well known that we are not competing as we should, and we can. And we can outcompete.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. We can.

And Congress established the Development Finance Corporation in the 2018 BUILD Act. The DFC was supposed to facilitate private sector investments that specifically complemented and are guided by overall United States foreign policy development and national security objectives. Has DFC been working with SOUTHCOM to establish investments in SOUTHCOM AOR to achieve our national security objectives?

General RICHARDSON. So, I would want to come back to you, Congresswoman, on that to make sure that I give you the correct answer. I think that, as I have said, continually, we have got to shine the light on it and make that investment coordinated, consolidated, and more aggressive.

Mrs. MCCLAIN. Point blank, what tools, if you can articulate, do you specifically need that you don't have?

General RICHARDSON. I would say just the continued resourcing of my requirements for security cooperation, my exercise program, the State Department's foreign military sales, financing, excess de-

fense articles. And we make those processes which are really more long-term, we have got to pressurize them and make them to where they deliver within months, not years.

Mrs. McCRAIN. And I want to go back to the DFC. If you will get back to me on my question on have they been working with you, and to what end?

General RICHARDSON. Yes.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 139.]

Mrs. McCRAIN. Because we give them a lot of taxpayer dollars, and I want to make sure that those taxpayer dollars are being spent that we are getting good value for our money, so to speak.

General RICHARDSON. Right.

Mrs. McCRAIN. I mean, Congress established the DFC to help counter the Belt and Road Initiative, right, from the CCP? DFC was supposed to be coordinating private sector investments in projects that benefit the United States, that benefit our interests. Instead, what I am seeing is DFC has dozens of projects in the Western Hemisphere that provide no real value to the national security, while at the same time China is investing in critical infrastructure—I mean mineral mining for their military and to provide greater ISR in the AOR.

So, what is a little concerning—and I don't mean this disrespectfully—but you can't rattle this off at the top of your head. Yet, I am sure if we asked China, they have direct mining initiatives, Belt and Road. I mean, they have clear and precise initiatives.

In my opinion, Congress needs to take a hard look at the DFC, the DFC's mandates, when there is legislation to reauthorize this agency, when it comes up for reauthorization this year. I mean, we need to take a good, hard look at what are those dollars getting spent for and are they being spent appropriately.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Horsford, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you very much, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for holding this important hearing.

Assistant Secretary Dalton, in your testimony you mention that "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." I agree with you that these environmental hazards are degrading readiness, critical infrastructure, and capabilities.

In my home State of Nevada, the vast majority of the State is currently experiencing a severe drought. That means that 2.6 million people are affected by the drought, with 6.13 percent of Nevadans experiencing extreme drought. The Colorado River Basin has racked up such dramatic deficits that a single season can't foretell the dire water supply concerns.

And Lake Mead, the Nation's largest reservoir, has fallen by about 170 feet since the current drought began in 2000 and currently sits at 27 percent capacity. In fact, if Lake Mead falls below 950 feet, it will go to dead pool status, which will prevent it from generating power that serves 40 million people throughout the West.

This clearly has an impact on our readiness, including the bases in my district at Nellis Air Force Base, Creech Air Force Base, the National Test and Training Range, and the Hawthorne Army Depot.

So, could you explain how extreme weather is affecting our military readiness further and how the Department is addressing climate resiliency?

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you for highlighting this really important issue. The NDS captures it as a critical trans-boundary challenge facing not just the United States, but also our global network of allies and partners.

The Department is seeking to make our systems more resilient to a range of threats that result from, or are exacerbated by, extreme weather events which are being reshaped by climate change. Increasing the resilience of our bases, making our structures, power grids, fuel distribution systems, and water lines more survivable not only gives us a strategic advantage, particularly in contested logistics, but also improves our operational effectiveness.

The military's mission is to provide the most lethal, effective, and capable fighting force, and that requires adapting to a changing security environment, including the effects of climate change. Additionally, working to build the resiliency of our partners to respond to climate-related disaster response efforts, through both DOD and non-DOD programming, will help DOD sustain focus on our key warfighting mission.

For example, SOUTHCOM is working with allies and partners in the Caribbean to enhance their planning capabilities and better prepare for the anticipated impacts of extreme weather events and regional climate-related hazards through an upcoming tabletop exercise. And we are grateful for Congress' support of a new authority, the Defense Operational Resilience International Cooperation Fund, that will enable us to help build the resiliency of our allies and partners abroad.

But we are looking at this, both domestically and abroad, to tackle the effects of climate change.

Mr. HORSFORD. And what happens if we fail to build resilience against these effects of climate change and its effect on the loss of military capability?

Secretary DALTON. Thank you, Congressman.

Let me give you a pretty stark example. The NDS makes clear the PRC is our pacing challenge. Part of the theater is the Indo-Pacific. When we look at Pacific Islands that we rely upon for access, basing, and overflight, for priority war plans for our PRC contingency, those are the very islands that are subject to storm surge and sea level rise over the next 10-to-20 years.

And so, if we fail to build climate resiliency in the Pacific Islands, key locations like the Kwajalein Atoll that has critical missile defense capabilities, we are going to be at risk of being able to perform our warfighting missions. Full stop.

Mr. HORSFORD. I appreciate very much the Department taking these challenges seriously, for you answering my questions, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Department and this committee to address the threats facing our national security, including those related to climate.

Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Jackson, for 5 minutes.

Dr. JACKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. And I also want to thank our witnesses for taking time out of your schedule to be here today. Much appreciated.

The past 5-to-10 years have brought with them unprecedented challenges in North and South America, including natural disasters, political upheaval, border and migration crises, and a pandemic. overshadowing all of these challenges are the ever-growing attempts of the Chinese Communist Party to achieve influence and a foothold right here in the Western Hemisphere.

In the last 5 years—and I know this has been touched on a little bit—in the last 5 years, Taiwan has lost four allies in Central America—Panama in 2017, El Salvador in 2018, Dominican Republic in 2018, and Nicaragua in 2021. In all cases, the severing of these relationships with Taiwan came hand-in-hand with Chinese predatory economic tactics in the form of investments and loans for these small countries, something Beijing has been able to exploit all over the world, quite frankly.

The majority of Chinese enticements to these small, vulnerable countries have come in the form of significant financial aid and investment in exchange for severing ties with Taiwan. General Richardson, to your knowledge, have any Chinese offers involved military assistance and have there been any requirements from the PRC to allow access to Chinese forces on any of the territories here in the Western Hemisphere?

General RICHARDSON. So, in terms of the hardware and the ability, so the PRC does compete in terms of whether a country is looking for vehicles or aircraft, or things like that. And so, certainly, with our processes, and the countries, now partner nations, are looking at, because of the economies and the issues with their economies, they are looking at what is the best finance package, too, to also be able to, before they make the big decision on buying aircraft or vehicles, and things like that. And so, the PRC is definitely competing in that space.

Dr. JACKSON. In the military space as well?

General RICHARDSON. They are more in terms of training and education, all-expense-paid training and education to Beijing—

Dr. JACKSON. I see.

General RICHARDSON [continuing]. And to China for a 1-year, 2-year, and even recently found out about a 4-year program.

Dr. JACKSON. But, to date, really no big plans for installations, ports, things of that nature, that we see going on right now in Africa and other places?

General RICHARDSON. I would say what the PRC is doing now, sir, is setting the theater, is what I call it—

Dr. JACKSON. Yes.

General RICHARDSON [continuing]. Or setting the table for these state-owned enterprises that come in and could be used for dual-use capability for the military in the future. So, while we don't have any basis right now from the PRC, I would say that that is something that will eventually happen—possibly 7, 10, 15 years from now.

Dr. JACKSON. Yes, ma'am. Thank you. That makes sense. Thank you.

As we have discussed today, some of our most sensitive, vital, and advanced defense platforms draw heavily on certain ranges of the spectrum. China also relies on the spectrum for its defense apparatus. However, here in the United States, our spectrum usage and allocation system is currently in flux, and there is a lot of debate on how we are going to ultimately resolve this.

General VanHerck, do you believe that China is exploiting our spectrum allocation in the dilemma that we are currently going through regarding this spectrum? And are they making significant advances beyond our own capabilities? If so, do you believe that we can make up our losses on this issue? And how do you suggest we recapture the high ground on spectrum?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I don't have any direct evidence that China is exploiting the electromagnetic spectrum. I would say that that would be their intent, if they could, the way they exploit everything else.

I believe that what we need to do with regards to spectrum is not look at it from only a commercial aspect, a sale, but a national security aspect, and ensure that all decisions with regards to spectrum look and assess the impact to national security, the ability to accomplish all of our national security missions.

Dr. JACKSON. Yes, sir. Thank you.

One last question. In Europe, we operate in a theater with many allies possessing military capabilities and technologies. We rely on knowing that, when deterring aggression or stopping bad actors there, we have capable, competent, trained forces with whom we can work side-by-side. SOUTHCOM, by contrast, operates in an area of the world where we are just kind of discussing to some extent that it is often still developing and lacks institutional knowledge in defense means and resourcing that many of our European allies have.

General Richardson, how does SOUTHCOM manage the distinct power and resource imbalance between the U.S. and our SOUTHCOM AOR allies when it comes to ensuring U.S. strategic interests in South America? And the EUCOM [U.S. European Command]/NATO model are different from what we face in this command.

General RICHARDSON. So, Congressman, I am happy to report that we just last spring, myself and the other allies that operate within the region, signed a Western Hemisphere Framework. And that is really a non-binding agreement, but it is a commitment to work better together, to share information. And as we are getting after integrated deterrence and Team Democracy in the Western Hemisphere, that is really what that is about.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska—

Dr. JACKSON. Thank you, ma'am.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. For 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Thank you to all three of you for being here today. It is great to see General VanHerck, who I have had the honor of working with in the past. And thank you, General Richardson, for visiting yesterday.

I want to clarify with General VanHerck some of the news reporting on the Chinese reconnaissance balloon. Some of the news reports claim that the citizens of Montana detected the balloon, which then led the military to brief the President on the location of it and what was going on. And reporting indicates that was the first the President had heard of it. Is that the case? Did we wait until citizens detected the balloon before we briefed the President on the balloon status?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I can't answer that question because I didn't specifically discuss that with the White House. I can tell you that, on 27 January, I made the Department aware. And when we detected it with radar on the 28th of January, again, I made them aware and made my assessment that there was no hostile intent—that being maneuvering to seek an offensive advantage or hostile acts, such as dropping weapons. And I provided that to the Department.

Mr. BACON. That is just a little worrisome, that it sounds like in some of the reporting that the President wasn't going to be briefed, but the fact that citizens saw it triggered, you know, the briefs to the President. That would be my concern.

I would like to follow up, too, on your comment on the mid-band frequency spectrum. You mentioned earlier that the auction of part of the spectrum, that our radars operate in that area would have a significant impact on your mission. If the science indicates that it is possible to effectively share the spectrum in these frequency ranges, would that reduce the risk to your mission? Or should we be even more cautious and not go down that path at all?

General VANHERCK. Yes, Congressman, ultimately, it is a policy decision. With regards to sharing, I am agnostic to the solution. We just need to understand the impacts of any sell-off on national security and defending our homeland.

Mr. BACON. Thank you.

And, General Richardson, Brazil is a rising power. How do you characterize our two countries' relationships? How is it trending? And what can we do to involve Brazil more in the world's leadership of standing up to authoritarian regimes and being part of the free nations?

General RICHARDSON. Continue to engage, Congressman. We have a foreign liaison officer at United States Southern Command, the second one from Brazil. We need to keep that relationship and build upon that.

And it is through our exercise program, I really think we are able to continue to build that. And we have a very good mil-to-mil. I have the Chief of Defense that is visiting the SOUTHCOM headquarters this coming Monday and Tuesday of next week, and then, I will go to Brazil next month and visit with the Minister of Defense as well as the Chief of Defense again.

But it is to build that trust. We have a brand-new administration that is in the seat, and so, clean slate and we have got to move out.

Mr. BACON. Thank you.

Would you benefit from having more Navy and Air Force presence in the southern part of South America?

General RICHARDSON. I would say our presence from Team USA in the region, as I said earlier, getting down into the Southern Cone, because it is a little bit further and it takes—you know, we need to visit our partners there. We need to be with them on the field. We need to meet with them in person. We need to do exercises in that region and be present, because there is a lot of—I think that is why the PRC has been able to gain inroads in the Southern Cone of Latin America, because we are not there. We are not there to compete with them on the field.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. General VanHerck, one last question, since I have got a little more time. One of the things that concerns me is nuclear command and control, having the survivability of it. I know it is more in the STRATCOM [United States Strategic Command] realm. What is your take, what is your assessment of our ability to track hypersonic weapons and the warning times that that we would have to respond?

General VANHERCK. I will give you more in a classified setting. But I have significant concerns about my ability to track hypersonics and cruise missiles, for that matter, and track undersea capabilities for submarines that could potentially threaten us, and cyber threats to our homeland. I am on record; I have been saying it for 3 years. So, significantly concerned about that.

Mr. BACON. And with that in mind, I think we need to do more on strengthening our command-and-control survivability. That is something to work on.

General VANHERCK. Yes, I want to point out why this is crucial. Okay, this is decision space for our national security apparatus, for continuity of government, for survival of our nuclear forces. And when you can't provide threat warning or attack assessment in a timely manner, then strategic stability erodes and the potential risk of strategic deterrence failure goes up. So, I couldn't agree more; we need to be very concerned about that.

Mr. BACON. The Russians and the Chinese must know that we can respond. We have to ensure that we have the capabilities in place to do it. Thank you.

General VANHERCK. We absolutely can respond. And I would remind you that the foundation of homeland defense is the nuclear deterrent.

Mr. BACON. Yes.

General VANHERCK. It is a safe, secure, reliable nuclear deterrent that we have today.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Scott, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to take just a minute to read from each of our witnesses' testimony.

And, General Richardson, on page 2, you give a pretty bold and direct statement. "Today, the PRC has both the capability and intent to eschew international norms, advance its brand of authoritarianism, and amass power and influence at the expense of the existing and emerging democracies in our hemisphere. This is a decisive decade and our actions or inactions regarding the PRC will have ramifications for decades to come." I agree with you 100

percent and I appreciate you being as bold as you are with that statement.

General VanHerck, in your statement, on page 4, “In May of 2022, the PRC and Russia conducted a combined bomber patrol over the Sea of Japan coinciding with the Quad Leaders’ Summit in Tokyo. The May 2022 bomber patrol was followed by a second bomber patrol in November 2022. The cooperation is not confined to the air domain. PRC and Russian naval forces conducted a combined patrol in the fall of 2022.”

Ms. Dalton, in your testimony, “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 as the pacing challenge for the Department.”

“A stark example of these challenges”—pushing along forward—“was recently brought to the attention of the American people and the world when the PRC irresponsibly entered our sovereign air space with a high altitude balloon. We know with certainty they intended to surveil sensitive U.S. military and critical infrastructure sites.”

I would have changed one word and put “intentionally” maybe, instead of “irresponsibly,” but I think your statement is very direct as well.

And, General VanHerck, I appreciate you giving specific examples of the alliance between China and Russia.

Mr. Alford, I believe it was, earlier said, “How do we get America to wake up?” Less than 14 days after China flew that balloon across the United States of America, Ford Motor Company, one of America’s most iconic brands, announced a multibillion dollar partnership with Communist China’s CATL [Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Limited] for battery technology. Are you aware of this? Are you all aware of this?

General VANHERCK. I’m not aware of that, Congressman.

Mr. SCOTT. Yes. Less than—okay, I hope you will look at that—less than 15 days. Now, I have thought about whether or not this was the right action or not, because I don’t like the heavy hand of government, but, every now and then, it needs to be used. And I will tell you something. Someone at that Pentagon needs to have enough brass to pick up the phone and call Ford Motor Company and tell them that the DOD will not purchase any vehicle that has that Communist Chinese technology in it.

Now, I don’t have a choice as a consumer. When I go to a Home Depot and I want to buy a power tool, every tool is made in China. The American citizens can either walk out of that store without a power tool or they can buy one made in China.

But I’m going to tell you something. The DOD budget is big enough that we can correct this action. We should have started correcting this a long time ago.

Now, Vietnam. In Vietnam, we lost 58,000 Americans in almost 20 years, if I am not mistaken. Over 100,000 overdoses this last year in the United States of America. You have all testified that China is indifferent and not willing to help us with this, is that correct?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I did say that. They are turning a blind eye to the precursors.

Mr. SCOTT. Turning a blind eye to the deaths that we have.

I apologize if the rest of you didn't say it. But it is pretty much the consensus of our intelligence community, our military community, that China could help, but they won't.

Corporate America has got to step up to the plate and help us stop this. And I will tell you, it is time for the heavy hand of government to pick up the phone and call Ford Motor Company and say, "You develop those batteries with China and we're not buying any of your battery-powered vehicles through the Department of Defense."

With that, I yield the remainder of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. We can do that statutorily, I think. I will help you with that. I will help you with it.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Chairman, I plan to.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, we have got the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Banks, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General VanHerck, how many times have you briefed, specifically briefed, the President of the United States about the situation at the border?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I have not personally briefed the President of the United States.

Mr. BANKS. Has the President of the United States requested a briefing from you about the situation at the border?

General VANHERCK. Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. BANKS. Are you surprised by that?

General VANHERCK. No, not necessarily. He works closely with, obviously, the Secretary and senior leaders, but I'm not necessarily surprised.

Mr. BANKS. It has been said many times already, 107,375 Americans have died from drug overdoses specifically related to fentanyl—the leading cause of death of Americans my age in this country today. And we know that the vast majority of the fentanyl is coming across the southern border.

It surprises me greatly—and frankly, it angers me—that the President of the United States of America is so tone-deaf and has turned a blind eye, that he is not asking the top general in the United States of America tasked with overseeing drug interdiction at our southern border to come and brief him on the leading cause of death of Americans of working age in this country.

What is the specific role that you are playing at the border to stop drugs from coming into this country?

General VANHERCK. So, to be clear, I am in support of Homeland Security. I don't have a direct role. I can't enforce the law because Posse Comitatus prevents me from doing that day-to-day. So, my direct role is providing support, such as intel analysis, detection and monitoring, those types of things. But I'm not authorized to provide the support that you are talking about.

Mr. BANKS. What is NORCOM doing at the southern border?

General VANHERCK. We are doing two things. Number one, we provide support to the requests for assistance from the Homeland Security; detection and monitoring, which we have about 106 locations where we provide support. We provide aerial support, about

12,000 hours for detection and monitoring, and we provide intel analysis.

JTF North, my Joint Task Force North, provides direct support to enable law enforcement agencies to conduct their mission, to include intel assessments in Mexico, pointing out where the Mexicans can utilize intel assessment to collect precursors, interdict precursors, and also, provide support to enable our folks here in the homeland, law enforcement agencies, to get after the problems north-to-south flow, such as interdicting money, and also, interdicting weapons. But I can't do that directly because that is a law enforcement action.

Mr. BANKS. But could the President ask you to do that?

General VANHERCK. The President could ask, under special authorities, for the military to do more, yes.

Mr. BANKS. Yes. I mean, this is pure insanity—a testament to the lack of leadership of this President, that he is not asking you to do whatever you can to stop fentanyl from flooding into this country.

In fact, let me point out that, in 2020, President Trump visited SOUTHCOM for a briefing, specifically, he went to SOUTHCOM for a briefing, to talk about the campaign against drug trafficking. That is the type of leadership that he provided in this country—the opposite of what we are seeing coming from President Biden.

Mr. Chairman, it is just unbelievable to me that this President has completely ignored this situation. I'm baffled by it, that the General has not briefed the President of United States directly and shown that kind of leadership, knowing that, as you just said, he could ask you to do more at the border, and he is not asking you to do it.

There is not a family in my district in northeast Indiana anymore that I talk to who isn't directly affected by the drug epidemic in this country. And that the President of the United States won't go to his top general in charge of protecting our southern border and stopping drugs from coming in here, when he could, is just—it is just absolutely—it is shameful, and I am going to continue to do whatever I can to make sure that we get a President in the White House who is paying attention to the southern border.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Florida, in fact, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. General VanHerck, ever heard of "Rice's whale"?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, I have not.

Mr. GAETZ. I don't blame you. There are only 51 of them. And until 2021, even the Rice's whale didn't know it was a Rice's whale; people thought it was a Bryde's whale. But now, because in 2021 some scientist believes they found 51 Rice's whales off the coast of Florida, right off the Continental Shelf, there's no live fire testing going on right now in the Gulf Test Range, because the renewal process that is required has been cleared by the Department of Commerce. As you well know, the Gulf Test Range is the only place where we do certain types of exquisite live fire testing.

Doesn't it seem odd that our country would suspend all of that for 51 whales that are a subspecies of a different whale?

General VANHERCK. It is certainly a policy decision. I am not aware of the specifics behind that, but, certainly, I think the stopping of military testing capabilities to test our weapons could have an impact on our readiness.

Mr. GAETZ. Yes, a cascading effect on our readiness, as a matter of fact. Because what is happening at Eglin Air Force Base now is that the live fire testing is having to occur over the land range, which is impacting the mission of 6th Ranger Battalion, of 7th Special Forces Group, of the Navy EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] School. It will potentially lead to evacuations of several highways that my constituents use by the thousands every single day.

And so, what I am hoping to do is bring a little sanity to this process. Because a serious nation would not impair live fire testing and other critical testing of hypersonic component parts over this range that this committee has invested about \$170 million into because we found 51 whales that we didn't know existed before 2021.

Because we share a vision to ensure that we have that high-level readiness and that we have the areas necessary to plan for a China scenario, will your staff work with me to try to see how we can supercharge the voice of the Department of Defense in this inter-agency process where some people appear to be stopping a critical military mission over 51 whales?

General VANHERCK. Congressman, that is not what my staff would do. I would say the Air Force and the Department should work with you on the way forward on that. I'm a consumer of that readiness. I do have concerns about ensuring our forces are ready, but that would not be my responsibility as a combatant commander.

Mr. GAETZ. Well, will the Department work with me on that?

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you for highlighting this issue. We are happy to take that question back.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 139.]

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you. I appreciate it. Because I don't think a serious country would behave this way.

And by the way, we are not the only ones operating in the Gulf of Mexico. China—China—was able to purchase from Shell Oil an oil rig where they have dual-use capabilities. As a matter of fact, it is called the Ram Powell Unit Platform. Are you familiar with that platform, General VanHerck?

General VANHERCK. I'm aware of what you are saying with regards to China purchasing an oil rig. I'm not aware of that specific platform.

Mr. GAETZ. Yes, so, I mean, here is what happened. It was astonishing to me that this could occur. In 2016, Shell Oil wanted to sell one of their platforms out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, where we do all this high-end testing. And the 96th Test Wing at my military installation objected. They said, "Please do not create a secret Chinese intelligence-gathering platform masquerading as an oil rig in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico." And lo and behold, in 2016, the Obama administration State Department approved it anyway through the CFIUS [U.S. Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States] process.

And so, I just wonder how that happens. I wonder how, like when the 96th Test Wing, when the Air Force, is saying, "Bad idea. Don't sell this oil rig in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico to China," then the Obama administration green-lights it.

What advice can you give me, Ms. Dalton, about how to ensure that these interagency workings don't lead to a circumstance where Americans are paralyzed in testing and operations in the Gulf because of 51 whales we didn't know existed until 2021, and yet, the Chinese are able to go and compromise a platform to gather intelligence on our exquisite testing?

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, as mentioned, I'm happy to take the question back on the whales. Certainly, when it comes to PRC activities in the region, as the three of us have testified today, we are closely tracking their investments, their activities, their operations, including through third parties.

Mr. GAETZ. Is there anyone who doesn't agree with the statement that we are all better off if the Chinese Communist Party isn't operating dual-purpose oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico? We all agree with that, right? No one disagrees? No one is like, "You know what? We need to think twice and maybe be more accommodating to the Chinese." Well, I would say let's not be so accommodating to the Chinese; let's not be so accommodating to the whales, and let's get back to the great mission that I know you all believe in.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair now yields to the gentleman from Tennessee, Dr. DesJarlais, for any questions he may have.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you, Chairman.

General VanHerck, how concerned are you by North Korea's continued missile development and production? And do you believe they presently have the capability to overwhelm our missile defenses of the homeland, or are they nearing that point?

General VANHERCK. Yes, I'm incredibly concerned about their ability to potentially overwhelm my capacity to defend. I would rather talk in a classified session about the details of that, but, absolutely, I'm concerned.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. Can you describe the benefit that the Next Generation Interceptor could provide in defending against this threat?

General VANHERCK. Absolutely. So, the Next Generation Interceptor gives 20 additional ground-based interceptors, which will help me with the capacity that you are alluding to. So, it would give us a total of about 64 or more interceptors, which gives me more opportunities and capacity.

In addition to that, the Next Generation Interceptor, when coupled with the Long-Range Discrimination Radar, will help me against the additional capabilities they are developing, such as decoys, to be able to discriminate that. That is really crucial going forward.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Yes. How about placement of additional interceptors in Alaska; would that be useful?

General VANHERCK. Capacity-wise? Absolutely, as long as they came with the capabilities we are describing.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. And finally, earlier in this hearing, you briefly mentioned concern about U.S. defense funding and strategies in the Arctic. I wanted to give you some more time, if you need it, to elaborate on your concerns in this area. What are the gaps in our Arctic strategy and capabilities, and what do we need to be doing better to compete with China and Russia in this critical region?

General VANHERCK. Yes, I would point to last year the National Defense Authorization Act directed me to do Arctic studies. I completed that and turned it in, and it was given to Congress in September. That will give you a classified look at the capabilities we are talking about.

But, in general, I need persistence. That means fuel north of Dutch Harbor, Alaska; infrastructure to operate day-to-day in campaigning, but also in a crisis, and communication capabilities as well, so we can communicate not only voice, but data as well in the Arctic.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Johnson, for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Richardson, thank you for your testimony today. I thank all of you for your time.

I'm very concerned about China's influence in our own Hemisphere in South America. And it has been widely reported that they have been trying to buy favor through the Belt and Road and other means. And you noted in your testimony that China's trade with Latin America and the Caribbean has increased by 24,000 percent over the last 20 years.

So, I'm curious about your assessment of how successful they have been in using those trade relationships to exert influence in South America. And what are some of the indicators that we should be looking at in measuring that success?

General RICHARDSON. So, I think that is, when that enormous amount of trade over a short period of time, then that is building trust with the partner nations, I would say. It is also building partnering that they are doing with our partner nations, and that further makes our partners think twice about partnering with us or continuing to look that direction towards them. And so, I think that plays quite a bit into the relationship dynamics.

Mr. JOHNSON. What are some of the things that we are currently doing to respond to those attempts from China to exert influence in our own Hemisphere? And then, moreover, in a perfect world, if you could design a perfect plan, what more would we or should we be doing to push back?

General RICHARDSON. Well, it is really to highlight what we offer and what we are able to do; that we are on the field and being able to give something counter. You know, that there is a counter argument to what the Chinese is offering.

And that is why I want to talk about loudly we are on the ground on the military side of the house, but we can do better talking about and advertising the other investments that we have going on in the region as a whole-of-government approach from Team USA.

Mr. JOHNSON. And I heard you earlier—and I wish you would elaborate or explain it one more time—what you mean by “putting the flag on more things.” I mean, we want to project peace through strength, and part of that, a big part of that is perception, right, our strength, our resolve? Is that what you mean by that?

General RICHARDSON. It is. And the private sector is a very important piece of this, and they are busy at work investing, but I would say we could—we shouldn’t be so modest; that we should advertise what Team USA is doing. Through all the instruments of national power, we should be advertising what Team USA is doing, because we are much more prevalent in the region than we are given credit for.

Mr. JOHNSON. I love that. You know, Ronald Reagan used to remind us we should paint with bold colors and not pale pastels because weakness invites aggression, and that is, in our view, what is happening right now.

General VanHerck testified a few moments ago to Mr. Banks’ questions about the very limited support, obviously, that the Department of Defense is providing at the southern border. And I wanted to ask Secretary Dalton about that just a little bit more.

My understanding is that DOD has fewer than 2,000 National Guard personnel in title 10 status deployed to the southern border in support of CBP [U.S. Customs and Border Protection], and the Department is providing UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] support and some of the intel assessment, I think. But the Department of Homeland Security requested the current levels of support, is that right?

Secretary DALTON. Congressman, thank you for the question.

So, we are actually providing approximately 2500 ground and air personnel in title 10 status to support DHS in the Southwest border mission, as well as 12,100 flight hours. On top of that, also, aerostat support; and also, the Secretary has approved contracted, reimbursable support for additional air, ground, land, building, and medical support for a surge at the border, if that is anticipated in the next few months.

Mr. JOHNSON. Okay. But all the things that have been described is not enough, clearly. We have a catastrophe at the border, from our perspective, and I think the evidence speaks for itself.

So, why hasn’t DHS requested more? That is the question.

Secretary DALTON. Thank you, Congressman.

We are continuing to engage DHS and our other interagency partners on what is an unprecedented challenge at the border. As noted, the numbers are skyrocketing. We are all very conscientious of the likely lifting of title 42 in May, and there are concerted interagency efforts to get after this challenge.

As General VanHerck mentioned, this is principally a law enforcement function. And so, we are strong advocates for fully resourcing the Department of Homeland Security for—

Mr. JOHNSON. Good. But I only have 10 seconds left.

Secretary DALTON [continuing]. Technologies that are important to this mission.

Mr. JOHNSON. Let me stop you. It is a law enforcement function, but if law enforcement is overwhelmed because of policy choices, or otherwise, DOD has to step up. We have to close the border. If we

don't have a secure border, we don't have sovereignty; we don't have a nation.

I'm out of time. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Guam.

And before he starts, I do want everybody to know, tell all the MLAs for Members back in their offices, after Mr. Moylan, then we will recess and move to the classified area for second portion of this hearing.

But the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for our witnesses.

General VanHerck, yes, the 2022 Missile Defense Review states, "an attack on Guam or any other U.S. territory by any adversary will be considered a direct attack on the United States." And it goes on to recognize that Guam is an unequivocal part of the United States. And given that Guam is part of the U.S. homeland, in your personal military assessment, General, is Guam defended to an acceptable standard, especially considering that the territory does not fall under the umbrella of NORAD? General?

General VANHERCK. That question is best answered by Admiral Aquilino.

What I can tell you is the Department is moving forward with an aggressive plan to defend Guam. The Missile Defense Agency is working that right now. I look forward to working with the Missile Defense Agency as we build capabilities out to defend the CONUS [continental United States] as well.

Mr. MOYLAN. And thank you, General. And then, just in your opinion, could you please highlight some resources that you would feel important to have defending the entire U.S. homeland, including Guam, such as the Over-the-Horizon radars?

General VANHERCK. Yes. So, the Over-the-Horizon radars are crucial for domain awareness. And I applaud Congress and the Department for funding those in fiscal year 2023. As we go forward, we will need a little bit more funding, and I look forward to seeing the budget in 2024, as it comes out here.

Additional capability, though, it is really access to forces that are organized, trained, and equipped to operate throughout my AOR, which includes the Arctic as well, but not only in the Arctic, but here in the homeland. I'm the only combatant commander that has to go ask for forces that has an area in a time of crisis that I don't have the assigned or allocated forces. And I don't need them assigned or allocated as long as I have access to those to defend the homeland.

I need additional domain awareness for undersea capabilities. The Russians, as you probably likely are aware, not only have now their most capable submarines in the Atlantic, but they have them in the Pacific as well. And that is going to present challenges. And the PRC is about 8 to 10 years behind them.

So, the problem is only going to grow from the homeland domain awareness perspective and, also, in the cyber domain. We need more capabilities to understand where we are vulnerable across not only DOD and our Federal entities, but across the Nation as a whole in the cyber domain.

Mr. MOYLAN. Thank you, General, for all you do. And thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The Chair will be reconvening in 2212 at 12:45.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:36 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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## **A P P E N D I X**

MARCH 8, 2023

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**PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

MARCH 8, 2023

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Statement by  
The Honorable Melissa Dalton  
Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs  
Office of the Secretary of Defense

Before the 118th Congress  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
March 8, 2023

**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 Glen VanHerck, 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 I testified before this committee in March 2022, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy conducted a reorganization, and my portfolio was updated accordingly. As the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs, 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, defense support of civil authorities, the Western Hemisphere, and 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.

Today, after briefly assessing 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 U.S. military 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 in an effort 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 the safety and security of 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 and response in a conflict, including actions aimed at undermining the will of the U.S. public and targeting critical infrastructure.

A stark example of these challenges was recently brought to the attention of the American people and the world when the PRC irresponsibly entered our sovereign air space with a high altitude balloon (HAB). We know with certainty they intended to surveil sensitive U.S. military and critical infrastructure sites. By shooting down the HAB in our territorial waters, we sent a clear message to the PRC 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 shorten its timeline 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 have had their capabilities degraded, but some may be able to reconstitute them in short order, which will require monitoring indications and warning against the violent extremist organization (VEO) threat.

**Rapidly Evolving Domains and Technologies:** The NDS makes clear that a wide range of new or fast-evolving technologies and applications are complicating escalation dynamics and creating new challenges for strategic stability. These include hypersonic weapons and new and emerging payload and delivery systems for both conventional and non-strategic nuclear weapons. New applications of artificial intelligence, quantum science, autonomy, and biotechnology have the potential not just to change kinetic conflict, but also to disrupt day-to-day U.S. supply chain and logistics operations. One example of a technology that is creating new risks for the Department is the growth in the use of small uncrewed aircraft systems (sUAS). The market for sUAS is large and expanding with UAS sales projected to reach \$43 billion by the end of 2024. We appreciate the support the Committee has provided for the legal authorities necessary to address this challenge; however, the technology to counter these systems when they pose a threat to domestic DoD facilities and assets has not kept pace with this challenge.

**Resilience in the Face of 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 90 incidents caused by natural hazards, including hurricanes, severe storms, wildfires, and floods. The Department plays an important, but 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. Reliance on support

from DoD continues to be high (e.g., in 2011, DoD supported 97 requests for assistance from nine Federal partners; in 2021, DoD supported 241 requests for assistance from 14 Federal partners; and in 2022, DoD supported 114 requests for assistance from 10 Federal partners). In addition, in 2022, the National Guard, operating in their state-status, responded to multiple events, including: winter storms in New York and South Dakota; three hurricanes (e.g., Hurricane Fiona, Hurricane Ian, and Hurricane Nicole); flooding in Alaska, Kentucky, and Montana; tornadoes in Louisiana and Minnesota; and multiple wildland fires.

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 to locations vital for deterrence and warfighting objectives while degrading readiness, critical infrastructure, and capabilities. Just this past September, during Hurricane Ian, the U.S. Navy had to relocate its ships and aircraft, and evacuate non-essential active-duty military personnel, from Naval Station Mayport in Florida.

In the Western Hemisphere more broadly, 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 storms. 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 and Integrated Deterrence**

**Deter Attacks:** Per the NDS, we will deter these threats, and meet these challenges, with a series of actions that reduce a competitor's perception of the benefits of aggression relative to restraint. The Department is doing more than ever before to deter, defend against, and defeat aggression from the PRC against the United States, our allies, our partners, and our interests. In defending the homeland, we will take steps to raise potential attackers' direct and indirect costs while reducing their expected benefits for aggressive action against the homeland. We will do this, in

part, by increasing resilience. Our work in this area will prioritize closer coordination with our FSLTT partners and the private sector, starting with the defense industrial base.

Homeland missile defense is an important aspect of our overall approach to deterrence. Missile defenses can raise the threshold for initiating nuclear conflict by denying an aggressor the ability to execute small-scale coercive nuclear attacks or demonstrations. Missile defenses also complicate adversary decision-making by injecting doubt and uncertainty about the likelihood of a successful offensive missile attack, either through conventional or nuclear-armed weapons.

As highlighted in the 2022 Missile Defense Review, missile defense systems such as the Ground-based Mid-Course Defense system are an essential component of homeland defense, offering a visible measure of protection for the U.S. population while reassuring Allies and partners that the United States will not be coerced by threats to the homeland from States like North Korea and Iran. To deter attempts by adversaries to stay under the nuclear threshold and achieve strategic results with conventional capabilities, we are examining both active and passive defense measures to decrease the risk from any cruise missile strike against critical assets, regardless of origin.

Nested within our broader missile defeat approach, Integrated Air and Missile Defense is the integration of capabilities and overlapping operations, in part, to defend the homeland, and enable freedom of action by negating an adversary's ability to create adverse effects with air and missile capabilities. Looking to the future, the Department must develop, design, acquire, and maintain Joint Integrated Air and Missile Defense systems that are integrated, interoperable, and sufficiently flexible to protect the homeland from the full spectrum of air and missile threats.

**Deter Strategic Attacks:** We will continue to rely on strategic deterrence – underwritten by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal, and reinforced by a resilient sensor and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) architecture – to address and deter large intercontinental-range, nuclear missile threats to the homeland from the PRC and Russia. To maintain credible and effective deterrence of both large-scale and limited nuclear attacks from a range of adversaries, the Department is modernizing nuclear forces, nuclear command, control,

and communications, and the nuclear weapon production enterprise. Here too, the Department is employing an integrated deterrence approach that draws on tailored combinations of conventional, cyber, space, and information capabilities together with the unique deterrent effects of nuclear weapons.

**Defend the Homeland:** The Department's top priority is to defend the homeland. Canada remains our essential partner in the NORAD mission and in ensuring NORAD's capability and capacity to deter aggression and, if deterrence fails, to defend the United States and Canada from airborne threats and maritime threats. This requires investment in modern sensors, infrastructure, and platforms that ensure NORAD's ability to successfully conduct aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning. Those capabilities are vital to homeland defense and to our nations' capability to project forces forward in support of operations overseas, including meeting NATO commitments.

DoD is working closely with Canada to implement the next steps in NORAD's modernization, as Secretary Austin and his Canadian counterpart announced on August 17, 2021. They agreed on investment priorities to improve NORAD's ability to detect, deter, and defend against aerospace threats and to detect maritime threats to North America. We welcome the recent announcements that Canada plans to boost Canadian defense spending to modernize NORAD capabilities and enhance continental defense, including by investing in Over the Horizon Radar (OTHR) technology and modern fighters to replace its aging fighter forces. During the 240<sup>th</sup> meeting of the U.S.- Canada Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD), in October 2022, representatives from both nations agreed to work together to develop a joint implementation plan to ensure that national investments are closely coordinated to avoid inefficiency and unnecessary duplication of effort as the United States and Canada invest in modernizing NORAD capabilities. The PJBD is one of our longest standing bilateral dialogues and, by enabling consultations and making recommendations on binational and bilateral joint political-military defense matters.

Here in the United States, we are grateful to the Committee for your support of the OTHRs in the Department's Fiscal Year 2023 appropriation. OTHR is a proven technology that will provide persistent surveillance of the distant approaches to the United States and mitigate the limitations of the Cold War-era North Warning System, while also addressing broader domain awareness

challenges. The ability to detect airborne, maritime, and space-borne threats in the approaches to Canada and the United States will be significantly enhanced by fielding OTHR, including four such systems in the United States, and two in Canada. We are working closely with our Canadian allies on an optimized OTHR siting arrangement that will maximize NORAD's coverage of the approaches to North America. The tracking and analyzing of the PRC surveillance HAB through NORAD in early February 2023 underscores the need for continued investment by the United States and Canada in NORAD modernization.

It is also vital that we secure an extension of the Secretary's authority under section 130i of title 10 to protect certain DoD facilities and assets in the United States from unmanned aircraft. The Department's February 4 response to the unlawful surveillance conducted by the PRC's HAB was authorized by section 130i. This provision expressly authorizes the Secretary to act to protect against threats posed by unmanned aircraft to the safety and security of covered DoD assets and facilities, including against surveillance from unmanned platforms. Absent your continued support in extending this authority, the Secretary's authority under section 130i will partially terminate on December 31 of this year, and with it, the Department's authority to protect facilities and assets associated with five of the nine DoD missions covered by the statute. The HAB incident, and indications that it is part of a continuing pattern, highlights the urgent need for action to keep this legal authority intact.

It is also vital to move quickly toward developing and employing advanced space-based sensors capable of detecting hypersonic weapons and other advanced systems designed to evade detection. Modernizing and expanding the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) is equally important as Russia and the PRC continue to field highly advanced guided missile submarines.

**The Arctic:** The United States is an Arctic nation by virtue of its sovereign territory within the Arctic in Alaska, which I am looking forward to visiting later this month. We are working with the White House on an implementation plan for the new National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR) to achieve an Arctic region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative.

DoD's efforts are focused on the first pillar of the NSAR, the Security pillar, though we are also contributing to work under the other three pillars: addressing climate change and environmental protection, building sustainable economic development in a way that takes national security concerns into account, and supporting international cooperation and governance, including through the Freedom of Navigation program. Our contributions to all four pillars are guided by the five overarching principles set out in the new strategy: consulting with Alaska Native Tribes, deepening relationships with Allies and partners, planning for long-lead time investments, cultivating coalitions, and employing a whole-of-government evidence-based approach.

Under the Security pillar, we are undertaking a range of activities from modernizing domain awareness to improving our understanding of the impact of climate change on the operating environment in the Arctic through expanded observations, modeling, and analysis.

We are doing this because the Arctic is a strategically important region for the Department for three main reasons. First, the Arctic is the northern approach to the United States, and homeland defense is DoD's top priority. Second, we may need to flow forces through the Arctic to other theaters or operate in the Arctic to achieve our strategic objectives. Finally, as the Arctic is warming on average at three-to-four times the rate of the rest of the world, we are seeing heightened access to the Arctic, increasing its economic, diplomatic, and military importance.

As directed in the 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region and NDS, we will deter threats to the U.S. homeland from and through the Arctic by improving early warning and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, coordination with Allies and partners to improve domain awareness, and calibrated activities and posture. These efforts will enhance our ability to defend our interests in the Arctic while mitigating the risks of unintended escalation through coordination with our Allies and partners, transparency, and strategic communications.

To that end, we regularly demonstrate combat-credible forces that are interoperable with our Allies and partners by training and exercising with our Arctic Allies and partners in all domains: land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace. Two examples are Arctic Edge, which provides bi-national training with Canada and saw more than 35 units from U.S. and Canadian armed services

participating in its 2020 iteration, and regular Bomber Task Force deployments -- with countries like the United Kingdom and Norway that allow for aerial integration among Allied and partner military aircraft to execute rapid, global power projection missions in support of the mutual defense of NATO Allies. We look forward to expanding the scope and complexity of these exercises to build capability and readiness. We also are working through the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research to close capability gaps and improve interoperability with our Allies and partners.

Following the establishment of DoD's first new Regional Center in 21 years -- the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies in Anchorage, Alaska -- we are leveraging the center to help DoD leadership better understand the changing operating environment, educate current and future leaders on the Arctic, and convene international partners to discuss shared regional challenges. Additionally, we are working with our Allies and partners to strengthen governance structures that affect the Arctic and to uphold the international rules-based order in the face of concerted attempts by the PRC and Russia to subvert or bend it to suit their interests.

In 2018 the PRC declared itself a “near-Arctic state”, a self-declared status that is not recognized by the United States or our Arctic allies and partners. While the PRC does not yet have an ability to project significant military power into the Arctic, it has been steadily pursuing a larger role in shaping governance and security affairs in the region by constructing research facilities that could serve both civilian and military purposes and taking steps to secure its access to new sea lanes and natural resources. More recently, we see the PRC taking active steps to demonstrate its capability to operate in the region, including by joining with Russia in a large-scale military exercise in the vicinity of the Aleutian Islands in September 2022.

Russia's geostrategic location and the increase in its military capabilities in the Arctic make it the most acute security challenge in the region. Russia has been very clear in stating its claims in the Arctic region, to include the right to regulate the waters of the Northern Sea Route in excess of the authority permitted under international law, and has displayed a willingness to use force in other regions to further its geostrategic goals. These illegitimate assertions of authority and actions are a danger to international peace and security.

Our strategy in the Arctic is calculated to challenge excessive territorial claims, maintain freedom of navigation in the region for all, and preserve regional stability while complicating Russia's ability to use the Arctic for strategic attacks against the homeland.

Regarding posture, we are constantly reassessing our requirements in light of the changing security environment. The Department of the Air Force is investing in infrastructure at Clear, Alaska, and at Thule, Greenland, to support expanded mission requirements. In fiscal year 2023, \$68M was appropriated to build new dormitories at Clear Space Force Station in support of upgrades to the site's Long Range Discrimination Radar, which will improve ballistic defense discrimination and increase the effectiveness of ground-based interceptors.

**Critical Infrastructure Resilience:** Our adversaries have strategies of achieving victory by undermining our military capabilities in the homeland. Current competitor tactics and technology require a greater focus on protecting key domestic assets, networks, and infrastructure. This is particularly problematic when it comes to gray zone activities – largely non-attributable, coercive means that fall below perceived thresholds for military action – affecting different elements of the FSLTT governments or the private sector.

Denying the benefits of aggression requires resilience – the ability to withstand, fight through, and recover quickly from disruption. DoD is improving its ability to operate in the face of multi-domain threats - including, cyber, counterintelligence, and espionage - to a growing number of vital networks and critical infrastructure, including in the homeland. The Department is bolstering deterrence by enhancing the resilience of U.S. systems that the PRC, Russia, and other adversaries may seek to target, working closely with the defense industrial base, interagency partners, and FSLTT governments, and through public-private partnerships. For example, the Department is working with and through our interagency and private partners to strengthen the resilience of the critical infrastructure that we depend on to project power and enable the warfighter. We will bolster our ability to fight through disruption by improving defensive capabilities and increasing options for reconstitution.

Our nation's infrastructure is designed for commerce rather than competition or conflict. The Department recognizes that adversaries are targeting U.S. infrastructure that both the military and the American people rely upon. We have observed the potential for attacks on private sector infrastructure to have far-reaching impacts, including low-cost physical attacks with minimal risk to the adversary, demonstrating the systemic challenges we must address in the near-term through prevention, mitigation, and preparation for rapid reconstitution.

To address this challenge, it is imperative that we work with interagency partners by leveraging their unique authorities, knowledge, and analytic capabilities to understand and manage risks to our national security. Our ultimate goal is to identify systemic risk, which will guide planning, standards development, and investments to transform our critical infrastructure and ensure that it can support daily commerce and survive competition and conflict.

The Department is pursuing a two-pronged approach. First, for DoD assets and facilities within the Defense enterprise, we have strengthened our internal processes to assess and resolve vulnerabilities. When necessary, we have increased investment in the resilience or redundancy of our most critical assets. The second element is more challenging – mitigating the vulnerabilities to civil and commercial infrastructure that we depend on to enable defense operations, such as the electric grid, water systems, and communications networks. Here the Department has more limited options, with neither the resources nor the authority to directly impact resilience of infrastructure “outside-the-wire.” This past year we have redoubled our efforts with our interagency partners to increase awareness of their vital role in national defense, share information about our interdependencies, and jointly develop options to mitigate risk. To inform these discussions, last year the Department established the Critical Infrastructure Defense Analysis Center (CIDAC) to merge, analyze, and disseminate all-source information about threats and vulnerabilities to “outside-the-wire” critical infrastructure that DoD depends on for priority operations.

As the Sector Risk Management Agency for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), DoD partners directly with DIB companies to protect our military advantage by raising the sector's collective cybersecurity and resilience posture and eliminating barriers to effective coordination. The

Department is working to maximize information transparency to ensure our partners have effective tools to mitigate risk. Over the past year, we focused on improving and expanding bi-directional threat and mitigation information sharing with DIB partners.

**Federal Mission Resilience:** We also seek to ensure that DoD is prepared to operate through disruption, consistent with the Federal Mission Resilience (FMR) Strategy, December 7, 2020. The FMR Strategy drives the Department to increase our resilience by reducing our reliance on reactive relocation after disruption and emphasizing the routine and proactive distribution of personnel to continue our most essential functions. This includes increasing DoD's ability to operate in a more dispersed manner and from alternate locations, increasing redundancy in our capabilities, and by planning, training and exercising.

**Defense Support of Civil Authorities:** DoD has a long history of leveraging its substantial capabilities and capacity to support our FSLTT partners in their homeland security missions, such as responding to man-made and natural disasters, public health emergencies, and securing our borders. Examples of DoD defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) missions in 2022 and early 2023 include support of: whole-of-government support during special security events (e.g., State of the Union Address and the United Nations General Assembly); responses to climate-related incidents, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and wild fires; support of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State Department in the rescue and resettlement of our allies in Operation Allies Welcome; and support of DHS efforts at the Southwest Border. DSCA is a vital and visible mission, directly supporting the American public and shaping civil-military relations in the United States.

The National Defense Strategy includes an expectation that DoD will be prepared to support other Federal departments and agencies in responding to crises with DSCA contributions of a scale and duration that does not substantially impair warfighting readiness. With this in mind, DoD supports our Federal partners' efforts to develop their own capability so they can independently perform their missions and functions without relying on DoD for support. This will increase the resilience of the nation, especially in scenarios where DoD capabilities are focused on executing our defense missions. Recently, DoD has made an effort to use its

tremendous contracting capability to support civil authorities' requests for assistance. This will continue to be a focus for the future. Ensuring that a DSCA mission is scoped under the appropriate authorities, operates in support of a civilian lead Federal agency, uses trained forces appropriate to the mission, and employs forces in a professional manner calibrated for the mission's context, is vital for healthy civil-military relations in the United States. We must think about an integrated, whole-of-government approach to ensure our domestic partners are resourced to meet their mission requirements, while preserving DoD's ability to defend the nation.

**Southwest Border Security:** DoD has supported DHS's border security mission at the southwest border for 18 of the last 22 years. In 14 of these 18 years, the duration of DoD support spanned the entire fiscal year, and, in many cases, was provided on a non-reimbursable basis. Currently, approximately 2,500 military personnel are deployed to the southwest border on active-duty (Title 10) orders, supporting U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detection and monitoring activities, and providing intelligence analysis, aviation, command and control, and other support to CBP.

**Enduring Advantage/Build a Resilient Joint Force:** Per the NDS, we will build enduring advantages across the defense ecosystem – the Department of Defense, the defense industrial base, and the array of private sector and academic enterprises that create and sharpen the Joint Force's technological edge.

As directed in the NDS, we are developing a strategic approach for addressing the nexus of climate change and national security. The effects of the changing environment are reshaping the geostrategic, operational, and tactical environments in which DoD operates, with profound implications for U.S. defense policy. Failing to build resilience against these effects could result in lost military capability and missed opportunity for technical innovation and economic growth. DoD is taking these challenges seriously.

The Department is integrating efforts to build global resilience into major planning documents, including the NDS and other DoD core guidance. Within the Department, we are working to

both strengthen the Department's ability to withstand and recover quickly from extreme environmental events and build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

Recognizing our shared priorities, addressing climate security is part of our core mission of combat readiness and integrated deterrence. As the hemisphere grapples with the effects of a changing climate, we recognize ally and partner engagement on this issue is a strategic advantage and necessity for the United States, one that demands greater cooperation between military officials and civilian authorities, including in the areas of training, research, and development. To that end, we are discussing climate resilience cooperation with Allies and partners during bilateral and multilateral meetings. For instance, under the former Defense Environmental International Cooperation (DEIC) program, we funded a table-top exercise on disaster risk reduction as part of the upcoming Tradewinds meeting with Caribbean partners in August. We intend to use the new Defense Operational Resilience International Cooperation (DORIC) program to build awareness and early warning capabilities among our partners to reduce the need for DoD assets as disasters and other emergencies in the region become more frequent and severe.

**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 the homeland. To preserve this benefit, we are deepening our core partnerships with Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Chile through ongoing engagement under existing arrangements, robust strategic dialogues, key leader engagements, and defense exercises, while at the same time reinforcing democratic institutions, civilian control of the military, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Later this year, Mexico will host the 5<sup>th</sup> installment of the North American Defense Ministerial, the defense component to the North American Leaders forum, to discuss trilateral defense cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. Later this week, I look forward to traveling to Mexico for meetings with counterparts to discuss a range of bilateral and hemispheric defense issues.

We were very pleased that integrated deterrence was a discussion topic at last year's Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, or CDMA, a multilateral meeting hosted by Brazil that

marked Secretary Austin's first trip to the region. As Secretary Austin highlighted in his remarks at CDMA, "...credible deterrence demands military and security forces that are ready, capable, and under firm civilian control. And it demands defense ministries that serve their citizens transparently and without corruption." We need to build resilient defense relationships to make progress toward our shared interests and hemispheric security, regardless of political swings.

Along these lines, I led a discussion with our partners at CDMA on integrated deterrence and how our countries can apply it together to our mutual benefit. Since then, hemispheric security institutions such as the Inter-American Defense Board and the Inter-American Defense College have led important discussions on integrated deterrence.

DoD aligns campaigning efforts with other instruments of national power to sustain and leverage our comparative advantage and, together with partners, increase our strength over time in the Western Hemisphere. To retain this competitive advantage, we are deepening our defense and security partnerships and defense cooperation with nations in the Western Hemisphere. We also are working to increase the efficiency of our defense and security cooperation and security assistance tools. We are prioritizing Institutional Capacity Building and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response capabilities in our partnerships across the region. Our relationships with our hemispheric partners are the foundation that ensures we will have 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 organized crime through detection, monitoring, and intelligence analysis support. These relationships also help us to promote climate resilience and to undertake pandemic response.

#### **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.

**Melissa G. Dalton**  
**Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs**

Melissa Dalton was sworn in as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs on March 4, 2022. She is responsible for advising the Secretary of Defense and other senior defense leaders on defense continuity and mission assurance; homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities; Arctic and global resilience; and U.S. defense and security policy for Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Prior to being sworn in as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs, she served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities from January 2021 to March 2022. In that role, she was responsible for advising the Secretary of Defense and other senior defense leaders on national security and defense strategy; the forces, contingency plans, and associated posture necessary to implement the defense strategy; nuclear deterrence and missile defense policy; and security cooperation plans and policies. Previously, Ms. Dalton was a senior fellow and deputy director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) International Security Program and director of the Cooperative Defense Project. Her CSIS research focused on reinforcing the principled foundations of U.S. defense strategy and military operations. Prior to joining CSIS in 2014, Ms. Dalton served for a decade as a career civil servant in the Bush and Obama Administrations at DoD. Her assignments included senior advisor for force planning, special assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, policy adviser to the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, Afghanistan, and country director for Lebanon and Syria in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. She also served as an intelligence analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Ms. Dalton holds a B.A. in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and was a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow.

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STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL GLEN D. VANHERCK, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
COMMANDER  
UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND  
AND  
NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND



BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

DELIVERY DATE 8 MARCH 2023

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Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for the honor of representing the men and women of U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). From the day I assumed Command in August 2020, USNORTHCOM and NORAD have worked tirelessly to defend the homeland and North America in an extraordinarily challenging strategic environment requiring the commands to adapt new approaches to how we plan, prepare, and operate. That innovation and evolution is necessary to outpace our competitors and is a testament to the devotion of our military and civilian personnel who stand constant watch over the United States and Canada.

The commands have made tremendous progress in a short time, yet much work remains. While the United States military remains the most powerful and professional force in history, and our alliances and partnerships provide a vital strategic advantage over any potential adversary, it is clear that our competitive advantage is eroding. The successful defense of North America requires the Department of Defense to move beyond outdated assumptions and plans that do not fully reflect competitor capability, capacity, and intent to threaten the homeland. Likewise, continued action is required to build enduring advantages and outpace the gains made by competitors around the globe. This will require the Department to invest in modernization, implement innovative processes, prioritize our personnel and improve civilian hiring practices, and increase agile decision making at all levels.

#### **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

Today's strategic environment is the most complicated and potentially dangerous in my 35+ years of service. Our competitors and potential adversaries, particularly the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia, continue to challenge the rules-based international order

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that has provided global stability and prosperity over the last seven decades. They seek to advance their interests and gain global advantages through political intimidation, economic coercion, cyber and information operations, asymmetric attacks on infrastructure, and the direct threat or actual employment of military force.

**The People's Republic of China (PRC)**

The PRC remains NORAD and USNORTHCOM's long-term pacing challenge. Beijing continues ambitious military modernization at an alarming pace. It would be naive to think their sprint to develop advanced cyber tools, maritime capabilities, and hypersonic technology has only regional applications, as the PRC continues to develop advanced long-range conventional and strategic capabilities and the infrastructure necessary to project military power at greater distances. Underpinning this growth is a rapid nuclear expansion that is on pace for the PRC to expand their nuclear stockpile from what DoD estimates is over 400 today to about 1,500 by 2035. While less observable, the PRC's aggressive efforts to exploit the information technology sector are accelerating an increasing threat to North America.

The PRC's aggressive actions in the Pacific in mid-2022 following Congressional visits to Taiwan illustrate how regional events create geostrategic ripple effects that can quickly reach our shores. President Xi is likely to use his next term in office to double down on the PRC's revisionist foreign policy, and is likely to include global efforts to undermine the United States and bolster partnerships with U.S. competitors, including Russia. In February 2022, Xi signaled his intent to follow this path when he declared the PRC-Russia friendship would have no limits in a public pronouncement just weeks before Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The PRC has almost certainly watched the war to draw lessons that will inform its next steps toward Taiwan.

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Xi's statement also proved to be more than rhetorical when, in May 2022, the PRC and Russia conducted a combined bomber patrol over the Sea of Japan coinciding with the Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo. The May 2022 bomber patrol was followed by a second bomber patrol in November 2022. The cooperation is not confined to the air domain. PRC and Russian naval forces conducted a combined patrol in the fall of 2022 that covered 7,000 nautical miles in the Pacific, included a first-ever combined naval transit of the Aleutian Islands, and came on the heels of Xi sending scores of troops to Russia to participate in Moscow's largest annual military exercise. For years, the PRC has relied on Russian military materiel to build its armed forces, and I am aware of reports that the PRC has transferred materiel with military applications to Russia during Russia's war against Ukraine. These actions are more than symbolic and demonstrate the PRC's growing power projection capabilities, which will likely encompass the Arctic in the next decade—a region the PRC is eying with its self-proclaimed status as a near-Arctic state.

**Russia**

As USNORTHCOM and NORAD take necessary measures to defend against a growing PRC threat, the commands continue to defend the United States and Canada every day against Russian aggression in all domains. Russia's brazen and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 proved that Russia has the capability and capacity to inflict significant damage to infrastructure and other critical targets with its all-domain long-range strike capabilities. Russia also has a history of conducting clandestine operations in other nations to achieve its political objectives. While Russia has overplayed its hand, suffered significant losses to the heroic Ukrainian defense forces, and inadvertently helped to unify NATO, it has gained real-world combat experience as it enters its second year of the full-scale invasion. The meager

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performance of Russia's ground forces in Ukraine should not overshadow other capabilities it has showcased in Ukraine, including air- and sea-launched cruise missiles capable of striking North America, cyber activities, and economic coercion. For the first time, we also saw Russia employ its new KILLJOY air-launched hypersonic missile in combat.

Concurrent with its war against Ukraine, Russia has also continued to conduct major military exercises and test developmental capabilities that will compound the threat to North America once fielded. In April 2022, Russia tested the massive SARMAT ICBM, a highly capable strategic weapon that helps reinforce the critical importance of a modern and reliable U.S. strategic deterrent. Meanwhile, Russia is testing its special mission Belgorod nuclear submarine, a modern platform capable of carrying the nuclear-capable Poseidon torpedo, designed to hold the homeland at risk by striking coastal targets from thousands of miles away.

The test of the Belgorod followed Russia's Arctic military exercise that included live-fire cruise missile launches designed to test Moscow's readiness for a conflict in the high north. Last fall, Russia added its first SEVERODVINSK-class conventional and nuclear capable cruise missile submarine to the Pacific Fleet, which poses a new challenge to our defense of the western approaches to North America. In October 2022, in the midst of elevated international tensions stemming from Russian threats to escalate its already brutal campaign in Ukraine, Russia chose to proceed with its annual strategic forces exercise, including demonstrations of multiple nuclear strike capabilities. Finally, in January 2023, a Russian GORSHKOV-class frigate transited the western Atlantic while armed with Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missiles.

I believe it would be shortsighted to view Russia's war against Ukraine as a limited regional crisis. Russia's actions increase the very real risk of miscalculation and the conflict's expansion beyond its current boundaries—scenarios that could rapidly increase the risks to North

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America and continental defense. If Russia should seek to compel allies to reconsider their support for Ukraine through escalatory actions or follow through with the desperate threats to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, the risks to the Homeland would increase.

**DPRK and Iran**

The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) tested at least 65 conventional theater and long-range nuclear capabilities over the last year. That number includes the first tests of a new larger, longer range, and more capable ICBM, adding another missile that can likely reach the entire homeland and one the regime claims is capable of carrying a hypersonic glide vehicle payload. The DPRK tested more missiles in 2022 than any time in its history, showing that the regime will continue to prioritize military capabilities at the expense of needed food and pandemic relief for its people. Public reports of renewed nuclear test preparations further highlight the grave danger this regime poses to regional and global stability. We must remain ready for multiple contingencies and potential crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

The DPRK's reckless pursuit of advanced nuclear capabilities and robust ballistic missile research, development, and testing threatens regional stability, our allies and partners, and potentially the homeland. However, today I remain confident in our current capability to defend the homeland against a limited DPRK ballistic missile threat. Looking forward, I am concerned about future capacity and capability to respond to advancing DPRK ballistic missile threats, making it crucial to field the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) as funded in the FY23 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-328).

Iran has not shied away from pursuing malign global activities, including in North America; the regime continues to pose a significant threat to the United States, as well as our partners in the Central Command region. The August 2022 disclosure of an Iranian plot to

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assassinate a former senior U.S. official on U.S. territory illustrated the brazenness of the Iranian government. The regime's decision to provide Russia with unmanned loitering munitions used to attack civilian infrastructure in Ukraine provides further evidence of Iran's embrace of destabilizing activity. A future decision by the regime to pursue an ICBM-class missile would add yet another threat vector capable of striking North America.

#### **Regional Security Threats**

I remain concerned about transnational organized crime in Mexico and the Western Hemisphere and the unrelenting violence it spawns and insecurity it creates, as cartels vie for control of lucrative illicit markets. Cartels control fentanyl, cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking as well as other drugs, and are demonstrating the capability to use improvised explosives and small-unmanned aerial systems against Mexican security forces in Mexico, which will likely embolden the cartels and challenge our partners. As USNORTHCOM supports our law enforcement and international partners in countering transnational criminal organizations in our area of operations, I remain steadfast in my commitment to our military partners in Mexico and The Bahamas.

I commend Mexico's arrest last summer of the cartel member who brutally murdered a DEA agent decades earlier, as well as the recent arrests of Ovidio Guzman Lopez, the son of Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, and Jose Rodolfo Villareal-Hernandez, a Mexican cartel leader known as "El Gato." These arrests are examples of a shared commitment to justice, buttressed by shared values and our decades-long partnership, which stands in stark contrast to PRC and Russian malign and self-serving activities in the Western Hemisphere.

I am committed to deepening the already strong partnership with the Mexican and Bahamian militaries to advance our mutual goals, from upholding human rights to ensuring

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hemispheric defense. I was proud to host my counterparts from the Mexican Department of National Defense (SEDENA) and Department of the Navy (SEMAR) in early 2022 and visit The Bahamas in late 2021, and we will continue to work with Mexico and The Bahamas to stamp out attempts by the PRC or Russia to divide our countries and our partnerships.

**Transnational challenges**

USNORTHCOM's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary offered a reminder of the transnational challenges that have shaped the Command from its inception. Foremost is the enduring transnational terrorist threat to North America, led by Sunni extremist groups and their supporters in North America. The arrest in August 2022 of an ISIS-inspired individual in New Mexico who had surveilled a U.S. military base is a stark reminder that military facilities remain attractive targets to terrorists. More broadly, the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan and violent extremist groups' ongoing presence in the region indicate a renewed threat to the region that we cannot discount. This extremist threat transcends south Asia and extends to other regions with security challenges, including the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, where terrorists continue to operate, train, and plan.

**Where We Are Today: 20 Years of USNORTHCOM and 65 Years of NORAD**

USNORTHCOM was established on October 1st, 2002, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States, marking the first time since the colonial era a single commander was responsible for the defense of the U.S. homeland. Twenty years later, the likelihood of a major attack inside the United States by a foreign violent extremist organization has diminished following a generational, whole-of-nation effort. However, the primary threat to the homeland is now far more significant and consequential. Multiple peer competitors and rogue states possess the capability and capacity to threaten our citizens, critical infrastructure,

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and vital institutions. These competitors possess, or are developing, the modern capabilities that limit the time and options available to decision makers responsible for defending our interests. In addition to destructive kinetic and cyber capabilities, malign actors actively exploit our democratic society by spreading disinformation that drives wedges between our citizens, undermines democracy, and weakens our alliances.

In crisis or conflict, potential adversaries will likely seek to interfere with the Department's ability to project power abroad. Disruptions of military and civilian transportation infrastructure in North America could impede the ability of the United States and Canada to project combat power. Today I assess, as I have for nearly three years, that homeland defense is a potential limiting factor to ensuring rapid and effective implementation and execution of global contingency plans. This is due to my lack of domain awareness, limited timely access to forces that are ready to operate throughout my areas of responsibility, including the Arctic, and a lack of resilient infrastructure enabling the Joint Force to fight in and from the homeland while ensuring forward power projection.

Defending the homeland against an ever-growing array of kinetic and non-kinetic threats will continue to require a collaborative, whole-of-nation approach to assessing vulnerabilities and developing appropriate deterrence, denial, and defense strategies. Cyber risks to critical infrastructure remain a significant concern and a domain awareness gap. DoD is tasked only with defending defense networks, but military facilities and missions frequently rely on civilian lifelines such as energy grids, transportation infrastructure, and other critical infrastructure. USNORTHCOM, due to law and policy, has limited insight into potential risks to commercial networks, which could lead to uncertainty in planning for consequence management. DoD's establishment of policy regarding the defense of critical infrastructure is a necessary step

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forward, and USNORTHCOM will continue to work with the Department and key mission partners, to include agencies with critical infrastructure security and cybersecurity responsibilities, to ensure key defense infrastructure is defended from attacks.

NORAD, the unique U.S. and Canadian bi-national command, was established in May 1958 to defend North America from Cold War-era Russian strategic bombers entering U.S. and Canadian airspace from the Arctic approaches. Sixty-five years later, Russia has restored its capability to threaten North America with modernized bombers, surface ships, and submarines armed with long-range, highly precise nuclear and conventional cruise missiles. The PRC is making rapid progress in developing similar capabilities, which will further complicate NORAD's warning missions and affect national strategic decision making.

While NORAD's missions to provide aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning remain critical to homeland defense, action and investment are needed to keep pace with competitors that clearly seek to hold North America at risk above and below the nuclear threshold. For decades, NORAD has relied heavily on the North Warning System arrayed along the Arctic coasts of Canada and Alaska to detect potential airborne threats to North America. It is clear that our competitors possess long-range strike capabilities that could be used to attack the United States and Canada from outside the detection range of legacy sensors.

In order to maintain domain awareness and ensure integrated threat warning and attack assessment to national leadership, the United States and Canada must continue to move swiftly to field Over the Horizon Radar (OTHR), as funded in the FY23 Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-328). OTHR is a proven, affordable technology that will ensure our ability to detect threats from surface to space in the approaches to North America. I commend both the Department of Defense and the Canadian Department of National Defence for

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their commitment in FY23 to investing in OTHR, and I respectfully urge both Governments to ensure this vital capability is fielded as quickly as possible.

NORAD's contributions to homeland and continental defense will remain vital for many years to come, and will continue to rely on strong cooperation and shared investment between the United States and Canada. The U.S. and Canadian continental defense framework has an unrivaled legacy of success and serves as an international model of defense cooperation. I remain encouraged by the bi-national commitments to modernizing the platforms, sensors, and capabilities necessary to execute NORAD's missions; this collaborative approach to deterring and defending against threats to North America is critical. NORAD must continue to look to the future and take necessary measures today to counter the threats of tomorrow, and investments by the United States and Canada must address kinetic and non-kinetic threats to our nations.

Potential threats to North America routinely transit international borders and the boundaries between U.S. geographic combatant command areas of responsibility. NORAD's ability to provide timely aerospace warning and control and maritime warning will be bolstered by the United States and Canada's joint commitment to improving global domain awareness, modernizing command and control systems to provide faster, better-informed decision making, and continuing collaborative research, development, and innovation. These efforts will ensure NORAD's ability to compete with the PRC and Russia for years to come while clearly signaling a lasting commitment to a robust, modern, and effective defense of North America.

#### **USNORTHCOM and NORAD Priorities**

My priorities for NORAD and USNORTHCOM directly reflect the need to inform the rapid, agile decisions required of senior leaders in this dynamic and complex strategic environment. Our competitors continue to field capabilities specifically intended to strike with

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limited warning, which decreases the time and options available to national leaders in a crisis. Continuing to trust legacy processes and capabilities increases risk to the homeland and compounds the risk of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation. USNORTHCOM and NORAD are working urgently to increase the domain awareness, information sharing, and global integration necessary to ensure national leaders have as much time and as many options as possible.

As competitors and potential adversaries continue to field advanced all-domain capabilities with the potential to create significant effects in the homeland, it is imperative that the United States and Canada move quickly to improve domain awareness from the seafloor to space and cyberspace for all approaches to North America. The Over-the-Horizon Radars (OTHR) funded in the FY23 President's Budget, along with the OTHRs announced by the Government of Canada as part of NORAD modernization, will leverage proven technology and will significantly improve the ability of USNORTHCOM and NORAD to detect and track potential threats to North America and the homeland from the Earth's surface to space. That capability, in turn, will directly correlate to more time available to leaders at all levels, enabling the creation and employment of better deterrence options and if required, defeat options.

U.S. Space Force investments in advanced space-based missile warning sensor capabilities show great promise with particular regard to hypersonic and advanced missile threats. These future systems will detect, track, and identify threats, including hypersonic threats, enable better warning and assessment, and develop actionable targeting solutions, at a much faster pace than we currently experience, while also delivering an inherent operational resilience. Given our competitors' advanced maritime domain capabilities, I fully support the Navy's investment in a modernized Integrated Undersea Surveillance System. These

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capabilities, in turn, will directly correlate to more time and options available to produce a favorable outcome for the United States and Canada.

Canada's plans to fund a layered surveillance system that will improve shared domain awareness in the northern air and maritime approaches to North America will have significant, long-term benefits for both NORAD and USNORTHCOM's missions. Planned Canadian investment in Arctic and Polar radars and spaced-based surveillance systems, along with advanced munitions, communications, and infrastructure clearly demonstrates shared commitment to NORAD and the combined defense of the United States and Canada.

In addition to the investment in OTHR, NORAD and USNORTHCOM have also demonstrated the potential for linking existing platforms and sharing data with multiple commands, interagency and international partners. By sharing data previously trapped in bureaucratic and organizational stovepipes through innovative programs like Pathfinder, Northstar, and the Global Information Dominance Experiments (GIDE), USNORTHCOM and NORAD have proven that it is possible to rapidly improve domain awareness and streamline global information sharing without the costs associated with fielding exquisite new capabilities. It is crucial that the Department of Defense and the Services, as well as the Canadian Department of National Defence, continue the work to unlock the remarkable potential of these initiatives.

I am encouraged by the establishment of the Department's Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO), and I believe that the CDAO must be empowered to rapidly integrate systems, software and platforms in order to maintain our competitive advantage across the Joint Force. Over the past several years, actions by each of our competitors and potential adversaries have made it clear that regional actions have global diplomatic, economic, and

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military ramifications. It is simply unrealistic to assume that crises will remain confined by artificial boundaries, and we must adapt plans and perspectives to account for that global reality.

The feasibility of every other Geographic Combatant Command's plans will require active campaigning in and from North America, and successful defense of the homeland is necessary to deter adversaries and assure allies and partners. Therefore, I have also directed that USNORTHCOM and NORAD prioritize homeland defense campaigning to demonstrate our readiness, capabilities, and resiliency. I am also operationalizing the commands to accelerate the flow of information from sensor to decision maker. Our competitors and potential adversaries have shown that they will hold the homeland at risk in a conflict, and USNORTHCOM and NORAD are acting today to ensure homeland defense plans are understood, exercised, and resourced.

While USNORTHCOM and NORAD have made strides in the homeland defense mission, building a resilient Joint Force is a fundamental element of all Department planning, exercises, and operations. The DoD's worldwide missions and responsibilities must evolve from regionally focused approaches to globally integrated efforts that account for finite resources and associated risks. At present, I am concerned for the commands' ability to execute assigned missions—including contingency and operations plans in support of homeland defense. I am limited by a lack of timely access to forces that are organized, trained, and equipped to operate throughout the NORAD area of operations and the NORTHCOM area of responsibility, as well as by insufficient supporting infrastructure.

A strong homeland defense is the foundation of our nation's ability to project power globally while deterring aggression and achieving our strategic objectives in competition, crisis, and conflict. As such, every plan, exercise, and policy decision must consider the necessity of

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defending the homeland when evaluating competing demands for forces and threats to global campaigning. That, in turn, will require the Department of Defense and the Canadian Department of National Defence to place greater focus on developing the depth, flexibility, advanced technologies, and supporting infrastructure required to respond to future challenges while addressing growing threats to the homeland.

#### **Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)**

When directed by the Secretary of Defense, USNORTHCOM provides Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) in the Continental United States, Alaska, and Puerto Rico. In preparing for and responding to major natural and human-caused disasters, USNORTHCOM serves as the DSCA synchronizer to support assessment and recovery while simultaneously acting as the supported combatant command in the command's area of operations.

USNORTHCOM often supports federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local (FSTTL) disaster relief efforts. These collaborative, whole-of-government efforts demonstrate national resilience that should reassure the American public, while also making clear to potential aggressors, that the United States routinely executes interagency domestic relief operations that allow our nation to recover quickly following even large-scale disasters. It is equally important for our FSTTL partners to identify and address their capabilities and capacity gaps to fully perform the roles, missions, and operations under their authorities. This kind of response, particularly when it is accomplished with little or no military support, can generate a deterrent effect by casting doubt in competitors' minds about their ability to produce significant effects from an attack on the homeland.

USNORTHCOM is uniquely suited to support our federal partners in the aftermath of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) attack. The Department must remain

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committed to this crucial mission to ensure these highly trained, specialized elements stand ready to respond immediately in the event of a weapon of mass destruction event in the United States.

I continue to stress the importance of USNORTHCOM's defense support of civil authorities, as rapidly executed, well-planned, multi-agency responses to wildfires, hurricanes, pandemics, and other significant disruptions are perhaps the most visible demonstration of the military's support to the American people. USNORTHCOM works year-round with our mission partners at every level to strengthen relationships, improve communications, and incorporate lessons learned from previous responses in order to deliver rapid and effective support to lead federal agencies. Our command takes tremendous pride in supporting our FSTTL partners, while helping to highlight the resourcefulness and solidarity of the American people in the face of adversity. It should be clear to competitors and potential aggressors that the United States routinely responds to and recovers quickly from large-scale disruptions—and USNORTHCOM is always ready to support those efforts with military capabilities as directed by the Secretary.

USNORTHCOM support to civil authorities includes the command's ongoing support of federal law enforcement efforts to counter the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that have caused so much harm to our nation. Illicit drugs trafficked by transnational criminal enterprises kill more than one hundred thousand U.S. citizens each year, and the number of fatal overdoses have risen dramatically as cartels have increased the volume of fentanyl smuggled into the United States. As directed by the Secretary of Defense and in accordance with my direct guidance, USNORTHCOM's subordinate command, Joint Task Force North (JTF-N), provides U.S. federal law enforcement partners with intelligence and counter-threat finance analysis and other support as requested to disrupt the sophisticated financial and physical networks used to infiltrate illicit goods and exploited human traffic into the United States. The important work

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done by USNORTHCOM and JTF-N in countering transnational criminal organizations and disrupting the flow of illegal drugs into the United States is a national security imperative that directly supports homeland defense.

Natural disasters, public health threats, and transnational irregular migration will likely continue to require DoD support for our lead federal partners. Environmental change will also continue to have a direct impact on military readiness and resources, as was made clear by the massive destructive power of Hurricane Ian in September 2022 and by western wildfires that are growing in scale and frequency as fire seasons now extend throughout most of the year. It is necessary to plan and account for the growing likelihood of natural disasters that disrupt military operations and damage critical infrastructure, while units involved in response operations require time to reset and recover after completing their missions. The long-term consequences of extreme weather, rising sea levels, and increased flooding will continue to affect DoD missions, infrastructure, and personnel, especially those in the homeland.

#### **Security Cooperation**

In addition to our more visible homeland defense and DSCA operations, USNORTHCOM continues to reap tremendous benefits from our military-to-military relationships with our allies and partners in Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas. Security cooperation with our neighbors is crucial to regional security, countering the influence of peer competitors, and addressing shared challenges. Security cooperation provides a critical and lasting advantage over our more isolated competitors, and I am grateful to the Department and to this Committee for your ongoing support of USNORTHCOM's vital work with our allies and partners. I am proud to work with my military counterparts in Canada, Mexico, and The

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Bahamas as we support one another's efforts to defend our nations and stand united against malign actors seeking to expand influence and presence in the Western Hemisphere.

The military-to-military relationship between the United States and Canada remains extraordinary and vital. In addition to standing side by side as partners in NORAD for nearly 65 years, Canada has been a stalwart ally in continental defense and operations overseas for decades. The unique trust between our militaries is immediately apparent within the USNORTHCOM and NORAD headquarters, as U.S. and Canadian personnel work side-by-side in pursuit of shared missions and objectives. The Canadian Armed Forces' shared commitment to improved domain awareness, information sharing, and modernization of the capabilities necessary for deterrence and continental defense is essential to our united efforts to defend North America, and I am fortunate to serve alongside such steadfast and trusted allies.

The Mexican Department of National Defense (SEDENA) and Department of the Navy (SEMAR) continue to meet daunting internal and external security challenges with professionalism and resiliency. Keenly focused on enhancing regional defense, our Mexican military partners continue to make major investments in a modern, capable, and reliable force capable of interoperability with the U.S. and other partners. In light of that important effort, USNORTHCOM strongly supports SEDENA and SEMAR modernization initiatives, including the potential divestment of their fleet of MI-17 helicopters in favor of Western helicopters.

In April 2022, it was my honor to host the Secretaries of SEDENA and SEMAR at USNORTHCOM for the Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable (BMCR). During this important annual dialogue, USNORTHCOM and our Mexican military partners conducted a candid and highly productive assessment of our mutual security challenges, associated requirements, and shared commitment to addressing threats to our nations. Over the course of

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three days, Secretary General Sandoval, Secretary Admiral Ojeda, and I reaffirmed our military-to-military relationship and committed to a number of concrete steps that will have significant and lasting positive impacts on regional security.

Our partners in the Royal Bahamian Defence Force (RBDF) continue to punch above their weight as they continue to provide important contributions to regional security.

USNORTHCOM and the RBDF operate maritime surveillance systems at Great Inagua and Coral Harbour, and plans are on track to add a third site in the coming years. That shared capability has significant benefits for domain awareness in the southern approaches to North America and demonstrates The Bahamas' ongoing commitment to security cooperation with USNORTHCOM. Our collaboration has taken on added importance as the PRC's diplomatic corps in Nassau continues to produce anti-U.S. public statements while highlighting Chinese economic investment and humanitarian relief efforts in The Bahamas.

USNORTHCOM is strongly committed to a long-term partnership with the RBDF, and continued whole-of-government engagement and investment by the United States. As you know, the United States has been without a confirmed Ambassador to The Bahamas since 2011. No action was taken on the President's nominee last year, and the nomination was resubmitted in January 2023. This senior diplomatic position is critical to demonstrating the importance of the relationship between the United States and The Bahamas and to mitigating the PRC's efforts to gain a foothold only 50 miles from the U.S. east coast.

#### **The Arctic**

The ability of the joint force to operate and campaign in the Arctic remains a pressing concern for USNORTHCOM and NORAD. The PRC and Russia continue to invest in Arctic capabilities as both seek to increase presence and influence in the region while shifting the rules-

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based international order to their advantage. More than 50 percent of USNORTHCOM's area of operations is in the Arctic, and USNORTHCOM and NORAD's priorities in the region continue to focus on increased presence, campaigning through joint training and exercises, and close collaboration with allies and partners.

The effects of environmental change in the Arctic will have significant impacts on accessibility, infrastructure, and competition for the foreseeable future, and the region remains the most unforgiving operational environment on earth. As the Department balances the demands of global mission requirements with difficult budgetary choices, USNORTHCOM and NORAD require access to trained and ready forces capable of operating throughout the commands' areas of responsibility—to include the Arctic. The Joint Force must keep sight of the fact that special training and purpose-built equipment are necessary to operate in a region in which extreme climate, distance, and geography quickly overtake the unprepared.

Over the last year, USNORTHCOM and NORAD collaborated with USEUCOM, USINDOPACOM, USTRANSCOM, USSOCOM and the military Services while conducting joint exercises in Alaska, Greenland, and northern Canada. These demanding events expose Joint Force participants to the demands of the Arctic operating environment and help to reinforce the necessity of a force trained and equipped to survive in the extreme cold and remoteness that defines much of the region. I am encouraged by the strategic objectives stated in the U.S. National Strategy for the Arctic that support better understanding of the region, exercising presence, and capitalizing on the definitive advantage of our international alliances and partnerships.

While the military Services' respective Arctic strategies acknowledge the importance of the Arctic and the need to develop the capabilities needed to operate and compete in the region,

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direct investment in Arctic-capable platforms, training, and infrastructure continues to lag. It is necessary that the Joint Force has the ability to compete, fight, and win in the Arctic in the coming years, and the time for the Services to invest in the required equipment, infrastructure, and training is now. The PRC and Russia have clearly demonstrated their intent to expand their Arctic presence and operations, and I urge the Department of Defense, the Services, my fellow combatant commanders, and the Canadian Department of National Defence to move faster toward improving our collective ability to succeed in this strategically vital region.

**Conclusion**

Homeland defense remains the core mission of both USNORTHCOM and NORAD. The one constant throughout my time in command has been the extraordinary pace at which our competitors have advanced their capabilities to threaten the homeland. Despite those clear risks, the processes used by the Department of Defense and the Canadian Department of National Defence for planning, acquisitions, personnel hiring, technology development, and other activities necessary to the success of the defense enterprise remain largely unchanged from when I received my commission nearly 36 years ago.

As competitors develop greater capability, capacity, and intent to challenge the United States, Canada, and the rules-based international order, I believe that the greatest strategic risk for the United States stems from our own inability to adapt at a pace required by the changing strategic environment. In an era of incredible innovation and technological achievement, inflexible, outdated processes are a greater impediment to success than many of our competitors' capability advancements. We cannot continue to rely on Industrial Age practices and legacy platforms to compete in a digital age, and if we fail to evolve at the pace demanded by the strategic environment, our competitive advantage will continue to erode.

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The Department and Congress must also be more willing to accept the relatively low risks associated with retiring legacy platforms in order to ensure our ability to fight and win against advanced and well-resourced competitors. Over the last decade, the PRC and Russia have made extraordinary technological advancements while the Department remains encumbered by obsolete capabilities and associated costs. To defend the homeland, USNORTHCOM and NORAD require a modern force with the capacity and capability to deter and if required defeat advanced peer competitors. Retiring systems that have exceeded their operational lifespans—to include fighters and command and control platforms at the end of their service lives—is necessary to accelerate the arrival of next generation capabilities.

Along with faster, more flexible development and acquisitions, the Joint Force requires predictable and timely funding to maintain readiness and increase capability, capacity, and resilience. The Continuing Resolutions that have become commonplace over the last decade have direct and lasting adverse consequences for military readiness, modernization, and planning. Predictable, on-time annual budgeting and appropriations, along with streamlined Department processes and greater tolerance for risk in developing and testing new capabilities, are essential to maintaining our competitive advantage.

The need to move faster is clear. The PRC and Russia have already fielded highly advanced hypersonic capabilities, while the United States' hypersonic program, although accelerating, still languishes well behind our competitors' efforts. Further, DoD faces operational challenges with civilian hiring processes for recruiting and hiring the innovative and experientially diverse workforce needed to drive innovation and advancement on pace with the civilian tech sector. Simply put, the Department must continue to strategically tackle hiring and

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personnel management improvements to move its workforce goal of being an employer of choice forward.

Finally, the PRC high altitude balloon (HAB) incursion into our national airspace was obviously a significant event that shined a light on the PRC's brazen intelligence collection against the United States and Canada. It was the first time USNORTHCOM conducted an engagement over the United States in our history, and it made it clear that our competitors have the capability and intent to reach the homeland. The three Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs), also shot down days later by USNORTHCOM and NORAD, clearly demonstrated the challenges associated with detecting and identifying unmanned objects in U.S. airspace. As for NORAD and NORTHCOM, I commit to you that this event has already generated critical lessons learned for my commands and our mission partners, and I can guarantee that NORTHCOM and NORAD are going to continue to learn from it and do whatever is necessary to keep our country safe.

While we face significant challenges, there should be no doubt we have the finest military on the planet and that the commands will defend our nations with tenacity and resolve. In what is likely my final appearance before this committee, I remain deeply humbled and immensely proud to lead the noblest mission of any Combatant Command—defending the homeland. I am grateful to the Committee for your longstanding support of our missions and of the men and women who stand watch over our nation every day. I thank you for the honor of representing our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Guardians, Marines, and civilians.

**General Glen D. VanHerck**  
**Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command**

Gen. Glen D. VanHerck is Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command. USNORTHCOM conducts homeland defense, civil support and security cooperation to defend and secure the United States and its interests. NORAD conducts aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning in the defense of North America.

Gen. VanHerck is a graduate of the University of Missouri and commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program. He has a diverse background that includes operational and training assignments in the F-15C Eagle, F-35A Lightning II, B-2A Spirit and B-1B Lancer aircraft. He has served as an instructor pilot and flight examiner in the F-15C, B-2A and T-6A Texan II. Additionally, he served as a U.S. Air Force Weapons School instructor in the F-15C and the B-2A.

He has commanded at the squadron, group and twice at the wing level, including the 325th Weapons Squadron, the 71st Operations Group, the 7th Bomb Wing, the 509th Bomb Wing. As a major general, he commanded the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center. His staff assignments include tours as the Chief of the B-2 Program Element Monitor at Headquarters Air Combat Command, the Director of Operations at Headquarters Air Force Global Strike Command, the Director of Plans and Integration at U.S. Strategic Command, the Vice Director of Strategy, Plans and Policy (J5) at the Joint Staff, and the Vice Director of the Joint Staff.

Prior to his current assignment, Gen. Glen D. VanHerck was the Director, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia. In this role, he assisted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in his role as advisor to the President and Secretary of Defense, coordinated and directed the activities of the Joint Staff in support of the Chairman and served as the Staff Inspector General.

**EDUCATION**

- 1987 Bachelor of Science, Liberal Studies, University of Missouri, Columbia
- 1995 Squadron Officers School, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
- 1999 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence
- 2000 Master of Science, Aviation Safety/Management, University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg
- 2005 Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence
- 2008 Master of Arts, National Security and Strategy, Naval War College, Newport Naval Station, R.I.
- 2008 Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
- 2009 U.S. Air Force Executive Leadership Seminar, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
- 2014 Combined Force Air Component Commanders Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 2015 Cyberspace Operations Executive Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 2015 Joint Flag Officer Warfighting Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 2016 Joint Senior Information Operations Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

- January 1988–January 1989, Undergraduate Pilot Training, 14th Flying Training Wing, Columbus Air Force Base, Miss.
- February 1989–May 1989, Student, Lead-in-Fighter Training, Holloman AFB, N.M.

June 1989–November 1989, Student, F-15C Replacement Training, Tyndall AFB, Fla.

November 1989–December 1993, F-15C Aircraft Commander, Mission Commander, Instructor Pilot, Flight Examiner, 44th Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan

January 1994–June 1994, Student, U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nev.

July 1994–May 1997, Chief, Weapons and Tactics, Flight Commander, Assistant Director of Operations, 94th Fighter Squadron, Langley AFB, Va.

May 1997–July 1998, F-15C Instructor Pilot, Chief of Safety, U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nev.

August 1998–March 2001, Assistant Director of Operations, 393rd Bomb Squadron, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

April 2001–December 2001, Director of Operations, 325th Bomb Squadron, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

January 2002–July 2004, B-2 Program Element Monitor, Chief, Air Combat Command Senior Officer Management, Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, Va.

July 2004–December 2004, B-2 Qualification Training, 394th Combat Training Squadron, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

January 2005–January 2007, Commander, 325th Weapons Squadron, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

January 2007–July 2007, Deputy Commander, 509th Operations Group, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

August 2007–June 2008, Student, U.S. Naval War College, Newport Naval Station, R.I.

July 2008–August 2008, Student, T-6A Pilot Instructor Training, 559th Flying Training Squadron, Randolph AFB, Texas

September 2008–January 2010, Commander, 71st Operations Group, Vance AFB, Okla.

January 2010–June 2010, Vice Commander, 71st Flying Training Wing, Vance AFB, Okla.

June 2010–June 2012, Director, Plans and Integration, Joint Functional Component Command for Global Strike, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt AFB, Neb.

July 2012–February 2014, Commander, 7th Bomb Wing, Dyess AFB, Texas

February 2014–June 2015, Commander, 509th Bomb Wing, Whiteman AFB, Mo.

June 2015–March 2016, Director, Operations, Headquarters Air Force Global Strike Command, Barksdale AFB, La.

March 2016–July 2017, Commander, U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, Nellis AFB, Nev.

July 2017–August 2018, Vice Director, Strategy Plans and Policy (J5), Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

August 2018–September 2019, Vice Director, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

September 2019–August 2020, Director, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

August 2020–present, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, Colorado Springs, Colo.

#### **SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS**

June 2010–June 2012, Director, Plans and Integration, Joint Functional Component Command for Global Strike, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., as a colonel

July 2017–August 2018, Vice Director, Strategy, Plans, and Policy (J5), Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., as a major general

August 2018–September 2019, Vice Director, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., as a major general

September 2019–August 2020, Director, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., as a lieutenant general

August 2020–present, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command, Colorado Springs, Colo. as a general

**FLIGHT INFORMATION**

Rating: command pilot

Flight hours: more than 3,200

Aircraft flown: T-1A, T-6A, T-37, T-38A, A/T-38B, T-38C, F-15A/B/C/D, F-35A, B-1B and B-2A

**MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Defense Distinguished Service Medal

Distinguished Service Medal (Air Force)

Defense Superior Service Medal

Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters

Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters

Air Medal

Aerial Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster

Joint Service Commendation Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal

Air Force Achievement Medal

**EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION**

Second Lieutenant Sept. 16, 1987

First Lieutenant Sept. 16, 1989

Captain Sept. 16, 1991

Major Aug. 1, 1998

Lieutenant Colonel Feb. 1, 2003

Colonel Sept. 1, 2007

Brigadier General Sept. 2, 2013

Major General May 13, 2016

Lieutenant General Sep. 27, 2019

General Aug. 20, 2020

(Current as of September 2020)

STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL LAURA J. RICHARDSON  
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND  
BEFORE THE 118<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 8, 2023



Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished committee members, 2022 marked two important milestones for U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM): the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our move from Panama to Miami in 1997, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Human Rights Initiative. For a quarter of a century, the brave women and men of USSOUTHCOM have called Miami home, while working with allies and partners to improve security, advance democratic ideals, and promote peace and prosperity throughout our shared neighborhood.

At the end of the Cold War, the United States, its allies, and partners believed that democracy would displace authoritarianism around the globe. Twenty-five years later, the strategic environment in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has changed significantly. The 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) states, in no uncertain terms, that “autocrats are working overtime to undermine democracy.”<sup>1</sup> We see this right here in our own hemisphere that external malign actors like the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are aggressively exerting influence over our democratic neighbors.

The NSS also states “no region impacts the United States more directly than the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>2</sup> Presence and proximity absolutely matter, and a stable and secure Western Hemisphere is critical to homeland defense. After traveling across LAC and meeting our partners face to face, I can confirm our security at home is directly impacted by the challenges facing this strategic region.

Our adversaries use a multidisciplinary and multidomain approach to counter democracy and SOUTHCOR, our allies, and partners must use the full weight of integrated deterrence, leveraging the whole of government, industry, private sector, and academia, in order to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

effectively respond. With shared purpose and mutual trust, we must collectively act with a much greater sense of urgency to ensure this hemisphere remains a stronghold for democracy.

Today, the PRC has both the capability and intent to eschew international norms, advance its brand of authoritarianism, and amass power and influence at the expense of the existing and emerging democracies in our hemisphere. This is a decisive decade and our actions or inactions regarding the PRC will have ramifications for decades to come.

While the PRC remains our pacing challenge, other malicious actors erode regional security. Russia continues its extensive disinformation campaigns and bolsters authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) spread violence and corruption throughout the region and beyond. These TCOs traffic drugs that contribute to the deaths of thousands of Americans in cities and towns across the country, from Alabama to Washington, from Rhode Island to Mississippi and everywhere in between. TCOs foment violence and instability that contribute to irregular migration, forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of people who risk their lives to reach U.S. territory each year. TCO corruption creates insecurity, deteriorates rule of law, and leaves partner nations susceptible to the actions of malign state and non-state actors.

We aren't alone in our efforts to create a stable and peaceful hemisphere. Integrated Deterrence includes campaigning with our partners and allies as force multipliers for achieving success in this resource-constrained reality. With our partners and allies from the United Kingdom, Canada, France, and the Netherlands, we recently adopted the Framework for Western Hemisphere Collaboration. The framework commits us to more frequently share information, and work more closely together on our aligned strategic interests.

Our USSOUTHCOM lines of effort in the face of these challenges are clear: by **strengthening alliances and partnerships**, collectively **countering threats**, and **building our team**, we are working to preserve democracy in our shared neighborhood. While doing so, we are pioneering ways to outcompete even our most innovative adversaries and address these transnational challenges.

#### **Expanding Challenges in the Region**

##### **Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China – A Decisive Decade**

When regional leaders and experts discuss the PRC's engagement in the Western Hemisphere, they focus largely on trade and investment. In 2002, PRC trade with Latin America and the Caribbean was just \$18 billion; in 2022 it ballooned to \$450 billion. That number is expected to increase to \$700 billion by 2035. Conversely, current U.S. trade within the region amounts to \$700 billion, which suggests that the United States' comparative trade advantage is eroding.<sup>3,4</sup>

What concerns me as a Combatant Commander is the myriad of ways in which the PRC is spreading its malign influence, wielding its economic might, and conducting gray zone activities to expand its military and political access and influence in the AOR. The PRC is investing in critical infrastructure, including deep-water ports, cyber, and space facilities which can have a potential dual use for malign commercial and military activities. In any potential global conflict, the PRC could leverage strategic regional ports to restrict U.S. naval and commercial ship access. This is a strategic risk that we can't accept or ignore. These activities are heavily subsidized through PRC state-owned enterprises (SOE), allowing them to underbid

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/china-lac-trade-four-scenarios-in-2035/>

on infrastructure projects, quickly displacing local and international competitors. SOEs are developing deep-water ports in seventeen countries, particularly around strategic maritime chokepoints in this region. In Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, PRC SOEs abused commercial agreements by conducting military functions at host-country ports. What's to keep them from doing the same right here in this hemisphere?

In Panama, PRC-sponsored companies are engaged in, or bidding on, several projects related to the Panama Canal - a global strategic chokepoint. These projects include port operations on both ends of the canal, water management, and a logistics park. Meanwhile, in Argentina, a PRC SOE is attempting to secure the rights to build dual-use maritime installations near the southern port city of Ushuaia, which would support sustainment and power-projection while providing proximity to the Strait of Magellan, Drake Passage, and Antarctica. This would be a potential game-changer for the PRC, dramatically improving its access to Antarctica.

The PRC also sees this region as key to expanding its space domain awareness and improving its military space capabilities. There are at least 11 PRC-linked space facilities across five countries in this region, more than any other geographic combatant command's AOR, that provide Beijing with space tracking and surveillance capabilities. This includes a joint space-monitoring facility in Chile and a deep space station in Argentina that is managed by an agency subordinate to the People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>5</sup>

Our nation's leaders have expressed concern about the insidious nature of the PRC-sponsored 5G technology providers for years now. In our region alone, five countries adopted Huawei's 5G technology, and 24 countries have existing Chinese telecommunication infrastructure (3G/4G), increasing their potential to transition to Chinese 5G. There are also

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<sup>5</sup> <https://features.csis.org/hiddenreach/china-ground-stations-space/>

twelve countries using PRC-created Safe City programs that provide persistent surveillance and give PRC SOE technicians access to government networks. These actions, among others, create a potential counterintelligence threat to the U.S. military, our civilian personnel, and our regional partners. The proliferation of this technology has also led even more partner nation military personnel to travel to China to receive training on cybersecurity and military doctrine.

The PRC relies heavily on resources, including food sources and minerals from the USSOUTHCOM AOR. This region is one of the richest in the world in critical rare earth minerals. The PRC's efforts to extract South America's natural resources to support its own population of 1.9 billion people are conducted at the expense of our partner nations and their citizens. These actions have the potential to destabilize the region and erode the fundamental conditions needed for quality private sector investment.

Environmental crimes such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF), illegal logging, and illegal mining continue to have devastating impacts on the region and the PRC is the largest perpetrator of these biodiversity crimes. Every year, there are between 350 and 600 Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-subsidized vessels fishing off the coast of South America. These vessels severely deplete fish stocks, disregard environmental safeguards, destabilize the economies of coastal states, and exacerbate security challenges at a cost of nearly \$3 billion in lost revenue annually.<sup>6</sup> When I meet with our partner nations, IUUF, along with transnational criminal networks and cyber security, is consistently among their top national security concerns. As a result, their militaries are increasingly being asked to play a leading role in combating this illegal activity.

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<sup>6</sup> (U) Online Publication: American University Center for South America and Latino Studies; 12 July 2022; (U) Latin America-Caribbean: Illegal Fishing is Environmental Security Challenge; <https://aulablog.net/2022/07/21/latin-america-caribbean-illicit-fishing-is-environmental-security-challenge/>

### **Russia as an Acute Threat**

The impacts of Vladimir Putin's illegal, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine reverberated around the world, worsening a global energy and food crisis. The USSOUTHCOM AOR has not been spared. Families across the region are struggling to put food on the table and gas in their cars because of the sharp rise in prices, compounding the negative impacts in this region from COVID-19.

Through military engagements and gray zone operations, Russia colludes with authoritarian regimes in the region to undermine U.S. influence. In the past year, Russia continued its military engagements with both Venezuela and Nicaragua. Last year Venezuela hosted *Sniper Frontier 2022*, a shooting competition and subcomponent of Russia's International Army Games. Nicaragua has publicly supported the Russian invasion of Ukraine, voting – along with only North Korea, Syria, and Belarus – against a UN resolution condemning Russia for its invasion. These engagements increase Russian influence with nations who are destabilizing forces in the region.

Russia uses disinformation to further its malign influence, sow instability and undermine democracy in the region, activities that promote Russian geopolitical goals and undermine U.S. national security interests. For example, Russia spreads false narratives about its invasion of Ukraine through its Spanish-language media arms, RT en Español, Sputnik Mundo, and its various social media sites. RT en Español's Facebook page has 18 million followers, more than its English-language site or even CNN's Spanish-language channels.<sup>7</sup> Despite efforts by Facebook and Twitter to take down accounts spreading disinformation, Russian operators continue to generate bot accounts to spread falsehoods quickly. We are in a constant fight to

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/09/business/russia-propaganda-spanish-social-media.html>

counter and remove the disinformation spread by fake accounts and correct the misperceptions this disinformation propagates. It is in our interest to help develop our partner nations' knowledge and understanding of these tactics and false information before this malign activity permanently erodes this hemisphere's confidence in democracy.

#### **Transnational Criminal Organizations**

Although many partner nation leaders recognize the threats the PRC and Russia pose to democracy in the region, they see TCOs as their primary security challenge. The number one cause of death among citizens ages 15-49 years old in Latin America and the Caribbean is violence and more than 60% of the world's most crime-stricken cities are in this region.<sup>8</sup>

USSOUTHCOM estimates that there are 200 TCOs and four terrorist groups operating throughout the region. TCOs such as the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel in Mexico are spreading their reach to the region. The National Liberation Army (ELN), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), Segunda Marquetalia, and Sendero Luminoso continue to operate along primary cocaine trafficking corridors. First Capital Command (PCC) operates in Brazilian urban streets, the Amazonian jungle, in neighboring Paraguay, Bolivia, and in the United States. In Haiti, gangs control roughly 60 percent of the country, blocking roads for much-needed food and fuel.

TCOs are engaged in a wide variety of illicit activities, including drug smuggling, arms dealing, illegal logging and mining, human trafficking, IUUF, and manufacturing counterfeit goods. They are also invested in numerous legitimate enterprises, including, but not limited to, commercial banking, manufacturing, agriculture, consumer sales, and real estate. Their diverse

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.maplecroft.com/insights/analysis/latin-america-hosts-over-60-of-worlds-most-crime-stricken-cities--global-ranking/>

activities amount to a war chest of roughly \$310 billion annually, five times the combined military budgets of every nation in Latin America and the Caribbean. TCOs are better funded, equipped, and manned than the security forces trying to fight them and increasingly rely on PRC-connected criminal organizations to launder billions of dollars around the world.<sup>9</sup>

Drug trafficking originating from this region contributes to the deaths of more than 100,000 Americans every year. Interdicting the flow of drugs directly saves lives by removing product from the pipeline. It also reduces TCO revenue. The type of contraband or destination is irrelevant as the money remains in the Western Hemisphere and TCOs use their illicit funds to exacerbate regional corruption, insecurity, and instability. This in turn disrupts legitimate economic opportunity, compromises the rule of law, allows malign state actors the opportunity to make inroads, and drives irregular migration. TCOs victimize migrants, by extorting them, forcing them into human trafficking, and saddling them with debt. The human toll TCOs cause is heartbreaking.

#### **Iran**

Iran is focused on rebuilding its economic and diplomatic ties in the region and pursuing opportunities to circumvent U.S. sanctions. Tehran's intelligence and security activities continue to be a concern and over the past two years Iran has increasingly used Venezuela to assert its presence in the region.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.propublica.org/article/china-cartels-xizhi-li-money-laundering>

### **Regional Humanitarian Crises**

**Fragility.** The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, driving 170 million people into poverty.<sup>10</sup> Countries in the region suffered disproportionately from the pandemic. While accounting for only eight percent of the world's population, Latin America and the Caribbean suffered nearly 29% of the world's COVID-19 deaths. Fragility and instability drive irregular migration and create an environment ripe for corruption and exploitation.

**Haiti.** In recent years, Haiti has suffered an onslaught of setbacks including corrupt leaders and political assassinations, rampant gang violence, disease, and devastating natural disasters. Violence in Haiti is at its worst level in decades, according to the UN, characterized by gender-based violence, homicides, and kidnapping for ransom. Civil unrest, inter-gang fighting, and road blockages hinder commerce and humanitarian access. Today, Haitian citizens are suffering, and its government faces a myriad of challenges to include insecurity, limited governance capacity, and health concerns. The chaos caused more than 69,000 Haitians to seek refuge in the United States in fiscal year 2022.<sup>11</sup>

**Nicaragua.** President Daniel Ortega's regime continues to detain and prosecute political opponents, even targeting clergy and shutting down hundreds of civil society organizations and independent media outlets.

Since switching diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to the PRC in December 2021, Nicaragua has engaged with the PRC in bilateral talks for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. In September 2022, PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Nicaraguan Foreign

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bloomberglinea.com/english/number-of-latin-americans-living-in-poverty-expected-to-surpass-one-third-of-total/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

Minister Denis Moncada on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, highlighting that the new bilateral relationship has already yielded “early harvests.”<sup>12</sup>

**Cuba.** President Miguel Diaz-Canel’s government continues to repress all Cuban citizens critical of the regime. The government engages in arbitrary detention, including children, and limits access to information and freedom of expression, and incarcerates political dissidents. The Cuban government’s oppressive tactics have forced more than 230,000 Cubans to seek refuge in the United States in fiscal year 2022.<sup>13</sup> In September 2022, Hurricane Ian struck Cuba, devastating homes, causing flooding, and knocking out power to many communities.

**Venezuela.** The humanitarian crisis caused by the Maduro regime in Venezuela remains one of the most severe in the world. President Nicolas Maduro’s regime and security forces continue to target and deny access to critical services to any citizen who speaks out against them. His regime continues to engage in extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and prosecution without due process. The International Criminal Court is currently investigating possible crimes against humanity in Venezuela.

The Maduro regime’s oppressive tactics and gross economic mismanagement have caused more than seven million Venezuelans to seek refuge elsewhere, causing instability and deepening challenges for those nations that have welcomed them. U.S. Customs and Border Protection statistics show that more than 187,000 Venezuelan migrants were encountered at the U.S.-Mexico border in FY 2022.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/kjgzbdfyyq/202209/t20220921\\_10769061.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/kjgzbdfyyq/202209/t20220921_10769061.html)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>

**Levers: Overcoming Threats and Challenges in the AOR**

The pervasive threats and challenges highlighted above pose significant risks to U.S. and regional security interests. We cannot accept such risks so close to home and we confront them by strengthening partnerships, countering threats, and building our team.

**Strengthen Partnerships**

As the Secretary of Defense said, “you can’t surge trust at the eleventh hour; trust is something you have to work on every day.”<sup>15</sup> We need to continuously engage our partner nations to build and sustain that trust and be their preferred partner. As we campaign in strategic competition to enable integrated deterrence and build enduring advantages, our engagements, presence, and policies must be flexible, consistent, and responsive to counter malign influence in the region.

The best way to outcompete our adversaries is to help partner democracies deliver for their populations at the speed of relevance. We achieve this by improving partner nation capability, capacity, and resilience through security cooperation, exercises, and training programs while upholding democratic values to ensure malign influence and autocratic alternatives do not further take root in this region.

The main priority in our USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan is to expose and mitigate PRC malign activity. Ultimately, strategic competition with the PRC is an ideological one between democracy and authoritarianism. Presently, the majority of nations in the Western Hemisphere are democracies, and eight of the 14 nations that still recognize Taiwan are located in

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<sup>15</sup> Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, speech to U.S. and NATO troops in Bulgaria, 18 March 2022.

USSOUTHCOM's AOR. Beijing is seeking to reduce that number and increase influence throughout the region while putting the defense of the U.S. homeland at risk.

**Security Cooperation.** Building Partner Capacity (BPC) programs are my main lever for engaging partners in this posture-limited theater. These programs allow us to be on the field and engaged, to strengthen our partnerships, and develop military capabilities to counter a broad spectrum of threats and challenges. From high-end technical training that keeps partner intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets in the air, to building institutional capacity that develops logistics and lifecycle management disciplines, to professional military education, we are developing trust and interpersonal linkages. USSOUTHCOM's BPC programs aim to make our partners resilient to the adversaries operating in this hemisphere.

Our embedded Ministry of Defense Advisors and field service representatives within partner nation security ministries, such as those in Colombia, support modernization and innovation efforts in such areas as personnel, defense intelligence, and doctrine development to help our partners meet threats to their national security.

The U.S. Colombia Action Plan enables Colombia to provide training and readiness directly to several countries, including Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Paraguay in Spanish, and at a fraction of the cost of U.S.-provided training. We really appreciate congressional support of this program.

These security cooperation programs offer a huge return on investment as they build trust and enhance capabilities and security throughout the region -- a little goes a long way here.

**Department of State Security Assistance.** State security assistance programs increase interoperability with our partners while meeting their individual security requirements. Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA)

programs produce an exponential return in this AOR. Brazil recently made an FMS purchase of \$15.8 million of 12 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles as part of the Brazilian Marine Corps modernization plan, strengthening its ability to counter threats and enhancing interoperability with U.S. forces. The former U.S. Coast Guard cutters Albacore, Cochito, and Gannet were delivered to Uruguay on November 12, 2022. These ships greatly enhance the maritime security of Uruguay and demonstrate that the United States is the preferred partner in the region. The Colombian Army received 86 armored vehicles in 2022 via the EDA program, giving Colombia a more modern capability to counter threats facing the country.

USSOUTHCOM executes State's International Military Training and Education (IMET) program that provides professional military education to personnel from 28 countries in the region. In 2022, USSOUTHCOM countries were allocated \$13.9 million for the IMET program. On average, this allocation provides professional military education for approximately 800 international students in U.S. schools. The IMET program is one of USSOUTHCOM's strongest levers for countering the PRC and other malign actors in the region by acquainting international students with democratic ideals and professional military doctrine. Partner nation personnel who attend these schools often go on to become senior military leaders in their countries. The relationships built at these schools last a lifetime.

***Joint Exercise Program.*** Our Joint Exercise Program continues to provide an outsized return on investment not only in building readiness, but also in strengthening partnerships that allow us to counter malign influence. In 2022 we had over 11,000 participants from 34 nations take part in our exercises, demonstrating once again that the United States has the convening power to bring nations together. These complex training events were multi-domain in nature and

provided us year-long engagement opportunities across the AOR, to include engagements with key leaders.

USSOUTHCOM's exercise program in the counter-TCO realm also brings together the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security (including the U.S. Coast Guard), along with partner nation and allied military forces to enhance readiness, interoperability, and domain awareness, and to increase intelligence and information sharing.

Additionally, our exercises include training on human rights and on Women, Peace, and Security, which helps to enhance professionalism and advance democratic principles.

**USNS COMFORT.** The USNS COMFORT hospital ship deployed to five countries in the region from October to December 2022 – Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti – taking part in a humanitarian assistance, readiness building, and goodwill mission. The USNS COMFORT's crew included military and civilian personnel as well as personnel from non-governmental organizations and partner nation militaries. Since its inception in 2007, the Continuing Promise mission has treated more than 580,000 patients overall and conducted over 7,000 surgeries. The USNS COMFORT mission to the USSOUTHCOM AOR historically lasts approximately 159 days, but even during this year's reduced mission of 52 days, the COMFORT managed to treat over 30,000 patients, conduct 350 surgeries, and positively impact 100,000 people with its outreach activities. This tremendous soft power asset will have lasting effects not just on the individuals who were treated, but also on the entire region.

**Operation Health Engagement Assistance Response Team (HEART).** During Operation HEART, a team of 34 medical professionals and 17 support personnel conducted orthopedic,

ophthalmology, and dental surgeries in Guatemala and Honduras. In just 56 days, Operation HEART treated 993 patients and conducted a knowledge exchange with medical residents and doctors from Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and El Salvador.

**Key Leader Engagements.** Since I last addressed this committee, I have visited 13 countries and conducted over 90 key leader engagements with ministers and chiefs of defense. Increasingly, I have also met with heads of state and vice presidents as the appetite grows amongst our partners to engage at senior levels with the United States. To date, I have engaged eight presidents, three vice presidents, and two prime ministers, and I have a full calendar of engagements planned throughout 2023. Establishing and cultivating these relationships is vital and we must step up our presence in the region to maintain relevance. Relationships absolutely matter, and our partner democracies are desperate for assistance from the United States, but if we're not there in time, they have no choice but to take what's available, creating opportunities for the PRC to expand its influence. Just like with the COVID-19 vaccine, they wanted a U.S. vaccine, but some partner nations had to take the Chinese Sinopharm or Russian Sputnik vaccines at 50-60% effectiveness because we weren't there with our Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.<sup>16, 17</sup>

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.** Infrastructure is one of our partners' critical needs, and the PRC is leveraging that need to achieve influence overmatch in the region. We need to step up with much greater responsiveness in our processes if we want to address our partner nation requirements and outcompete the PRC in this domain. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) works with USSOUTHCOM and partner nations to advance security, preserve

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<sup>16</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/china-gao-fu-vaccines-offer-low-protection-coronavirus-675bcb6b5710c7329823148fbff6ef9>

<sup>17</sup> <https://absolutelymaybe.plos.org/2022/04/20/did-we-ever-find-out-how-effective-sputnik-v-vaccine-actually-is/>

environmental sustainability and climate resiliency, and protect at-risk indigenous populations.

USACE is providing technical support to the Panama Canal Authority to help ensure the canal operates successfully for the next 50 years. It also supports Ecuador to mitigate the negative effects of a substandard PRC construction project at the Coca Coda Dam. In January 2023, at the request of the embassy and the government of the Dominican Republic, USACE assigned a subject-matter expert embedded within the Dominican Republic's Agency of Mines and Minerals to assist with developing efforts to preserve rare earth materials.

From a defense and security cooperation perspective, USACE's recent agreement with the Peruvian Navy to build out Peru's port facilities, and its continued construction efforts on Tolemaida Air Base in Colombia, facilitating the development of the largest rotary wing training and maintenance facilities in the region, will increase our partners' capacity to counter TCOs in the region.

***State Partnership Program.*** Through the State Partnership Program (SPP), the National Guard continues to develop relationships with our partner nations. Eighteen U.S. states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have active partnerships with defense and security forces from 30 nations in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. By providing long-term and consistent support and building trust and teamwork, National Guard servicemembers give us the presence on the field that is so critical. For example, this year, the South Dakota National Guard worked with its partner Suriname to renovate a school for 450 children and provide medical and dental care to three separate rural and underserved communities, impacting approximately 2,500 civilians. This year, the Regional Security System (RSS), consisting of seven Eastern Caribbean nations, conducted 25 events across the RSS and in the continental United States.

SPP's success is enhanced through National Guard participation in partner nation exercises like those in Brazil and Colombia. The National Guard also provided medical service members from Puerto Rico, Louisiana, Arkansas, and South Carolina to our successful Continuing Promise operations through the USNS COMFORT deployment.

***Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HA/DR).*** Latin America and the Caribbean are susceptible to hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, and other extreme natural disasters. The United States is there with assistance before, during, and after disaster strikes. USSOUTHCOM engages our partner nations regularly, encouraging and assisting them to take positive steps toward disaster risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness, and resiliency. Several of our annual exercises, including TRADEWINDS and CENTAM GUARDIAN, have a HA/DR component to help build resiliency and readiness related to climate change and natural disaster response.

A recent example of our support is our response to Haiti's widening political and humanitarian crises. Supporting a whole-of-government effort led by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department, USSOUTHCOM delivered thousands of gallons of much-needed fuel and 300,000 cholera treatment packets to Haiti. This operation relieved strain on the local healthcare system and enabled the U.S. Embassy to remain open to facilitate life-saving assistance.

Humanitarian assistance activities also address basic needs of the population and build partner capacity to maintain a healthy population. Activities emphasize public health capacity building, such as improving medical facilities, disease surveillance systems, and providing basic medical equipment, education, prevention, and training. Basic infrastructure activities focus on building partner capacity to provide essential services, like potable water. Finally, we recently

joined with 12 other countries to identify logistics processes, procedures, and protocols that are required to improve the military logistics support to HA/DR activities in the Western Hemisphere.

***Confronting Climate Change.*** This is one of the regions most impacted by climate change. Hurricanes, rising sea levels, flooding, and drought are causing grave harm to the region's health, food, water, energy, and socioeconomic development. Extreme weather events impact our partners' national security, displacing populations and increasing irregular migration already accelerated by TCOs and insecurity.

These calamities know no borders. In 2022, Hurricane Fiona slammed into the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, Hurricane Ian ravaged western Florida and Cuba, and Hurricane Julia caused landslides and wiped-out crops in Central America. To help address threats from climate change and support humanitarian assistance, USSOUTHCOM works to strengthen our partners nations' ability to address more demanding disaster response roles, mitigate the effects from climate change, protect the environment, and enable the transition to clean energy through subject-matter expert exchanges and by incorporating energy security scenarios in exercises. Successfully confronting this complex issue requires a true integrated approach. For example, USSOUTHCOM partners with the Pacific Disaster Center in Hawaii to facilitate disaster response training and conduct National Disaster Preparedness Baseline Assessments with our partner nations. These assessments promote a multi-agency approach to disaster risk reduction and national disaster preparedness, in collaboration with partner nations' national disaster management agencies.

### **Countering Threats**

***Countering PRC malign efforts.*** In alignment with the 2022 National Defense Strategy's integrated deterrence approach, we strive to use all levers through campaigning to deny the PRC the perceived benefits of aggression. USSOUTHCOM leverages the expertise of the Executive branch, to include the Departments of State and Commerce, to improve partner nations' knowledge of effective legal frameworks to develop reliable and secure telecommunication infrastructure and cyber resilience, while highlighting state-of-the-art substantive alternatives to counter PRC state-owned enterprise expansion in the region.

By methodically identifying and synchronizing separate initiatives, from building cyber capability to exposing PRC malign activities, we can strengthen critical infrastructure to improve our collective ability to operate in the face of multi-domain threats posed by the PRC.

Information sharing with our partners on the malign activities of the PRC in other nations and regions that have undercut sovereignty is critical to ensuring our partners can make informed decisions on their engagements with the PRC. However, information sharing alone is insufficient. Collectively, in a whole-of-nation integrated approach, we must also provide viable alternatives for partnerships and offer significantly more incentives through campaigning for critical infrastructure investment and port development in the region.

While the PRC consistently works to expand its network of military space infrastructure across the AOR, we are focused on strengthening relationships with our allies and partners through sustained engagement and investment with what we currently have, including by assisting our partners to build capability to conduct space operations to meet their needs. By focusing on strengthening relations, the United States demonstrates what a true partner looks like, which stands in stark contrast to the transactional nature of PRC engagements. This

strategy, coupled with continued exposure of the military purpose of the PRC's scientific or academic space sites in the region, may slow and possibly reverse the expansion of the PRC's space network in our neighborhood.

***Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported Fishing.*** IUUF is another area where we must leverage diverse capabilities and authorities. We have teamed up with the Department of State, partner nation stakeholders, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, and an interagency team of U.S. government experts to confront this issue head on. The U.S. Coast Guard is conducting various IUUF missions in the AOR, and USSOUTHCOM has four ongoing IUUF initiatives that are complementary in nature.

Enhanced Domain Awareness is a secure, unclassified, virtual environment where USSOUTHCOM, interagency, and foreign partners can leverage commercially and publicly available information and analytics. This allows us to collaborate on diverse security challenges including strategic competition and IUUF as well as issues like migration, human trafficking, and illegal mining.

USSOUTHCOM has signed a memorandum of understanding with Global Fishing Watch and has a longstanding relationship with Florida International University through which we partnered to create the Security Research Hub—a virtual research community that brings together the United States, partner nations, academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector to foster shared understanding of the most pervasive security issues, to include IUUF.

USSOUTHCOM is also exploring areas of cooperation and opportunities to provide technical assistance and support to the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor, a voluntary regional cooperation mechanism created by the coastal states of Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Panama.

Finally, working with 14 partner nations and the National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office, U.S. Navy South leads the way for an intergovernmental approach to information-sharing efforts. When fully implemented, they will collectively foster timely, actionable information sharing, multifunctional collaboration, and multinational trust. This collaboration will illuminate nefarious actors negatively impacting our partner nations' economies and populations.

***Countering Russian malign influence.*** USSOUTHCOM is postured to compete with Russia through the coordination and application of information-related capabilities. While Russia may seem distant, its presence and influence is felt in our hemisphere, actively undermining the security and stability of our partner nations. Our multifaceted approach aims to bolster partner efforts and expose malign activities, with the goal of blunting Russian exploitation in the information environment.

Our partners are inclined to support efforts that impose costs on Russia. Some are willing to exchange their Soviet-era equipment for NATO-interoperable, U.S.-made equipment. However, as our partners agree to support efforts against Russia, the United States must have responsive mechanisms in place to rapidly provide replacement assets to maintain partner nation readiness – if not done right, we could lose this opportunity.

***Cyber.*** Cyber is an all-encompassing domain capable of affecting every sector of society, not just defense. USSOUTHCOM partners with other U.S. agencies and organizations such as the Departments of State, Commerce, Homeland Security, and Justice along with U.S. Cyber Command, our National Guard SPP teammates, and the U.S. Coast Guard, to deliver the right support at the right time to assist our partners with their cyber-related challenges.

Through our cyberspace advise and assist efforts, including subject-matter expert exchanges and leveraging the expertise of our Joint Combatant Command Cyber Assistance Teams, we support our partners' efforts to advance their defensive cyber capabilities and develop cyber resiliency. These programs are enablers that help our partners tactically defend against the threats posed by Russia and its proxies in the cyber domain. However, with the significant increase in nation-state cyber attacks and hacktivist attacks in the region, our partner nations are struggling to protect their citizens in the cyber domain, and we are in a race to help them protect their cyber assets before they choose competitor solutions.<sup>18</sup>

***Competing in the Information Space.*** Additionally, our information operations team shapes pro-U.S., pro-democracy narratives, counters disinformation by promoting fact-based information, and works aggressively to reduce U.S. adversary influence in the information environment. This team highlights democratic ideals such as respecting human rights and protecting the rule of law. This capability is postured to provide accurate, timely, and valid information to support reasonable decision making, resulting in better outcomes and ultimately decreasing the effectiveness of propaganda.

***Agile Processes.*** To outcompete our adversaries and win through campaigning, we need to be agile and support our partners at the speed of relevance. While we are committed to transparent processes, we must be faster and more innovative to outcompete our adversaries. Right now, our partner nations are quickly losing confidence in the U.S.'s ability to deliver capability. At a recent event when I spoke about what I call "Team Democracy," a term I use to describe integrated deterrence and working together to counter adversary malign activity, a head of state responded that there aren't very many on "Team Democracy" anymore, citing multiple

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.recordedfuture.com/latin-american-governments-targeted-by-ransomware>

examples of countries turning away from democracy because the U.S. overpromises and underdelivers. FMF, FMS, and Security Cooperation are great levers that can make huge inroads in the AOR when delivered at the speed of relevance for our partners. However, these programs are only as good as the processes by which we execute them. While a little goes a long way in this AOR, we need to do better to support and react at the speed of need, armed with the capabilities our partners can implement quickly and sustain for the long term. When we don't support our partners at the speed of need, our competitors willingly fill the gap.

To help improve processes, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy has established two working groups to break down barriers to our success. The Campaigning in the Western Hemisphere Group brings together entities within the Department of Defense that play a role in building partner capacity, and the Defense Opportunities Group convenes interagency partners that have a stake in a stable and secure Western Hemisphere. We aspire to quickly gain efficiencies across the U.S. Government so we may apply all levers of national power in this vital strategic competition.

***Countering TCOs.*** Our Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) conducts the statutorily-directed mission to detect and monitor illicit drugs transiting toward the United States in the maritime and air domains, delivering a high return on modest investments. In Fiscal Year 2022, JIATF-South facilitated the disruption of 371 illegal smuggling events, including a total of almost 300 metric tons of cocaine and over 140,000 pounds of marijuana, with a combined wholesale value of \$7.5 billion and saving an estimated 2,976 American lives. In addition to saving U.S. lives and reducing TCO revenue, JIATF-South-facilitated drug trafficking disruptions produce evidence in the form of contraband, detainees, and other information. Our

interagency and international law enforcement partners use this evidence, to help affect judicial end states that degrade and dismantle TCOs.

I want to highlight our international partners' participation in these operations, as they are key to overall mission success. Our international partners participated in 76% of the JIATF-South-facilitated disruptions (up from 62% last year) and were responsible for removing 475,000 kilograms of transit zone cocaine headed toward the United States. This is a testament to their commitment to support this regional effort and build their capability and capacity.

U.S.-led, multinational counternarcotics operations ultimately result in our international partners taking the lead on their own operations, as Colombia does via their Operation Orion. Colombia executed two iterations of Orion in 2022, leading a coalition of 41 countries, resulting in the disruption of more than 180,000 kilograms of cocaine and seizing dozens of conveyances. This is an excellent example of integrated deterrence return on investment – gained by combining willing and able international partners with a committed U.S. presence in the Western Hemisphere. Each of these operations was only successful because of the U.S. investment to train and equip our Colombian military and security partners.

Notwithstanding our significant achievements over the decades in this mission space, there is still more to do. As U.S. resources against this threat decline, we will continue to innovate – both in strategy, like re-examining current authorities, and unconventional resourcing, like contract assets, commercial data, and artificial intelligence and machine learning.

***Combating Money Laundering.*** Systemic political corruption and lack of strong anti-money laundering policies make the region a permissive environment for illicit financial activity. USSOUTHCOM continues to identify TCO financial support networks, providing direct analytic support to U.S. Treasury Department and other interagency partners that facilitate sanctions,

arrests, and prosecutions against TCOs. Recently, USSOUTHCOM supported Treasury's designation of Ecuadorian national Wilmer Emilio Sanchez Farfan, one of the most significant drug traffickers in the world and a major cocaine supplier to the Sinaloa cartel.<sup>19</sup> While continued disruptions of illicit drug movements toward the United States remain critical, to truly disrupt these billion-dollar conglomerates, we must also support interagency efforts to follow the money.

***Coast Guard Support.*** The U.S. Coast Guard is one of USSOUTHCOM's strongest partners, with its National Security Cutters and Fast Response Cutters providing the bulk of our counterdrug forces. U.S. Coast Guard assets enhance operations with unique capabilities and authorities which, when used in conjunction with the U.S. Navy and partner nation platforms, maximize the effectiveness of a variety of missions. The Coast Guard is executing its largest fleet recapitalization since World War II. These recapitalization efforts will provide capabilities that support three USSOUTHCOM strategic initiatives: enhancing Theater Security Cooperation, countering IUUF, and combating TCOs. Additionally, the Coast Guard provides valuable humanitarian mission support across the region, saving lives and delivering much-needed aid when natural disasters suddenly strike the region.

#### **Building our Team – People First**

***Housing.*** Our service members and families are our strength and foundation. While having our headquarters and two subordinate commands in South Florida offers a great synergy with our AOR, our team faces extraordinary pressures with the expensive, competitive, and volatile housing market. In September 2022, Secretary Austin announced immediate and long-

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<sup>19</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0592>

term actions to help strengthen the economic security and stability of service members and their families. We benefited with automatic increases in the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for the Miami-Dade and Broward County areas that have carried forward in the Calendar Year 2023 BAH rates. We are seeking similar relief for the Key West area. We are also continuing our work with the Department of the Army and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) on a housing solution to address servicemember concerns about cost and availability of housing in the Miami area.

***JIATF-South Resiliency.*** JIATF-South is currently operating out of 70-year-old facilities that are severely degraded. We received full fiscal year 2023 planning and design funding to complete the design for a new command and control facility. We appreciate this continued support as we look to finalize the design and request the military construction funding to construct a resilient facility for this critical mission for the nation.

***Women, Peace and Security (WPS).*** At USSOUTHCOM, we deliberately integrate gender perspectives throughout all ranks into our operations, activities, and investments, exemplifying a truly diverse joint force and encouraging our partner nations to do the same. Our main objective is to maximize the talents of the force through recruitment, retention, training, and advancement. We also highly encourage partner nation leaders to increase their numbers of women who participate in IMET and other special programs. We are seeing results. In August 2022, the Florida National Guard and Guyana's Defense Force hosted the first Caribbean Regional WPS conference with leadership from 12 partner nations – including Guyana's First Lady Arya Ali and the AOR's first female Chief of Defense, Jamaica's Staff Rear Admiral Antonette Wemyss-Gorman, advocating for gender inclusivity and advancing regional influence in ways that our adversaries cannot. In September 2022, Colombia appointed its first female

Senior Enlisted Leader of the Colombian Military Services, Command Sergeant Major Consuelo Diaz Alvarez, and in October 2022, for the first time in its history, the Colombian Navy promoted two female Navy Captains, Beatriz Helena Garcia Restrepo and Carolina Gomez de Castillo, to the rank of Rear Admiral. Although much work remains, these are just a few of the examples that demonstrate USSOUTHCOM and its partners' commitment to provide opportunities for women to become leaders in the defense and security sectors.

**Total Force.** The United States military is the most powerful in the world, and USSOUTHCOM leverages all available personnel, making us flexible and agile to counter any challenges we may face. Of the service members at USSOUTHCOM, up to 20 percent at any given time are Guard or Reserve members conducting operations in more than 20 locations throughout the AOR.

One such total force mission has been ongoing for a decade. Since 2003, Air National Guard Airmen have supported JIATF-South's detection and monitoring mission through the Host Nation Rider Program. This program provides technical language support and translation/interpretation that has been instrumental in achieving successful detection and monitoring of air operations within the AOR. In fiscal year 2022, this program was involved in the seizure of over 49,000 kilograms of cocaine, 24,000 pounds of marijuana, and the apprehension of 154 detainees.

The Reserve Component is a force multiplier used in a cyclic manner to provide predictability, operational capability, and as a strategic force, providing depth to support a full spectrum of conflicts. Guard and Reserve support is critical to USSOUTHCOM's mission continuity and success.

**What Resources Does USSOUTHCOM Need?**

In this region, a small investment – whether in time, physical resources, funding, or collaboration – goes a long way. We don't have to outspend the PRC to outcompete, but we must be present on the field and deliver at the speed of relevance. This requires having a timely budget – continuing resolutions are disruptive to U.S. and partner nation efforts to defend against threats. If we don't, China and Russia will fill the void.

*Security Cooperation* is our main tool for building the capability of our very willing partners. These partners take our small investments and immediately employ them against the threats and challenges that affect our entire hemisphere. Our partner nations are a force multiplier in a posture-limited theater. The support Congress provided for the fiscal year 2023 budget toward making our partners more capable makes us all stronger. We look forward to putting those funds to good use to support both our fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 programs for security cooperation in our region.

*Security Assistance* goes hand-in-hand with security cooperation. The security assistance we provide to countries like Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama is a game-changer for our partners who are working every day to counter illicit trafficking, address irregular migration, and secure our region. However, in contrast, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador are currently not eligible for FMF. We will work with the Department of State to consider tailored solutions to advance regional policy goals.

*Domain Awareness* is key to countering PRC, Russia, and TCO malign activities that threaten hemispheric security, as well as assisting our partners during disaster relief. Air, maritime, land, space, and cyber domain awareness projects in the region fill debilitating coverage gaps and enable our partners to counter drug smuggling, IUUF, money laundering,

human smuggling, weapons trafficking, and illegal trade in natural resources. These projects reveal shared problems, illuminate opportunities, foster enhanced collaboration, and enable us to export security regionally. The ability to sense, make sense, and share data with our partners is critical. Maintaining a comprehensive threat picture with our allies and partners through our Enhanced Domain Awareness platform enables us to react quickly to threats and to collaborate in real time as we engage in combined operations and activities. Critical to building this shared picture is commercial imagery, open-source intelligence, and off-the-shelf bulk data analytics that allow us to harness this data in the public and commercial space to address critical gaps.

Aerial ISR is also paramount to maintaining domain awareness. To stay ahead of the growing pernicious threats that state and non-state actors pose, we require long-range, long-dwell, next-generation aerial ISR, such as solar-powered aircraft with a greater range and time over target. Aerial ISR aircraft have been critical to our ability to detect and deliver actionable information to other U.S. agencies and partner nations that enable their counternarcotics and counter-TCO operations. In fiscal year 2022, information provided by airborne ISR assets operating overland accounted for the seizure of 322 metric tons of cocaine and deprived TCOs of over \$9 billion in profits. To further enhance our ability to enable counternarcotics and counter-TCO operations, we are pursuing ISR technologies with a greater ability to detect active drug production laboratories. When deployed, this capability will allow us to collect over a 4x larger area with twice the sensor resolution of any comparable platform in the U.S. Government's inventory.

The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) also remains a key intelligence provider in meeting U.S. Southern Command's priorities. Warning decision-makers of the breadth and depth of challenges in the Western Hemisphere requires geospatial analysis at speed

and scale. We appreciate Congress's continued support for NGA's budget request and for their personnel supporting the Combatant Commands.

***Innovation, Science, and Technology.*** Today we face a more level playing field in technology, and we need to rapidly adjust how fast we get technology to the warfighter to maintain dominance and confound the adversary. The USSOUTHCOM AOR provides a permissive environment that has a high tolerance for technology experimentation, willing partners, and diverse climates and geography, all close to the U.S. homeland. This affords us great opportunities to conduct innovative activities with our partners that help gain and maintain a strategic advantage over the PRC, Russia, and other malign actors.

We take every opportunity to capitalize on these benefits. We are developing green energy capabilities, working on the first unmanned persistent solar-powered aircraft with a 300-pound payload, creating small-scale autonomous low-profile vessels, and developing laser communications systems with a low probability of detection and faster speeds than conventional solutions on the market.

A good example of this innovation is our collaboration with the Office of Naval Research, which has designed an experimentation series known as SCOUT. SCOUT's inaugural cycle automates antiquated processes and places capabilities into warfighters' hands faster. The SCOUT team, comprised of warfighters, engineers, academia, and industry partners, executes small-scale, discovery-focused events that provide multiple opportunities to test and measure technologies. This year we will conduct our first main event in JIATF-South to integrate prototype solutions focused on enhancing counternarcotics operations.

***Information Related Capabilities.*** To compete in the information environment, USSOUTHCOM needs an adequate force structure with the requisite skills to counter the

overwhelming threat from malign state actors in the information domain. Our adversaries are dedicating significant effort and resources with unrestrictive policies to undermine democracy in this region. We must do better to keep pace with them and outcompete them.

**NAVSCIATTS.** While considering modern warfare, we tend to focus on five domains: the high seas, inland regions, air, space, and cyber. However, littorals and rivers are the lifeblood of maritime commerce, large population centers, and bustling seaports for most of the 31 LAC countries. Ensuring security in these vital areas is essential to good governance, economic growth, and long-term prosperity. Malign state and non-state actors know the significance of littorals and rivers and routinely use them to transport bulk currency and illegal drugs, smuggle people and a vast array of illicit commodities, and enable illegal mining and logging activities that imperil the environment.

We appreciate the support Congress offered last year for the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) in Stennis, Mississippi. The maritime training and education programs at NAVSCIATTS generate outsized return on investment, providing invaluable opportunities to military and law enforcement personnel from the United States and our allies and partners, most of whom operate smaller craft. Expertise shared at NAVSCIATTS generates reciprocal trust, shared knowledge and understanding, collaboration, and multifaceted technical skills that enable integrated deterrence against the PRC and other malign actors. They also reduce environmental damage and protect natural resources.

**Ambassadors.** We truly appreciate Congress's efforts to confirm additional ambassadors in the Western Hemisphere last year. Having a confirmed ambassador in country is critical to maintaining strong relationships and, conversely, not having one in place can have a detrimental

effect and opens the door to our adversaries in the region. We look forward to Congress's continued support in the effort to strengthen diplomatic ties in our neighborhood.

**Conclusion**

The defense of the U.S. homeland is directly linked to the resilience, stability, and security of the Latin America and Caribbean region. Proximity places us on the frontline of strategic competition, as we share transboundary challenges and global threats. This requires the USSOUTHCOM team to be a trusted partner and pursue efforts that meet our partners where they are, maximizing our efforts where their priorities align with our own national interests. Meeting these challenges requires campaigning through an integrated approach to utilize all available levers across the DOD, U.S. interagency, Allies and Partner Nations to establish the desired conditions of security, peace, and prosperity throughout our neighborhood.

**General Laura J. Richardson  
Commander, United States Southern Command**

General Laura J. Richardson is a native of Northglenn, Colorado and a graduate of Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado. She was commissioned into the U.S. Army and trained as an Army Aviator. She holds a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy from the National Defense University's Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy.

General Richardson previously served as the Commanding General of U.S. Army North (Fifth Army) at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, which is the Army Service Component Command for U.S. Northern Command.

Other assignments as a General Officer include Deputy Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Chief of Army Legislative Liaison to the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C.; Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications at Headquarters International Security Assistance Force in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Kabul, Afghanistan; Deputy Commanding General of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas; and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Operational Test Command at Fort Hood, Texas.

Over her career General Richardson has commanded from the Company to Theater Army level. She commanded an Assault Helicopter Battalion in combat in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), deploying her unit from Fort Campbell, Kentucky to Iraq 2003-04, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She has also served in numerous staff assignments at a myriad of locations, including Military Aide to the Vice President at the White House in Washington, D.C., the Army's Legislative Liaison to Congress at the U.S. Capitol, and at the Pentagon as an Army Campaign Planner.

General Richardson's awards and decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Defense Superior Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Legion of Merit (with three Oak Leaf Clusters), Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters), and the Air Medal (with Numeral 7). She also has various unit, service and campaign awards, and numerous badges, including the Combat Action Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Senior Army Aviator Badge, Vice-Presidential Service Badge and the Army Staff Identification Badge.

She is married to Lieutenant General (Retired) Jim Richardson and they have one daughter and a grandchild.

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**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING  
THE HEARING**

MARCH 8, 2023

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### **RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GAETZ**

Secretary DALTON. The Department of Defense (DoD), via the Department of the Air Force, has been engaged with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on this matter. NMFS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) expedited issuance of a new Final Rule and Letter of Authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act for the Eglin Gulf of Mexico Test and Training Range (EGTTR). The Department appreciates the efforts of NMFS and NOAA in this regard. The new LOA became effective 13 April and enables the Air Force to resume live, inert, and/or aerial gunnery operations in the EGTTR's two designated Live Impact Areas. Neither air-to-air operations nor costs/schedules of the Systems Program Offices were impacted while awaiting issuance of the final rule and LOA. As per normal practice, the Air Force actively works with tenant units at Eglin Air Force Base to maintain weapons development test schedules; additionally, the Air Force regularly engages with customers of the EGTTR Complex to continue the pace of readiness-related trainings with the least amount of impact to other missions as possible. [See page 49.]

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### **RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MS. ESCOBAR**

General RICHARDSON. Our partners are our best defense in this region. As you outlined in your question, the interconnectedness of these issues caused by TCOs creates an environment that the PRC has learned to exploit. For that reason, we use integrated deterrence—working alongside our partners, allies and the interagency—to build capacity in the region and bolster the resiliency of some of the more vulnerable populations. We synchronize activities with the interagency that bolster cooperation with militaries and security forces to secure and tailor support to our partners that are willing to break the vicious sequence described.

For example, we share information with our partners to aid decisionmakers in selecting trustworthy telecommunications providers. We quickly coordinate and execute assessments that identify network vulnerabilities and threats. We employ a whole-of-government integrated deterrence approach to help our partners develop reliable and secure telecommunication infrastructure and cyber resilience while highlighting state-of-the-art substantive alternatives. We coordinate with the Department of Commerce to advise and assist partner nations in developing robust legal frameworks to secure their critical telecommunication infrastructure.

This effort is coordinated through the Department of State, both at the NCR and country team level, and is further guided by National Security Council prioritization to ensure synergy. The detect and monitoring activities the Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) conduct help degrade TCO networks by integrating FBI, DEA, and HSI targets into the daily targeting cycle. JIATF-S consistently integrates partner nation forces and assets into combined detect and monitor operations as well. These integrated efforts of interagency and international partners apply pressure on TCOs, preventing them from operating in a permissive environment. [See page 31.]

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### **RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MRS. MCCLAIN**

General RICHARDSON. USSOUTHCOM began coordinating with the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) in 2021 to better understand DFC's mission, resources, mandate, and potential integration with the command. We have included DFC's intelligence analyst in our USSOUTHCOM Joint Interagency Coordination Group to facilitate ongoing information-sharing, but there has not been extensive coordination on priorities or the DFC's current projects in the Western Hemisphere. [See page 40.]

#### **RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. FALLON**

General VANHERCK. Adversary intelligence services and hostile non-state actors are likely to at least consider exploiting known vulnerabilities at any of our border locations and ports of entries. Intelligence services are also able to utilize other legal methods of entering the U.S., to include tourist, work or immigration visas. We assess the majority of Russian passport holders seeking asylum in the United States, or who enter illegally, are economic migrants seeking greater opportunities in the United States. [See page 37.]

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#### **RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. GIMENEZ**

General RICHARDSON. Over the past ten years, the PRC has significantly expanded its lithium mining operations in Argentina and Chile—collectively known as the “Lithium Triangle.” Between 2018 and 2020 alone, the PRC invested approximately 16 billion USD on projects in the region and now has 23 PRC-affiliated lithium mining, development, or exploration projects. At least three PRC companies (Ganfeng Lithium, Tianqi Lithium, and Zijin Mining) have majority stakes in mining operations in Chile and Argentina, the world’s second- and fourth-largest lithium producers, respectively. PRC companies control 75–100% of the offtake of four mines in Argentina that are still in development and own a 24% stake in Chile’s largest lithium mining company. Market experts estimate these mining operations will produce over 60,000 tons of lithium per year, which is close to half of global lithium mining production in 2022. In early 2023, a PRC battery company, CATL, won the bid to develop Bolivia’s huge lithium reserves. Technical hurdles and a lack of infrastructure have long delayed the extraction of lithium in Bolivia, whose reserves are estimated at 21 million tons (24% of the known world reserves). [See page 32.]

General RICHARDSON. We defer the question about Chinese banks doing business in the United States to United States Department of the Treasury, we do not have the authorities to investigate activities in the United States. Regarding the Chinese banking footprint in the USSOUTHCOM AOR; there are at least seven Chinese banks operating in Latin America and the Caribbean. All have strong affiliations with the PRC government. Four of the seven are the world’s largest financial institutions based on total assets. Three of the four (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China Construction Bank (CBC), and Agricultural Bank of China (AgBank)) were created as state-owned subsidiaries of the Peoples Bank of China following the Communist Revolution, and the Bank of China (BoC) was founded by the Chinese government in 1912. All four banks are majority-owned and controlled by the PRC government and maintain their corporate headquarters in Beijing.

- All four have commercial office representation in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- ICBC has commercial representation in Lima, Peru and an extensive retail network in Argentina, with additional branches in Uruguay and Panama.
- CBC has commercial representation in Santiago, Chile and some retail presence in Brazil.
- BoC has commercial representation in Santiago, Chile and some retail presence in Panama City, Panama and Lime, Peru. We continue to study and assess the processes Chinese banks leverage, how they operate in the region, and how they approach contracts which many times lead to debt diplomacy of our partner nations. [See page 32.]

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#### **RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. LUTTRELL**

General RICHARDSON. Your questions have largely focused on USSOUTHCOM’s resource constraints. No budget is unlimited or without risk, and the Department of Defense makes tough choices and weighs where it can take greater risk. To make these tough resource decisions, the Department prioritizes against the National Defense Strategy (NDS). Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) are not included in the NDS and the focus for the Western Hemisphere in this strategic document is to “maintain the ability to respond to crises and seek to strengthen regional roles and capabilities for humanitarian assistance, climate resilience, and disaster response efforts.”<sup>1</sup> USSOUTHCOM’s resource allocation will not change as long as our mission requirements are not reflected in the NDS. This is true for our ISR requirements that would allow USSOUTHCOM to have domain awareness and it is also true for our levels to engage with and train our partners such as the Joint Exercise Program and Security Cooperation Programs. These programs yield a high return on investment as they get our willing partners in the fight with us to counter

shared threats and they also go a long way toward building and strengthening our relationships within the region at a time when the PRC is increasing its efforts to gain a strategic foothold in the Western Hemisphere.

1 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF> [See page 27.]

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**RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. LALOTA**

Secretary DALTON. The U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), in effect since 1960, is a mutual agreement between the governments of Japan and the United States that respects the legal systems of both countries while providing for the rights and privileges of U.S. military personnel stationed abroad. We have no plans to revise the SOFA. [See page 20.]



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**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING**

**MARCH 8, 2023**

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#### **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT**

Mr. SCOTT. What is the U.S. Coast Guard's security cooperation role with Canada?

General VANHERCK. I defer to the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant for this response.

Mr. SCOTT. What is the U.S. Coast Guard's security cooperation role with Mexico?

General VANHERCK. I defer to the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant for this response.

Mr. SCOTT. What is the U.S. Coast Guard's security cooperation role with the Bahamas?

General VANHERCK. I defer to the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant for this response.

Mr. SCOTT. Is the United States to conduct a large scale Search and Rescue mission in the arctic today?

General VANHERCK. No. I believe the United States government would face significant challenges in conducting a large-scale Arctic search and rescue (SAR) response. The harsh climate, remoteness, limited Arctic capable platforms and capacity, and limited infrastructure in the region create challenges for all Arctic missions, to include search and rescue (SAR) response. As Commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM, I have prioritized improved domain awareness, reliable communications, and infrastructure in the Arctic, all of which would benefit all of the inter-agency and international partners who would be needed to execute successful SAR operations in the Arctic.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the National Guard be better integrated with USNORTHCOM?

General VANHERCK. The National Guard is well-integrated with USNORTHCOM including the National Guard Bureau staffing an Integration Office at NORAD and USNORTHCOM (N&NC) Headquarters. There are 52 National Guard personnel assigned to and performing USNORTHCOM missions daily. Army and Air National Guard units perform many of the Command's missions except for maritime warning. With additional resources, the National Guard could expand its contributions to critical infrastructure resilience, Arctic domain awareness, communications, and cyber operations.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better integrated with USNORTHCOM?

General VANHERCK. The Coast Guard is well-integrated within USNORTHCOM including Coast Guard officers holding a number of key positions on the N&NC staff. Additionally, the Atlantic Area and Pacific Area Commanders have been invited to all USNORTHCOM Commander's Conferences since 2013. Senior Coast Guard and USNORTHCOM leaders are working to further integrate the Coast Guard to better utilize their unique authorities and capabilities. The Coast Guard continues to have an integral role in homeland defense, having most recently they supported N&NC operations involving the High-Altitude Balloon and Lake Huron unexplained aerial phenomena (UAP) recovery operations.

Mr. SCOTT. What are your explosive ordnance disposal (eod) priorities?

General VANHERCK. My priorities for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) are homeland defense, Defense Support of Civil Authorities, and Theater Security Cooperation. EOD units also provide critical support to the U.S. Secret Service and Department of State to mitigate threats to National Special Security Events such as the annual United Nations General Assembly in accordance with Department of Defense policy and orders.

Mr. SCOTT. Captain Michael Cilenti and Commander Matthew Rooney, U.S. Coast Guard wrote an article in the October 2022 edition of Proceedings entitled, "SouthCom Needs an Oilier." According to Cilenti and Rooney, "The recent oiler deployments to SouthCom naturally improved logistics, but counterdrug operations provide an opportunity to use replenishment ships for more than their traditional role. With a little planning, they also could decrease the time detainees remain on deck and reduce crew fatigue while building credibility among myriad stakeholders and disarming critics. Further, they could improve operational success by foiling

transnational criminal organizations' (TCOs') counterintelligence efforts by altering cutter pattern of life." Do you agree with the authors that SouthCom needs an oiler?

General RICHARDSON. USSOUTHCOM can put any platform to good use, to include oilers that could extend the presence of any surface platform compatible with the ship's logistics connection. This could help us more effectively use the limited surface platforms we are allocated to meet our mission requirements. Employing fleet oilers for missions outside logistics, specifically migrant operations, imposes unacceptable risks to both ship crews and migrants. Transferring people at sea from ship to ship via small boats is inherently risky. Moreover, these crews are not properly trained or equipped to conduct complex and dangerous migrant operations at sea. The logistics, authorities, and feasibility of staging migrants or detainees on a ship not designed for this purpose, as described in the article, is not recommended. From the perspective of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), while at-sea replenishment does reduce time needed in ports, which diversifies asset movements and reduces TCO surveillance opportunities, Coast Guard cutters must still routinely pull into port to replenish other resources such as food, water, and parts.

Mr. SCOTT. Can the aviation assets of the Department of Defense conduct more training missions in your area of responsibility by flying missions North to South instead of East to West?

General RICHARDSON. I highly encourage all services to conduct training and exercise missions, along with research and testing missions, within the USSOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). The USSOUTHCOM AOR provides an easily accessible training environment that mimics the topography and environment of other AORs, providing the ability to conduct real-world missions with lower costs and risks associated with deployment to AORs with greater time-distance challenges for CONUS-based forces. At the same time, the training environment increases force readiness and our presence in the region, reinforcing the message that the U.S. wants to be the partner of choice. Similarly, I invite the Navy to conduct port calls throughout the AOR as ships transit through enroute to other theaters. As a recent example, U.S. Air Force South demonstrated the innovative capabilities of USSOUTHCOM by hosting an Air Combat Command (ACC) Lead Wing/Agile Combat Employment (ACE) exercise in February 2023. ACC fielded A-10s from the 23d Wing in Moody AFB, GA and C-130s from Air Mobility Command, which featured operating locations in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The exercise provided a unique opportunity for both Commands to experiment and refine Command, Control, and logistics concepts relevant to the Pacific and European theaters while simultaneously strengthening partnerships with participating nations.

Mr. SCOTT. How can the National Guard be better integrated in USSOUTHCOM's AOR beyond the State Partnership Program?

General RICHARDSON. The National Guard is a critical component of our total force at USSOUTHCOM as we leverage all available personnel, making us flexible and agile to counter any challenge we may face. Of the service members at USSOUTHCOM, up to 20 percent at any given time are Guard or Reserve members conducting operations in more than 20 locations throughout the AOR. One such total force mission has been ongoing for a decade. Since 2013, Air National Guard Airmen have supported JIATF-South's detection and monitoring mission through the Host Nation Rider Program. This program provides critical foreign language support and translation/interpretation that has been instrumental in achieving successful detection and monitoring of air operations within the AOR. In fiscal year 2022, this program was involved in the seizure of over 49,000 kilograms of cocaine, 24,000 pounds of marijuana, and the apprehension of 154 detainees. The National Guard is fully integrated into our operations. I invite them to be a part of all national level meetings and visits between USSOUTHCOM and partner nations to foster those partnerships and look for ways to expand our interactions. Outside of the State Partnership Program but leveraging their partnerships and capabilities, we have expanded engagement with our partners in other nontraditional State Partnership Program capacities, particularly in the Cyber and Space domains. I would support fully resourcing the requirements of the SPP Program, as it is a force multiplier for this theater. As USSOUTHCOM has no assigned forces, we work to optimize all the capabilities they can provide.

Mr. SCOTT. Your predecessor General John Kelly is on the record that the Coast Guard, "Isn't big enough and can't deploy enough cutters to prevent all at-sea contraband from reaching U.S. shores." What is the minimum number of Coast Guard cutters and aviation assets needed in USSOUTHCOM's AOR "to prevent all at-sea contraband from reaching U.S. shores?"

General RICHARDSON. We won't be able to interdict our way out of this threat to our national security or prevent all at-sea contraband from reaching U.S. shores. This problem is a complex international challenge that needs to be attacked on

many fronts, not just at-sea. The Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) are conducting a wide spectrum of illegal smuggling to include not only drugs, but people, weapons, and other illicit cargo. The US and our partners need to focus actions on activities that work closer to the sources of the contraband, including drug production, loading of ship/plane, and initial movement of contraband to have a significant impact on decreasing the amount reaching U.S. shores. We also need to continue and enhance the Counter-Threat Finance activities being accomplished in coordination with the Department of Treasury, to have an impact on the over \$310B annual profit realized by TCO's this past year. USSOUTHCOM serves as a supporting entity to the greater U.S. Government actions to accomplish this goal. USSOUTHCOM authorities are limited to providing support and assistance to law enforcement organizations, like the U.S. Coast Guard, DEA, and Customs Border Protection, as they enforce U.S. laws at sea. While we cannot interdict our way out of a drug problem, additional U.S. Coast Guard ships and aviation assets provide increased presence, deterrence, and interdiction capabilities, which allows us to counter threats further from the homeland. An active presence, by the U.S., both U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy, along with allies, such as France, Netherlands, and UK, enhances the deterrent effect and increases interdictions. Bolstering DoD-led detection and monitoring capabilities, to include intelligence-directed targeting, directly impacts our ability to counter at-sea contraband from reaching U.S. shores. Additionally, partner nations contributed to 76% of JIATF-S cocaine disruptions in FY 2022, which highlights the vital support provided by partner nations to detect and interdict contraband before it reaches U.S. shores. To enable these continued contributions by partner nations requires full resourcing of USSOUTHCOM's security cooperation program to build our partner nations' capacity to execute this mission.

Mr. SCOTT. What low-cost ideas are you pitching to get more platforms operating in USSOUTHCOM's AOR?

General RICHARDSON. USSOUTHCOM pursues opportunities with U.S. Service labs to test emerging capabilities and to conduct technology acceleration initiatives within the USSOUTHCOM AOR. This allows USSOUTHCOM to remain on the front edge of technology development while also providing a complex environment for testing of emerging technology. Examples of some of the technology being tested/reviewed include, but not limited to, the following: Integrating air and surface unmanned systems into US 4th Fleet, which is a subordinate command of US Southern Command. Those capabilities will begin operations in that region during the UNITAS 2023 exercise scheduled for July 2023. Airborne Long-Wave Infra-Red Hyperspectral Imagery (HSI) Sensor. HSI enhances our counter-narcotics/counter-Transnational Criminal Organization mission through the detection of chemicals associated with manufacturing illicit materials and improves detection and monitoring against PRC and RUS illegal mining and logging activities. Center for Southeastern Tropical Advanced Remote Sensing (CSTARS). CSTARS provides access to commercial synthetic aperture radar imagery collection and analytics to provide early warning of changes in the environment, such as indicators of illicit trafficking. Asymmetric Targeting Acquisition Center (ATAC). ATAC exploits aggregated Publicly Available Information by leveraging assisted artificial intelligence/machine learning and advanced analytics to prosecute targets associated with PRC, RUS, Transnational Criminal Organizations, and Violent Extremist Organizations. I also encourage all services to conduct training and exercise missions, along with research and testing missions in this theater which offers real-world missions in a variety of geographies, close to the homeland. These opportunities increase force readiness, while at the same time increase U.S. presence in the region, reinforcing the message that the U.S. wants to be the partner of choice. Similarly, I invite the Navy to conduct port calls throughout the AOR as ships transit through on their way to other theaters.

Mr. SCOTT. How can NGO's be better integrated with USSOUTHCOM?

General RICHARDSON. USSOUTHCOM does work closely with NGOs throughout the AOR in a variety of missions. Our mission has historically been achieved through the integration of non-Federal entities (NFEs), which includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business, think tanks, and academia. USSOUTHCOM J7/9 currently has active partnerships with 64 NFEs. NGOs participate in and help shape USSOUTHCOM exercises by participating from the initial to the final planning conferences alongside USSOUTHCOM and component planners. Their subject matter expertise on topics such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), medical support, and more enhances our reach and effectiveness in the region. We are also exploring how NFEs can support achieving national security goals related to countering the PRC and Russia in the AOR. Recent examples of how NFEs have enhanced USSOUTHCOM Operations and Exercises:

- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing- In January 2021, USSOUTHCOM finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Global Fishing Watch (GFW), an NFE that employs the latest technology to visualize, track, and share data on global fishing activity in near real time. GFW is working with us to re-establish automated data sharing and has offered to share their analysis methodologies with us and partner nations during virtual training sessions.
- Continuing Promise 2022: 22 NFEs and two interagency partners augmented the USNS COMFORT mission with approximately 560 medical/interpreter volunteers, subject matter exchanges (SMEEs), logistics, and donations valued at \$1.7 million in aid to the region. NGO World Hope International led the HA/DR training and provided medical volunteers; NGO Project CURE donated medical supplies and equipment; NGO Operation Blessing supported with medical interpreters.
- Tradewinds 2022: Six NFEs supported logistics, cyber training, IUU-F maritime domain training, and medical and school furniture donations. NGO World Hope International provided air transportation to the Regional Security System and donated medical supplies and equipment to Belize valued at \$200,000.

Mr. SCOTT. Should the United States consider shiprider programs, bilateral agreements, and information sharing with partner nations to combat IUUF?

General RICHARDSON. As the lead Federal agency for at-sea enforcement of living marine resource laws, the U.S. Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF). As such, the U.S. Coast Guard currently has ship rider programs, bi-lateral agreements, multi-lateral agreements, and information sharing agreements with partner nations to combat IUUF. As Coast Guard presence expands in vital areas such as the Indo-Pacific, the Service will continue to seek new opportunities to partner with like-minded nations to combat IUUF. At present, the U.S. Navy does not have authority to conduct IUU fishing law enforcement operations in the SOUTHCOM AOR, but can share information, improve maritime domain awareness, and conduct professional exchanges with our partner nations who identify IUU fishing as a top maritime threat.

Mr. SCOTT. What is the center of gravity of the transnational criminal organizations in USSOUTHCOM's AOR?

General RICHARDSON. At USSOUTHCOM, we have worked with our interagency and international partners to identify three distinct Centers of Gravity (COG) for the Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) operating within our AOR. The three distinct environments for the COGs are Strategic, Operational, and Informational. The Strategic COGs for TCOs in the Western Hemisphere are the illicit revenue streams and the associated "strategic objective" to acquire and maintain wealth and power by any means available. Collective TCO operations generate continuous revenue streams that exceed the GDPs of most countries in Central America. These annual profits of over \$300 billion make it impossible for regional and local governments to counter them independently; inoculate TCOs and affiliates against local law enforcement; and is not impacted by attrition of illicit drugs from its supply chain alone. In the operational environment, the COG for TCOs is a permissive environment—illicit pathways and federated functional systems that enable its trafficking of commodities that sustain its wealth and power to act. A TCO's illicit activities exacerbate the destabilization of regional state and civic institutions, allowing the TCO to operate in a fluid, decentralized, and extremely efficient manner. In the information environment, the COG for TCOs is its control of information. That is, the state and quality of the information, information sources, and information means it possesses; and its ability to use and control information effectively to accomplish tasks, create effects, and achieve objectives. Any network's continued success is based on gaining and maintaining a favorable information position.

Mr. SCOTT. How can Non-Governmental Organizations be better integrated with SOUTHCOM?

General RICHARDSON. USSOUTHCOM does work closely with NGOs throughout the AOR in a variety of missions. Our mission has historically been achieved through the integration of non-Federal entities (NFEs), which includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business, think tanks, and academia. USSOUTHCOM J7/9 currently has active partnerships with 64 NFEs. NGOs participate in and help shape USSOUTHCOM exercises by participating from the initial to the final planning conferences alongside USSOUTHCOM and component planners. Their subject matter expertise on topics such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), medical support, and more enhances our reach and effectiveness in the region. We are also exploring how NFEs can support achieving national security goals related to countering the PRC and Russia in the AOR. Recent examples of how NFEs have enhanced USSOUTHCOM Operations and Exercises:

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Mr. SCOTT. How can U.S. corporations support USSOUTHCOM's mission? How can U.S. colleges and universities support USSOUTHCOM?

General RICHARDSON. In order to meet the national security challenges in this AOR we must take a holistic approach: Integrated Deterrence. Integrated Deterrence provides a common framework for collaboration, planning, and coordination, allowing us to connect easily and deliberately with private sector and academic partners on USG priorities. U.S. corporations are already investing and doing business throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Many corporations also do philanthropic work in the countries in which they conduct business. However, many times it goes unknown that these are American companies. By simply prominently displaying the US flag on their activities, for example, next to their company logo, Team USA can take credit for being present and contributing to our partners' economies. Colleges and universities are critical partners for the U.S. Government to deliver information and perspective not available through other means to the USG, which helps mitigate some of our pervasive knowledge gaps. Such knowledge provides a different lens through which to view persistent issues affecting the Latin American and Caribbean region and infuses key leader engagements—from those within the top echelons of the U.S. Government, across the Intelligence and interagency communities, and with our allies and nations, with well-researched and candid solution-oriented insights and recommendations. Such access has also proven critical to challenging conventional wisdom, inspiring intellectual curiosity, and identifying potential blind spots and alternative approaches to countering strategic threats. Because it is unclassified, it also drives engagement with whole-of-government, whole of society, regional and global partners on a variety of platforms. Also, institutions such as the InterAmerican Defense College, Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, and the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies execute critical IMET programs for us that professionalize partner nation military and security forces and strengthen our long-term relationships with these personnel.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you have any plans to issue a USSOUTHCOM recommended reading list?

General RICHARDSON. US Southern Command currently has 3 recommended reading lists; USSOUTHCOM Key Documents, Allied Partner Nation Recommended Reading List, and USSOUTHCOM Reading List. The first encompasses all national strategic documents and our nested USSOUTHCOM documents. The Allied Partner Nation Recommended Reading List contains recommendations from our Foreign Liaison Officers that provide historical and cultural references. The USSOUTHCOM Reading List contains regarded authors such as David Kilcullen, Christian Brose, and Adam Grant.

Mr. SCOTT. How important is WHINSEC to USSOUTHCOM?

General RICHARDSON. WHINSEC plays a pivotal role in the USSOUTHCOM AOR, providing key international training with an overwhelming focus on Professional Military Education. WHINSEC is the largest provider of international training for our Partner Nations and has trained more than 19,000 students from 36 countries. The WHINSEC academic curriculum directly contributes to the ability and capacity of our Partner Nations across the USSOUTHCOM AOR to enhance their own defense institutions, contribute to U.S. efforts to Counter-Transnational Criminal Organizations across the region, support the Command's Military Imperatives, and build long-term, enduring partnerships. The preponderance of all WHINSEC courses are categorized as PME, contributing directly to Defense Institution Building and/

or Security Sector Reform. Attendance at WHINSEC courses encompassed a variety of Services, including Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard units, as well as the Colombian Anti-narcotics Police. Courses are broken out as follows: Cadet Leadership; Small Unit Leader; NCO Professional Development; Inter Agency Crisis Action Planning; Transnational Threat Network and Intel Analysis; Intermediate Level Education; Joint Operations; Maneuver Captains Career; Senior Enlisted Advisor; and UN Staff & Peacekeeping Operations. These programs not only help professionalize the military and security forces, but also build life-long relationships with Partner Nation service members and civilians that will be the future leaders in their national security organizations.

Mr. SCOTT. What are your explosive ordnance disposal (eod) priorities?

General RICHARDSON. In USSOUTHCOM's AOR, there are many countries affected by landmines, unexploded ordnance, conventional weapons, and munitions remaining within reach of civilian populations because of varying degrees conflicts throughout the AOR. Colombia remains the priority for demining efforts closely followed by Ecuador; both victim to the violent extremist organizations and transnational criminal organizations that use this as a tool to counter their respective countries' counter drug efforts.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GALLAGHER

Mr. GALLAGHER. Generals: within each COCOM is a CYBERCOM-owned entity, called a "Cyberspace Operations Integrated Planning Element" as well as a separate "Joint Cyber Center." What does your Joint Cyber Center provide to you, and how is it distinct from what the Cyberspace Operations Integrated Planning Element is capable of providing?

General VANHERCK. The Cyber Operations—Integrated Planning Element is in direct support of USNORTHCOM and provides cyber subject matter expertise in the areas of policy, planning, and cyber domain awareness.

The N&NC Joint Cyber Center (JCC) is a distinct, organic part of the command that conducts full-spectrum cyberspace operations to include planning, prioritization of cyber operations, and command and control of USNORTHCOM cyberspace operations to assure N&NC critical mission systems and networks. Furthermore, the JCC provides 24-hour manning support to the N&NC Joint Operations Center, ensuring cyber is integrated into all aspects of N&NC assigned missions.

Mr. GALLAGHER. How does PRC influence affect your mission in NORTHCOM, and what is your command doing to limit Chinese interference in the information operations space?

General VANHERCK. The People's Republic of China (PRC) operates in the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility and associated information space, often with the intent of countering U.S. interests. USNORTHCOM partners with a wide variety of stakeholders to cohesively provide mutual defense and cooperation to deter malign influence threatening the homeland. USNORTHCOM uses a combination of avenues, including public and non-public fora, to identify malign threats in the information space and provide partner nations with situational awareness. These efforts serve to expose the predatory nature of specific Chinese activities, increase our cooperative relationships, and emphasize the advantages of the United States as the partner of choice.

Mr. GALLAGHER. In both of your commands, what do you find to be the most important and least financed area of infrastructure investment critical to carrying out your operations?

General VANHERCK. My greatest unmet need for infrastructure investment is in the Arctic, specifically infrastructure investments at Pituffik Air Base (formerly Thule Air Base). My fiscal year 2024 (FY24) unfunded priorities list includes funding requests that enable geotechnical and topographic surveys in advance of infrastructure restoration and design work for hangar restoration at Pituffik. I also have a validated requirement for fuel north of Dutch Harbor, Alaska that I believe will be met by planned improvements to the Port of Nome, Alaska in the coming years.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Can you speak to any efforts underway by NORTHCOM to harden U.S. military infrastructure and enhance capability in the Arctic? Are there any factors that, in your opinion, prevent NORTHCOM from delivering the capability required to deter Russia and the PRC in the Arctic within the next three years? In your opinion, has the US already fallen behind our adversaries in the development of the operational capacity required to preserve American security interests in the Arctic?

General VANHERCK. Through the Services, NORAD & USNORTHCOM advocates for continued development of facilities-related control system cybersecurity, particu-

larly critical for remote Arctic facilities where the distance between alternate sites does not allow for practical redundancy. Factors preventing NORAD & USNORTHCOM from delivering capabilities in the Arctic within the next three years include the lack of domain awareness from undersea to space and the cyber domain, and a continued need for timely access to forces specifically equipped and trained to operate in the Arctic.

To answer your second question—yes, we have fallen behind our adversaries. To close the operational capacity gap, we conduct operations, exercises, and activities in the Arctic to enhance Joint Force capabilities, in coordination with other Combatant Commands as well as allies and partners. Examples include joint exercises like ARCTIC EDGE and key strategic activities executed as part of Consolidated Strategic Opportunities Development (CSOD) process. Additionally, I continuously advocate for the Services to resource Arctic capability development.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Generals: within each COCOM is a CYBERCOM-owned entity, called a “Cyberspace Operations Integrated Planning Element” as well as a separate “Joint Cyber Center.” What does your Joint Cyber Center provide to you, and how is it distinct from what the Cyberspace Operations Integrated Planning Element is capable of providing?

General RICHARDSON. As I meet with Partner nation leaders, cyber is always at the top of their list of concerns and it is a regular ask for support from USSOUTHCOM, as they are concerned about the security of their networks. The Joint Cyber Center (JCC) is the USSOUTHCOM command organization, embedded within the Operations Directorate, responsible for planning and executing full-spectrum cyber operations, and advancing cybersecurity capabilities of partner nations in the AOR. The Cyberspace Operations Integrated Planning Element (CO-IPE) is an extension of Joint Force Headquarters—Cyber (Navy) and provides direct support to USSOUTHCOM. The CO-IPE enables full spectrum Cyberspace Operations by providing subject matter expertise and operations level planning in direct support of USSOUTHCOM and CCDR’s objectives. At USSOUTHCOM, JCC manning shortfalls limit its capacity to effectively coordinate on all cyber requirements. JCC personnel and funding challenges also affect how much, and how often USSOUTHCOM can provide support to partner nations. With 31 countries in the AOR, the JCC’s limited capacity restrains its ability to plan and execute engagements that meet the partner nation demand. The JCC and COIPE are complementary organizations, each with their own responsibilities and capabilities. One does not replace the other. These shortfalls are also resident in our space operations activities. We have a Space Operations Branch comprised of one Space Force officer.

Mr. GALLAGHER. In both of your commands, what do you find to be the most important and least financed area of infrastructure investment critical to carrying out your operations?

General RICHARDSON. There are several critical areas of infrastructure that challenge USSOUTHCOM’s operational success both here and in the AOR. USSOUTHCOM’s designation as a posture limited theater challenges our ability to respond to crises throughout the AOR and where our limited resources place U.S. interests at risk by allowing the PRC to continue its expansion efforts. Persistent USSOUTHCOM presence in the Southern Cone would provide needed domain awareness over vital sea lanes of communication and the access and placement necessary to strengthen our relationships with partner nations to compete with the PRC. USSOUTHCOM does not have permanent locations, support facilities or bases throughout the AOR and depends on others for movement of forces and supplies to accomplish our missions. This leads to my first critical need: consistent heavy airlift routes across the USSOUTHCOM AOR and especially into the Southern Cone. As the United States works to collaborate with countries throughout the Southern Cone, limited strategic airlift inhibits access and persistent engagement in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. Consistent engagement with these countries is essential to countering monopolistic PRC occupation with U.S. partners in the region. Additionally, the United States does not currently maintain support facilities or contingency basing locations, inhibiting our ability to support our partners. Establishing agreements with our partners to facilitate contingency basing locations would allow the United States to achieve force projection and dynamic force employment into the theater to provide policy makers response options during emerging crisis. The two forward strategic locations that do exist, Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras, and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba, each have MILCON projects that are in the FY24 President’s Budget Request: a DLA fuel facility at Soto Cano (\$41M); and a DHA Ambulatory Care Center at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (\$257M). There are also additional requirements for MILCON that remain unfunded for replacing old, aging facilities at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras. Closer to home, JIATF-S HQ facilities are 70 years old and deteriorating. Roughly \$30M

has been spent over the past five years to keep these facilities operational, but despite this they are rated as “poor” or “failing” according to Navy facility condition data. An economic analysis completed in 2021 showed that new construction was more cost-effective than continued repairs. The replacement facility design is fully funded and will be completed in FY24. The MILCON project remains unfunded.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. SHERRILL

Ms. SHERRILL. First, I would like to thank all of you for your service and commitment to keeping our homeland safe, especially as our country grapples with a variety of complex and nontraditional threats, including the war in Ukraine, disinformation, global terrorism, climate change and increases in natural disasters, as well as supply chain shortages. I’d like to point to a common topic that ties together many of the challenges you have brought to our attention today, and that’s the role of transnational criminal organizations and economic insecurity in the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM areas of operations.

I think it would be fair to say that a poor economic outlook coupled with transnational criminal organizations and crime syndicates that use systematic violence and terror to destabilize local communities are key factors that drive migration to our borders.

How would you say the Department of Defense, and in particular NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM, are doing in executing integrated deterrence to reduce the corrupt and violent influence and impact of transnational criminal organizations throughout the region?

Specifically, what are the successes in this regard, and where are the areas where we need to reassess?

Secretary DALTON. The Department of Defense (including USNORTHCOM and USSOUTHCOM) provides many types of support for U.S. and foreign partners that enables them to conduct a range of operations, including to counter transnational organized crime (CTOC). DoD provides most of its CTOC-related support to other U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies and to partner nations through DoD’s Counterdrug (CD) program under 10 U.S.C. § 284, for the primary purpose of supporting efforts to disrupt drug trafficking organizations. Under 10 U.S.C. 284, support may include transportation, establishment and operation of bases of operation or training facilities, intelligence analysis support, and aerial and ground reconnaissance. Pursuant to 10 U.S.C 124, DoD is the lead Federal agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States; interdiction activities are conducted by U.S. and foreign partners. Approximately 67 percent of the DoD counterdrug support budget is focused on the Western Hemisphere and the homeland. It is important to note that DoD’s CD and CTOC activities are in support of USG and foreign partners; DoD is not the lead agency to conduct CD and CTOC operations. For more detailed information on DoD’s CD and CTOC support activities, I would refer you to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, who is the Department’s lead for these programs.

Ms. SHERRILL. A general theme tying together many of the issues discussed today is the insecurity and instability facing nations in the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM areas of operations caused by economic challenges, the climate crisis, and the widening sphere of Chinese and Russian influence.

As China continues to increase their presence and sway in Panama, such as winning contracts for critical infrastructure, what are the Department of Defense and SOUTHCOM doing to protect and strengthen our interests and reach in the region? What additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

Secretary DALTON. I remain concerned that autocratic powers are working within the Western Hemisphere to undermine the stable, open, rules-based international order. The best way to counter the autocracies’ attempts to gain influence is for the United States to be present and engaged in the region, including by building strong defense and security partnerships with our neighbors. Toward this end, in fiscal year (FY) 2023, the Department of Defense has allocated more than \$115 million in funding to support our partners in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. This brings our investment in security cooperation in the hemisphere since 2020 to more than half a billion dollars. The Department is dedicated to engaging in the region in alignment with the objectives in the National Defense Strategy and with congressional intent, as reflected in our International Security Cooperation Program resource allocation for USSOUTHCOM in the President’s FY 2024 budget request. We will continue to invest in regional, transparent solutions

that deepen our shared security, and that promote democracy, the rule of law, civilian control of the military, and human rights.

Ms. SHERRILL. First, I would like to thank all of you for your service and commitment to keeping our homeland safe, especially as our country grapples with a variety of complex and nontraditional threats, including the war in Ukraine, disinformation, global terrorism, climate change and increases in natural disasters, as well as supply chain shortages. I'd like to point to a common topic that ties together many of the challenges you have brought to our attention today, and that's the role of transnational criminal organizations and economic insecurity in the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM areas of operations.

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Specifically, what are the successes in this regard, and where are the areas where we need to reassess?

Secretary DALTON. Counteracting the illicit activities of the TCOs is inherently a law enforcement responsibility, and USNORTHCOM is tasked with supporting partners and lead Federal agencies' efforts to reduce crime, corruption, TCO finances, and illicit narcotics production and flows toward the United States.

As I have testified, an approach focused on interdiction is insufficient to stemming the flow of illicit traffic into the United States. In recent years, USNORTHCOM has shifted the focus of our support to counteracting illicit networks, regardless of commodity, while focusing on the competitors that seek to exploit these networks. Our support activities successfully leverage our allies and partners while working seamlessly across domains and theaters to address Homeland Defense and CD/CTOC priorities. Due to the scope and scale of this challenge, I strongly support the establishment of a USG operational-level convening authority and coordination mechanism to better facilitate and to oversee a whole-of-government synchronization of all CD/CTOC activities.

Ms. SHERRILL. General VanHerck, it is great to see you again. Last year you mentioned the importance of persistent presence in the Arctic, especially due to the complexity of the region. As the PRC continues to assert their 'near-Arctic state' title and increase their investments in Arctic infrastructure, what is NORTHCOM doing to protect and strengthen our interests and reach in the region? What additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

General VANHERCK. USNORTHCOM and NORAD's priorities in the region continue to focus on increased presence, campaigning through joint training and exercises, and close collaboration with allies and partners. I continue to advocate for additional Arctic capabilities to include Over-the-Horizon Radar for domain awareness; Pituffik Air Base (formerly Thule Air Base) infrastructure to support a persistent presence; maritime fuel availability north of Dutch Harbor, Alaska to enable campaigning and deterrent operations in the far north; and sustainment of existing domain awareness capabilities such as ARCHER. I also require timely access to forces that are organized, trained, and equipped to operate day-to-day in the Arctic. I continue to advocate to the Government of Canada for timely modernization of forces and infrastructure to support day-to-day campaigning and crisis operations that will enable NORAD & USNORTHCOM to conduct assigned missions.

Ms. SHERRILL. As the war in Ukraine continues on, militaries around the world are facing challenges with supply chain and production of critical defense assets. How is NORTHCOM working with our organic defense industrial base to ensure that the end items and munitions that you are receiving are fully compatible with Arctic operations? What challenges has your department faced as you modernize your systems to work in a complex environment and what additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

General VANHERCK. Munitions and end-item procurement is a military Service responsibility, and NORAD & USNORTHCOM works closely with the Services and Joint Staff to meet our commands' requirements. When addressing "Arctic Capable" munitions, the Services procure munitions that meet a broad specification to function in a variety of conditions. Through demanding exercises such as Arctic Edge and live fire training events at the Joint Pacific Range Complex in Alaska, we identify limitations or issues and convey this information to the Services in order to assist with modifying or designing equipment and munitions.

Ms. SHERRILL. First, I would like to thank all of you for your service and commitment to keeping our homeland safe, especially as our country grapples with a variety of complex and nontraditional threats, including the war in Ukraine, disinformation, global terrorism, climate change and increases in natural disasters, as well as supply chain shortages. I'd like to point to a common topic that ties together many of the challenges you have brought to our attention today, and that's the role of transnational criminal organizations and economic insecurity in the NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM areas of operations.

I think it would be fair to say that a poor economic outlook coupled with transnational criminal organizations and crime syndicates that use systematic violence and terror to destabilize local communities are key factors that drive migration to our borders.

How would you say the Department of Defense, and in particular NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM, are doing in executing integrated deterrence to reduce the corrupt and violent influence and impact of transnational criminal organizations throughout the region?

Specifically, what are the successes in this regard, and where are the areas where we need to reassess?

General RICHARDSON. Transnational Criminal Organizations are extremely complex entities that destabilize the hemisphere with their unbounded violence, illicit profits, and corruption. No one entity has the resources and authorities to counter this threat to our national security. At USSOUTHCOM we have more than 24 representatives from 15 different agencies and departments assigned full time to enable effective interagency integration into operations and planning to counter TCOs. As an example, our Law Enforcement Working Group here brings interagency law enforcement agents and intelligence officers together with key members of the staff and components to support the DEA Special Operations Division, target TCO and cartel members, and work with the Department of Treasury to build sanctions packages. Additionally, the interagency, international effort led by JIATF-S is a model for integrated deterrence for the detection and monitoring of illicit drugs.

Last year, JIATF-S, together with our international partners, disrupted 371 illegal smuggling events including cocaine and marijuana worth \$7.5 billion. In addition, these disruptions produced evidence our interagency and international law enforcement partners use for judicial purposes to degrade and dismantle TCOs. As I mentioned in this year's posture statement, while illicit drug movement disruptions are critical, in order to truly impact these billion-dollar conglomerates we must also support interagency efforts to follow the money. To that end, USSOUTHCOM continues to identify TCO financial support networks, providing direct analytic support to U.S. Treasury Department and other interagency partners that facilitate sanctions, arrests, and prosecutions.

Recently, USSOUTHCOM supported Treasury's designation of Ecuadorian national Wilmer Emilio Sanchez Farfan, one of the most significant drug traffickers in the world and a major cocaine supplier to the Sinaloa cartel. We know we can't interdict our way out of this problem. To compete and win, we need an increased whole-of-government effort to go after the spectrum of threats associated with TCOs—counterdrug, counter threat finance, demand reduction on the domestic side, and security cooperation to build our partners' capacity to counter the TCOs. Through innovation, creative resourcing and smarter use of artificial intelligence and machine learning, USSOUTHCOM will continue to leverage integrated deterrence to reduce the corrupt and violent influence, and impact of TCOs throughout the region.

Ms. SHERRILL. General Richardson, how is SOUTHCOM working with our organic defense industrial base to ensure that the end items and munitions that you are receiving are fully compatible with regional operations? What challenges has your department faced as you modernize your systems to work in a complex environment and what additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

General RICHARDSON. As a Combatant Command, USSOUTHCOM develops its requirements for end items and munitions and submits those requirements through the Global Force Management Process to the Joint Staff. As part of our requirement generation process, we consider factors such as interoperability and compatibility with partner nations. USSOUTHCOM then relies on the Joint Staff and the Services, to meet those requirements working with the industrial base. As a posture-limited theater, USSOUTHCOM does not receive the assets needed to meet our requirements, and as such, the Command strives to find commercially available options to mitigate those shortfalls.

Ms. SHERRILL. A general theme tying together many of the issues discussed today is the insecurity and instability facing nations in the NORTHCOM and

SOUTHCOM areas of operations caused by economic challenges, the climate crisis, and the widening sphere of Chinese and Russian influence.

As China continues to increase their presence and sway in Panama, such as winning contracts for critical infrastructure, what are the Department of Defense and SOUTHCOM doing to protect and strengthen our interests and reach in the region? What additional resources do you need to accomplish your mission?

General RICHARDSON. Our goal is to increase security and amplify democracy to maintain a stable and prosperous hemisphere. Across the AOR, USSOUTHCOM focuses efforts on exposing, illuminating, and attributing PRC malign activity through information and intelligence sharing with the interagency and partner nations. We need well-resourced and staffed interagency partners. In those areas that directly affect our authorities, we need more agile vetting processes to reduce the lag-time for International Military Education and Training program enrollment. We need a faster foreign military sales pipeline to meet the real-world challenges that partner nations face. We need the ability to react at scale to support U.S. government messaging, counter disinformation, amplify key narratives, and refocus target audiences on topics of national security. We need the resources to support our partner nations in securing their technology infrastructure. This can only be accomplished through a multi-front campaign including, removing disinformation, releasing timely messages that are amplified at scale, using third-party validators that are able to reinforce that narrative, offering private/public alternatives that are viable, and providing a proactive, technologically advanced protective force that can work on partner nation infrastructure. At the end of the day, nations in the region value U.S. relationships, but not at the expense of their own national interests. We must be present, responsive and reliable in meeting their needs or we can expect our adversaries to fill the void.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. BERGMAN

Mr. BERGMAN. How are you using your Guard & Reserve components within your unit?

Secretary DALTON. As the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs, 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, and the Arctic and global resilience. In this role, although I do not command Reserve Component (including National Guard) personnel, I benefit from the superb contributions and insight of Reserve Component personnel who are serving tours in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. BERGMAN. How are you using your Guard & Reserve components within your unit?

General VANHERCK. The Guard and Reserve have been integrated into day-to-day operations since the establishment of NORAD & USNORTHCOM. Guard and Reserve component personnel support various homeland defense missions such as ballistic missile defense, cyber, Defense Support of Civil Authorities, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear. Further, Air Guard and Reserve elements are directly involved in the NORAD Operation NOBLE EAGLE mission which identifies, monitors, and tracks suspect air tracks approaching and traveling through North American Airspace. Air Guard and Reserve forces are critical to the Aerospace Control Alert mission providing 24/7 national coverage to immediately respond to intercept, inspect, influence, and if necessary, defeat a potential airborne threat.

Mr. BERGMAN. How are you using your Guard & Reserve components within your unit?

General VANHERCK. Guard and Reserve personnel are a force multiplier and are fully integrated into our total joint force at USSOUTHCOM. They are engaged in all aspects of the COCOM's operations including manning the Joint Operations Center, planning and participating in joint exercises, managing the vital State Partnership Program (SPP), and working alongside civilian and active-duty service members at USSOUTHCOM seamlessly. Our Service Components also incorporate their respective Guard and Reserve organizations in the same way.

One example of this total force approach at my headquarters is the Navy Reserve Joint Intelligence Operations Center 0174. Leveraging their drill weekends and yearly active-duty times, these reserve sailors supported the intelligence and evidentiary package that ultimately led to sanctioning action on Pingtam Marine Enterprise, Ltd. (Nasdaq: PME) along with eight other affiliated entities. This action represents the first time the Department of Treasury has designated an entity listed

on the NASDAQ stock exchange. Additionally, this action identified 157 People's Republic of China-flagged fishing vessels, of which, 300–600 operate within our AOR.

As a recent emergent response example, in September we had forty-eight, C-130 sorties flown over 28 days delivering 121K of diesel fuel to US Embassy/USAID in Haiti. Thirty percent of the flight operations were executed with Air National Guard aircraft and crew. Air Force Reservists from Homestead Air Reserve Base provided critical, short-notice voluntary support to base operations during this high visibility fuel delivery mission with elements consisting of aerial port, logistic planners, and ramp security surveillance. These RC forces were designated part of the initial SOUTHCOM response because they had high operational readiness, unique capabilities, and location proximity to the mission. Within the USSOUTHCOM Joint Exercise Program, the Guard and Reserves typically make up a large portion of participating US forces—78% of Resolute Sentinel, 60% of Tradewinds, and 40% of PANAMAX. Although rotational, as of this response, within our two Joint Task Forces, they make-up 66% of JTF-GTMO, and 20% of JTF-Bravo personnel respectively. Internally, state National Guard units such as Arkansas, Texas, and Florida provide intelligence capabilities and analysis and guard units in the operations directorate play a critical role in strengthening our partners' cyber defense capabilities and developing their space support capabilities.

Additionally, Alabama's 167th Theater Sustainment Command is an integral part of ensuring we can sustain our forces throughout the Hemisphere. Due to our lack of assigned forces, maximizing the integration of the Guard and Reserves is critical to our success.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WALTZ

Mr. WALTZ. In 2022 Russia released its new Maritime Doctrine prioritizing the Arctic, pledging to protect these Waters "by all means". This shift in priorities has already manifested itself in terms of assets on the ground and increasing exercises. Russia unveiled plans for a new strategic missile carrying submarine cruiser and just one month later it deployed several submarines for an exercise to the Arctic around Umka to showcase their capabilities in the High North.

General VanHerck, do you currently have the resources and infrastructure to protect and deter Russian creep into the Arctic?

General VANHERCK. No, I do not have the resources and infrastructure to counter increased Russian or PRC military activity in the Arctic. To address NORAD and USNORTHCOM mission requirements in the region, I continue to advocate for investments in domain awareness and infrastructure to deter potential threats in the northern approaches to North America. For example, given Russia's advanced maritime capabilities, I fully support the Navy's investment in a modernized Integrated Undersea Surveillance System in the Atlantic, while Over-the-Horizon Radars will significantly extend the detection range for airborne and maritime objects. I also need timely access to forces that are ready to operate in the Arctic, resilient infrastructure that can support those forces, and maritime refueling capability north of Dutch Harbor in Alaska. Finally, I need a netted array that links undersea, air, land, and space sensors to a common operating picture command and control node.

Mr. WALTZ. You have previously highlighted the challenges for communications north of 65 latitude, and how they effect our ability to defend the homeland—what is the status of your work with SPACECOM to field capabilities that secure our ability to communicate in the Arctic, particularly given increased Russian and Chinese activities in the high north?

General VANHERCK. NORAD & USNORTHCOM are engaged with USSPACECOM in their role as the Global Satellite Communications Operations Manager, and the Services, to access proliferated commercial satellite communications (SATCOM) services which are now capable of providing 100 percent Arctic coverage. Appropriations provided in response to previous unfunded priorities lists enabled testing of proliferated commercial capabilities at Arctic ground stations, aboard ships, and on Department of Defense (DoD) aircraft, and facilitated development of a hybrid terminal capable of switching seamlessly between multiple commercial and DoD military SATCOM systems. Once the hybrid terminals are ready for production (fiscal year 2028) we will advocate for the Services to begin procurement. While not specifically designed to provide polar service, the Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) demonstrates an ability to provide tactical communications across the Arctic region. I endorse the U.S. Space Force plan to extend the service life of this constellation and I continue to urge the Services to fully fund terminal procurement.

Mr. WALTZ. Do you believe Iran could use its space launch vehicle program to develop an ICBM capability to strike our homeland?

General VANHERCK. We have not observed any indications Iran is pursuing an ICBM or that Tehran plans to lift its self-imposed 2,000km range limit on its ballistic missile program. Iran continues to develop space launch vehicles (SLVs) with increasing lift capacity. Although key differences between SLVs and ICBMs remain, including technologies necessary for development of launch trajectories and survivable ICBM reentry vehicles, progress in Iran's space program could shorten a pathway to an ICBM.

Mr. WALTZ. What are we doing NOW to ensure we will have a shoot-look-shoot homeland defense capability against an Iranian ICBM if/when they field one?

General VANHERCK. I defer to the Missile Defense Agency on programmatic and architectural specifics. I remain confident in my ability to defend the homeland against a rogue nation threat such as the DPRK and potentially an Iranian ICBM. However, as we work towards future proofing our architecture to provide the flexibility afforded through shoot-assess-shoot, it is a capability I welcome.

Mr. WALTZ. Could the drug and human smuggling routes on our southern border be used to infiltrate terrorists into the United States?

General VANHERCK. Yes, terrorists could be infiltrated into the United States utilizing current drug and human smuggling routes. However, attempting surreptitious entry into the United States via Mexico poses greater risks than attempting to send in operatives unknown to U.S. law enforcement or intelligence agencies with legitimate travel documents via commercial air or maritime conveyances.

Mr. WALTZ. In a Taiwan contingency, do you believe China could conduct cyber-attacks against our CONUS U.S. military bases and the civilian infrastructure that supports them and what are you doing to address that threat?

General VANHERCK. Yes. USNORTHCOM, in conjunction with U.S. Cyber Command, has worked to ensure vital assets, both physically and virtually, to conduct military operations will be able to provide all support necessary. USNORTHCOM works closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command to coordinate defensive efforts across the entire United States.

Mr. WALTZ. More than 80,000 Americans with fentanyl every year, creating a crisis at our border. Yesterday, we heard the awful news that 2 of the 4 Americans kidnapped by Mexican drug cartels were killed. General Richardson, do you believe the Mexican drug cartels pose destabilizing threat to the nations in your area of responsibility?

General RICHARDSON. Mexican cartels are a threat to the stability of countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR. Mexican cartels dominate the drug supply chain, moving cocaine from South America to the United States and Europe. With most U.S.-bound cocaine originating in Colombia, Mexican cartels facilitate key revenue generation for some of Colombia's most dangerous armed groups responsible for regional instability, including the Gulf Clan, National Liberation Army, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)-People's Army, and FARC-Second Marquetalia. The Mexico-based Sinaloa Cartel, New Generation Jalisco Cartel, and the Zetas traffic weapons into Central and South America often as payment for northbound drugs, fueling the violence committed by transnational criminal groups and local gangs.

Mexican cartels have gained more control of these supply chains during the past two decades, and their presence and activities in Latin America and the Caribbean have also grown. Although Mexican cartels do not control territory, they send emissaries to negotiate and monitor cocaine movements headed north. Mexican cartels have long-established associations with smaller gangs and transportation networks that facilitate cocaine movement in Central and South American transit countries, including Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, and they use the Dominican Republic as the central Caribbean hub for cocaine trafficking to the eastern United States and Europe. These gangs and transportation networks violently compete for territory motivated by their alliances with one or more Mexican cartels.

For example, in Ecuador, during the past two years, gangs aligned with either the Sinaloa Cartel or New Generation Jalisco Cartel have engaged in deadly clashes for control of logistical corridors and have targeted Ecuadorian security forces responding to the violence, leading President Lasso to declare a state of emergency several times. Other countries that have identified Mexican cartels coordinating cocaine trafficking activities include Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. In addition to drug trafficking, Mexican cartel operatives in Latin America and the Caribbean reportedly engage in myriad illicit activities that have destabilizing economic, environmental, and security impacts, including money laundering, human trafficking, illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and illegal mining.

### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MOYLAN

Mr. MOYLAN. The Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA mandated by statute a timeline to contract an independent assessment of the much discussed “defense of Guam” integrated air and missile defense architecture.

The 60 day window for the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract to fulfill this requirement has expired, and we have not seen any public notification that this congressional mandate has been met. Please advise where we stand on this mandate as of date.

Secretary DALTON. OUSD(R&E) is actively seeking to enter into a contract with an FFRDC to conduct the assessment. The Department of Defense intends to complete the study and submit a response to Congress no later than December 2023.

Mr. MOYLAN. The Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA mandated by statute a timeline to contract an independent assessment of the much discussed “defense of Guam” integrated air and missile defense architecture.

The 60 day window for the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract to fulfill this requirement has expired, and we have not seen any public notification that this congressional mandate has been met. Please advise where we stand on this mandate as of date.

General VANHERCK. I defer to the Secretary of Defense for this response. Guam is in the USINDOPACOM area of operations, and USNORTHCOM was not tasked with this report.

Mr. MOYLAN. The Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA mandated by statute a timeline to contract an independent assessment of the much discussed “defense of Guam” integrated air and missile defense architecture.

The 60 day window for the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract to fulfill this requirement has expired, and we have not seen any public notification that this congressional mandate has been met. Please advise where we stand on this mandate as of date.

General RICHARDSON. I defer to the Secretary of Defense on this question.

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### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MCCORMICK

Mr. MCCORMICK. ASD Dalton, given that many of our efforts in NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM span the DIME spectrum, what other U.S. government entities and international organizations are the most important in supporting our national security goals in these regions?

Secretary DALTON. In addition to Congress, the Department of Defense works closely with many other Federal departments and agencies in support of our national security goals in the Western Hemisphere. These include the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, and the Treasury. Key international organizations include the United Nations and its agencies, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Defense Board, and the Inter-American Defense College.

Mr. MCCORMICK. GEN VanHerck, as you're undoubtedly aware, tragedy struck just days ago when 4 U.S. citizens innocently traveling in the NORTHCOM AOR, specifically in northern Mexico, were violently kidnapped with 2 Americans losing their lives. We've seen similar tragedies play out countless times, and it's symptomatic of our failure to deter and contain these murderous drug cartels. Can you offer us some sense on how your command plans to cooperate with partner nations in your AOR to ensure that tragedies like this don't continue to occur? What additional authorities and resources could Congress provide that would produce maximum positive impact on this mission set?

General VANHERCK. Mexico's strong bilateral military relationship with USNORTHCOM focuses on defense security cooperation efforts, to include domain awareness, domain control, and institutional strengthening. Through our CD/CTOC authorities, USNORTHCOM assists Mexico in funding multiple small-scale construction projects specifically designed to support and enhance Mexico's CD/CTOC efforts. As I have testified before Congress, CD/CTCO is primarily a law enforcement action and USNORTHCOM is in support of Federal law enforcement agencies.

Mr. MCCORMICK. GEN VanHerck, In recent years, we've observed the Arctic region become a nascent arena for great power competition with the U.S. and several NATO allies on one side and the Russian Federation on the other. Does NORTHCOM anticipate the Arctic becoming a potential battlefield of the future and, if so, what resources or authorities are urgently needed to deter and, if necessary, combat threats to our sovereignty in the region? a. Given the intense co-operation between Russia and China on icebreaker development and deployment, is NORTHCOM pursuing a parallel strategy to pool icebreakers and other key assets?

General VANHERCK. Today the Arctic is a region of strategic competition. Future potential crisis and conflict with the PRC or Russia could spill into the Arctic. As such, the United States cannot afford to concede operational superiority in the region to any potential adversary. Russia clearly has the capabilities to threaten our national security interests in the region and has demonstrated its intent to use the Arctic as an avenue of approach to North America. The PRC also has clear ambitions to increase its influence in Arctic governance with a focus on long-term exploitation of natural resources. Per the National Defense Strategy, the Department must be able to “monitor and respond” to threats in the Arctic, and to do so, I require timely access to forces and equipment that are capable of Arctic operations, along with the necessary supporting infrastructure. To meet that requirement, the Services must resource their Arctic strategies, and the Global Force Management process must be better aligned with the NDS’s prioritization of homeland defense. Finally, while icebreaker procurement is currently a U.S. Coast Guard responsibility, as the DoD Arctic Capability Advocate, I fully support their efforts, or efforts of DoD Services to grow the fleet of icebreakers and Arctic-capable vessels.

Mr. MCCORMICK. GEN Richardson, I’m very pleased to see the seriousness with which SOUTHCOM treats strategic competition with the PRC in your AOR. As we know, diplomatic and economic overtures that the PRC makes to developing countries are so often predatory and extractive in nature, and I believe they present a direct threat to our national security. After all, limiting the influence of near-peer competitors in Latin America is a national security goal almost as old as the United States itself. What specific sectors would you point to as the most critical areas where we should be leveraging assets to outcompete China in the SOUTHCOM/AOR? Due to China’s authoritarian system, they unfortunately have something of an advantage in strategic planning since they aren’t subject to electoral cycles. How can we insulate our strategy in SOUTHCOM from political turnover not just every 4 years but also every 2 years?

General RICHARDSON. Presence and proximity matter. Not only do we share many of the same values and ideals with the countries that comprise the USSOUTHCOM AOR, but our national security is also intertwined with their stability. Our consistent and persistent military and security engagement in the USSOUTHCOM AOR has enabled our military-to-military relationships to weather regional political shifts. But we must remain on the field to make a difference. Threats develop and gain momentum when we don’t have a presence with our partners, and we must maintain consistent relationships or risk losing influence, especially regarding Panama, Colombia, and the Southern Cone.

The PRC poses a strategic, pacing threat to the United States and to our partners around the world. For this reason, USSOUTHCOM’s strategies continually look toward both short and long-term impacts. One example is International Military Education and Training (IMET), where we focus on training our partners’ next generation of military leaders specifically promoting respect for the rule of law and upholding democracy—these programs pay dividends in the long game. But we also need tools for competing in the near term. Our FMF and FMS processes are not built for agile competition. We need to relook these processes and streamline them so we may offer alternatives to PRC equipment at the speed of need for our partners. Space enabling infrastructure (SEI) is one critical area where we should leverage assets to outcompete China in Latin America and the Caribbean. The PRC continues to advance its SEI projects in the AOR through federal, provincial, academic, and commercial partnerships. With the PRC’s large focus on Military-Civil Fusion (MCF), it is possible that these sites may serve a dual use.

Despite PRC advances, partner nations want to establish a partnership with NASA and the United States. For example, thirteen companies from Argentina’s space industry participated in the Argentine Embassy’s first-ever “Space Day” this year in Washington D.C. Panelists discussed opportunities for Argentine companies to pursue U.S. commercial opportunities, help address emerging challenges like climate change, and strategies to secure investment funding. Cyber is another critical area that deserves our attention. The 3G, 4G, and developing 5G infrastructures in Latin America provide network connectivity on which international commercial banking, providers, and government critical infrastructures operate, making them vulnerable to PRC and Russian influence.

