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Well, good morning, everyone. And Peggy, thank you so much for that very kind introduction. The Reagan Foundation and Institution [sic] has been a great host -- but you know, it feels a little unfair to be expected to give a speech after Peggy Noonan. And as you pointed out, Peggy, the last time that we saw each other was actually in Iraq, in a dusty conference room, in a palace -- in a palace at Baghdad. So this indeed is a bit nicer, and I'm delighted to be here.

I'm delighted to be here with an outstanding delegation from the Department of Defense, including Secretaries [sic] Wormuth, Secretary Del Toro, and Secretary Kendall, as well as members of the Joint Chiefs, combatant commanders, and more. So let's give the Joint Chiefs and the combatant commanders a round of applause.

We also have a distinguished bipartisan delegation here from the United States Congress. And I always appreciate your constructive partnership. And I'm confident that we'll keep coming together to keep America secure -- including the passing of a full-year omnibus appropriation. And I look forward to working with you in the coming weeks, and in the 118th Congress.



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I'm honored to see ambassadors and defense ministers from allied and partner countries. So, welcome.

Now, it's already been a very productive trip to California. And yesterday was a proud day for our country and the United States Air Force. I was in Palmdale to participate in the historic unveiling of the B-21 Raider. And that's the long-range strike stealth bomber that will soon be the backbone of the Air Force bomber fleet. The B-21 was developed over seven years by our partners at Northrop Grumman. So it was a really proud day for -- for Kathy [Warden] -- and -- and very well done, by the way. And it shows that we're clear-eyed about what it's going to take to keep America secure in the 21st century.

You see, the B-21 is an extraordinary display of combat power -- and a major advance for American deterrence. And making this bomber required harnessing the driving forces of American innovation and ingenuity -- and drawing on both free minds and free enterprise.

And ladies and gentlemen, only one country on Earth consistently delivers that combination -- and that's the United States of America. American power, innovation, and values make the U.S. military the strongest fighting force in human history.

And make no mistake: We're going to keep it that way.

And so our job is simple. We don't lose focus because of polls or politics. The U.S. military is here to fight and win our nation's wars. And we will always work to deter conflict whenever we can. But if we are forced to defend ourselves, we will win -- and we will win beyond doubt.

Now, as President Biden has said, we stand in "a decisive decade."¹ And these next few years will set the terms of our competition with the People's Republic of China. And they will shape the future of security in Europe. And they will determine whether our children and grandchildren inherit an open world of rules and rights, or whether they face emboldened autocrats who seek to dominate by force and fear.

As some of you may know, I was at the Halifax International Security Forum in Canada two weeks ago. And I was introduced to a brave young Ukrainian soldier. And we spoke briefly about what she'd seen in her -- her fight to defend her country. The next day, I saw that young soldier again. And she was weeping because six of her brothers and sisters in arms had been killed overnight by Russian forces. And through her tears, she presented me with a Ukrainian flag signed by some of the fighters who liberated the city of Kherson. And she told me that the next day she was headed back to Ukraine to rejoin the fight.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, that's what's at stake in this decisive decade.



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So let me reaffirm a basic American truth: In the struggle between those fighting to defend democracy and those bent on imperial aggression, the United States stands with the forces of freedom. And we're determined to use American power to defend our great democracy and to bend the arc of history toward liberty. And I am confident that America is up for the great competitions ahead.

You know, President Reagan liked to tell the story of an elderly British woman whose home was bombed during the Blitz of London. And when the rescuers arrived, they found a bottle of brandy that she had stored behind her staircase, which was the only thing actually still left standing. And so she was barely conscious, and one of the rescuers pulled the cork out of the bottle to give her a taste of the brandy. And she came around and immediately said, "Hey, put that back. That's for emergencies." Now, that's the spirit that we need. This is no time to hold back our resources or our resolve.

To meet this moment, we're going to need help from Congress, industry, and more. And I hope that you will join us in this mighty task. To shape this decisive decade, we're driving hard to further strengthen America's deterrence. We're taking on the generational pacing challenge posed by the People's Republic of China. And we're tackling the acute threat of Putin's Russia; and defending the rules-based international order that keeps us all secure; and we're going to do all of this the American way -- by drawing on the full force of American innovation and American industry to ensure that we get our warfighters what they need before they need it. And at this hinge in history, we're carrying forward the great American tradition of strong, principled global leadership -- alongside our stalwart allies and our valued partners -- in the service of human freedom.

So let's start with American deterrence. It lies at the core of the National Defense Strategy that guides the Department. We've got the right strategy and the right operational concepts -- and they're driving us to make the right investments for our warfighters. So we're upgrading, and honing, and strengthening our armed forces for a changing world, even as we shore up the -- the strong foundation that has kept us secure for decades -- because in our imperfect world, deterrence does come through strength. And we will continue to make clear to any potential foe the folly of aggression against the United States -- at any time or any place, in any theater or any domain.

So in our -- Deterrence means airpower. So in our Fiscal Year 2023 budget, the Department has requested more than 56 billion dollars for airpower, focused on the F-35 and F-15EX fighters, the B-21 bomber, mobility aircraft, and [un]manned systems. And American airpower helps deter conflict every day, from joint exercises with our Indo-Pacific partners to aerial drills with our allies to protect NATO's eastern flank.



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Deterrence means seapower. So we're investing in the new construction of nine battle-force ships and our Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines. And just last month, one of our Ford-class nuclear-powered carriers made its first transit to Europe.

Deterrence means long-range fires, like the HIMARS [High Mobility Artillery Rocket System] systems that have been so crucial to Ukraine's self-defense. Long-range fires will be vital for contingencies in the Indo-Pacific as well. So we're investing in land-based hypersonic missile batteries and an air-launched hypersonic cruise missile. And the USS Zumwalt will become the first Navy platform to field hypersonics.

Deterrence means cutting-edge capabilities in domains where 21st-century conflicts could erupt, including space and cyberspace.

And finally, deterrence means a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal as the ultimate backstop to deter strategic attacks on our country and our allies, including NATO, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. And so that's why our Fiscal Year 2023 budget includes 34 billion dollars to continue modernizing our nuclear triad and to bolster our Nuclear Command and Control and Communications [NC3].

You know, when you add that up, that's a lot. But we've got more to do. So let me urge Congress to pass an on-time appropriation so that we can get the capabilities to further strengthen our deterrence.

Now, to complete -- to compete in this decisive decade, we've sharpened the Department's focus on our primary theater of operations, which is the Indo-Pacific. And we're working to be able to mobilize and deploy American troops more quickly, and investing in military construction, and logistics, and infrastructure across the region. We've requested billions to modernize the Marines into a highly mobile expeditionary force. And to maneuver better in the critical First Island Chain, we're investing in nimble new groupings, like the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces. And as we strengthen our deterrence, we're fortified by the allies and partners who share our -- our values.

Here's one simple military truth: Our allies and partners are a phenomenal force multiplier. And as Margaret Thatcher once said, "we will not stay free for long" if we have no allies or "no friends" or "no alliances."² Our network of alliances and partnerships is a core, a strategic strength. And no other country on Earth has anything like it.

So just a few weeks ago, the American carrier strike group named for President Reagan conducted operations alongside the Canadian and Japanese navies in the Philippine Sea. And days later, the Strike Group came together again with the Japanese -- with Japanese, and Australian, and Indian forces for the annual Malabar exercise. As one of the American



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commanders described our operations, "We have [an] Australian supply ship bringing millions of gallons of fuel [[and]] food and supplies to a Carrier Strike Group escorted by Japanese, Canadian, and American warships."³ Now, that type of cooperation is rare and precious in world history. But for the United States and our allies and partners, it's all in a day's work.

Or consider the AUKUS partnership. Next week, I'll welcome my Australian and U.K. counterparts to Washington for an important AUKUS defense ministerial. And so we're working together on advanced capabilities, such as AI and hypersonics, and we're charting the best pathway for Australia to acquire a nuclear-powered, conventionally-armed submarine as early as possible -- all while upholding the highest nonproliferation standards.

Now, our network of allies and partners just didn't happen. It is a direct result of decades of American leadership. And our friends know that we'll stand with them to support freedom of navigation, and to defend the rights of small countries to not be bullied by larger ones, and to defend stability and sovereignty and the potential for prosperity that they bring.

Now, the National Defense Strategy is clear-eyed about our main competitors -- and that starts with the People's Republic of China [PRC]. In recent decades, its military has embarked on a breakneck program of modernization. And the PRC is the only country with both the will and, increasingly, the power to reshape its region and the international order to suit its authoritarian preferences.

So let me be clear: We will not let that happen. And that begins with America's combat-credible deterrence. And we're going to sustain and sharpen our warfighting advantages so that the PRC can never conclude that aggression is in its best interests. We're aligning our budget as never before to the China challenge. And we're making the Department's largest investment ever in R&D, and forging stronger capabilities. And we're modernizing, training, and equipping the -- the U.S. military for contingencies in the Indo-Pacific. DOD is finally making fundamental and unprecedented shifts in attention and resources toward Asia.

And ladies and gentlemen, the Department is putting its focus, its time, and its money where its mouth is. And so we're matching our investments with new operational concepts suited to 21st-century deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. And we're bolstering our forward presence in the region to build a more lethal, mobile, and distributed force posture. And we'll keep investing in a strategy of deterrence and denial.

Now, we're not doing this alone. I just returned last week from Southeast Asia, where I met in -- in Cambodia with defense leaders from around the region. And nearly every one of them shares our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific -- a region in which countries large and small can chart their own futures and have the capabilities to defend their own interests.



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We're also deeply committed to responsibly managing our competition with the PRC, even as we defend our interests, our allies, and our partners. And while I was in Cambodia, I met with General Wei [Fenghe], the PRC's Minister of National Defense. And I made clear that great powers need to compete responsibly, and keep lines of communication open, and build guardrails at multiple levels. And I also underscored our serious concerns about the increasingly dangerous behavior that we're seeing from PLA aircraft flying in the Indo-Pacific. And I made clear that the United States will continue to fly, to sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

You know, great powers must choose responsibility over recklessness. Great powers must communicate with candor and respect the hard -- hard-won system of international laws, and alliances, and norms, and agreements that has made us all more secure and prosperous since the end of World War II. You know, we can't take that open and stable order for granted. And that's one key reason that the world has come together to condemn and resist Russia's reckless war of choice in Ukraine. And this decade will be decisive for security in Europe as well as in Asia.

So let's be clear about what we've seen in Ukraine.

Russia wasn't provoked.

Russia wasn't threatened.

Russia wasn't attacked.

Instead, one man chose war. And Putin's war is not the result of NATO expansion. It is the cause of NATO expansion. And now, because of the Kremlin's longing for a vanished empire, Europe faces its worst security crisis since the end of World War II. And a member of the U.N. Security Council -- let me say that again -- *a member of the U.N. Security Council* is waging war to deny democracy to more than 43 million people. With deliberate cruelty, Russia is putting civilians and civilian infrastructure in its sights. Russian forces have killed thousands of Ukrainian citizens, even as millions more have fled. And Russian attacks have left children dead, schools shattered, and hospitals smashed. So, Russia's neighbors view its imperial aggression with growing alarm.

And Putin's war of choice has given everyone on Earth a preview of a world of tyranny and turmoil that nobody would want to live in. And Russia's assault on its peaceful neighbor has shown every country on Earth the dangers of disorder. And so that's why so many countries of goodwill have raced to get Ukraine the capabilities to defend itself, including some 50 members of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group that we've created and led.



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It's why our united and resolute NATO allies have bolstered the -- the alliance's forward defenses and reinforced its eastern flank.

And it's why the United States has raised our total number of service members deployed in Europe from 80,000 to more than 100,000, and permanently -- permanently forward-stationed forces in Poland, and hammered home our ironclad commitment to NATO and to Article Five.

So let's be clear: We will not be dragged into Putin's war. But we will stand with Ukraine as it fights to defend its citizens and its sovereignty. And we will stand strong with our NATO allies. And we will defend every inch of NATO territory.

Now, that young Ukrainian fighter and her comrades in arms have shown the moral and military power of a free people roused to its defense. And her fellow citizens on the home front have shown immense resilience in the teeth of Russian aggression. From President Biden on down, U.S. leadership has been vital to Ukraine's success. And we're going to support Ukraine's right to defend itself for as long as it takes.

Now, our ability to shape this decisive decade rests on America's enduring advantages in national security. So we work hard to draw on the full range of talents of the American people. And we're driven by the power of patriotism and our restless spirit of innovation. Our free-enterprise system is key to our national defense. Our defense industrial base is unmatched. And we've got to keep it that way.

You know, our outstanding Deputy Secretary of Defense, Kath [sic] Hicks, and I meet regularly with industry leaders, including some new partners that used to think the Pentagon was just too hard to work with. And from the World War II mobilization to the MRAPs [Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected] that I saw in Iraq, our public-private defense partnership protects American troops in the field. So we're working to -- to strengthen that industrial base for the long haul. We're also working closely with Congress to secure multi-year procurement authorities -- and allow us to meet the needs of tomorrow.

Now, our partners in the private sector have flagged a consistent problem. Even when they can see a way to deliver a promising technology to a military customer, securing the necessary capital to -- to bring that capability to scale is hard -- and sometimes impossible. So we've listened. And we've acted.

Our Defense Innovation Unit is focused on identifying priority technology areas and using faster methods to get that tech into the hands of warfighters.



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And earlier this week, I announced the creation of the Department's Office of Strategic Capital. This important office will work to secure U.S. private-sector investment in critical defense-technology areas, ensuring that technology developed in -- in America benefits America. And it's an example of how we're creating the conditions for innovation -- innovators -- innovators to succeed.

You know, this kind of change doesn't always move as smoothly or as quickly as I'd like. But we are determined to change the way that the Pentagon does business -- and to create a -- a true innovation ecosystem.

Let me make one last point. American firepower is extraordinary. But over the course of my brief, 41-year career in uniform, I learned that the source of our strength isn't just our weapons. It's our democracy. And that democracy demands something of us all. It's a daily referendum that asks us all what we are willing to give to the cause of American ideals and human freedom. And it's time to ask ourselves what each of us will do to help shape this rare and malleable moment in the course of human events.

Now, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Guardians risk their lives every day for all of our security. And even in times of challenge or in hours of division, the American men and women who wear the cloth of our nation inspire us all with their unity of purpose. And they challenge us to put our shoulder to the wheel; to seize this moment to make America more secure and the world more just; to rally together with our allies and partners who magnify our strength; and to prove again that the -- that the democratic ideals of America's founding still provide the world with a powerful beacon of hope.

So let me quote President Reagan one last time -- and this time about what history remembers. "Yes, the deeds of infamy and injustice are all recorded," he said. "But what shines out from the pages of history is the daring of the dreamers and the deeds of the builders and the doers."⁴

So in this decisive decade, let us pledge again to be the dreamers, the builders, and the doers. Let us forge a world of greater security, prosperity, and liberty. And let us meet America's challenges with confidence, courage, and a can-do spirit. And let us come together to build a brighter, safer future for this country that we love and the democracy that we defend.

Thank you very much, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.



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¹ The term appears in the most recent publication of the U.S. National Security Strategy: "The 2022 National Security Strategy outlines how my Administration will seize this **decisive decade** to advance America's vital interests, position the United States to outmaneuver our geopolitical competitors, tackle shared challenges, and set our world firmly on a path toward a brighter and more hopeful tomorrow. Around the world, the need for American leadership is as great as it has ever been. We are in the midst of a strategic competition to shape the future of the international order." However, Biden previously used the term verbally in his 2021 Address to the United Nations: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the clear and urgent choice that we face here at the dawning of what must be **a decisive decade** for our world -- a decade that will quite literally determine our futures. As a global community, we're challenged by urgent and looming crises wherein lie enormous opportunities if -- if -- we can summon the will and resolve to seize these opportunities...Will we apply and strengthen the core tenets of -- of the international system, including the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as we seek to shape the emergence of new technologies and deter new threats? Or will we allow these universal -- those universal principles to be trampled and twisted in the pursuit of naked political power?" [emphases added]

² See Thatcher's *1980 Address to the Conservative Party Conference*. Broader quotation delivered in the context of Britain's economic policy: "I do care about the future of free enterprise: the jobs and exports it provides and the independence it brings to our people. Independence? Yes, but let us be clear what we mean by that. Independence doesn't mean contracting out of all relationships with others. A nation can be free but it won't stay free for long if it has no friends and no alliances. Above all, it won't stay free if it can't pay its own way in the world."

³ Quotation is from Capt. Justin Harts, deputy commodore, Commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15. Relevant quotation: "Most people really can't fathom how large the Pacific Ocean truly is. To live and work here year round, day and night, and in all weather conditions, requires tremendous logistical support...We have an Australian supply ship bringing millions of gallons of fuel, food, and supplies to a Carrier Strike Group escorted by Japanese, Canadian, and American warships. Being so incredibly well integrated with our Allies and partners ensures we can better deliver on the ask from Western Pacific nations for increased regional stability." [Source: <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/3224287/us-japan-australia-integrate-allied-logistics-during-tri-lateral-operations/>]

⁴ Reagan, R. (1984). *Address to the 39th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, New York*. Broader quotation: "Yes, the deeds of infamy or injustice are all recorded, but what shines out from the pages of history is the daring of the dreamers and the deeds of the builders and the doers. These things make up the stories we tell and pass on to our children. They comprise the most enduring and striking fact about human history -- that through the heartbreak and tragedy man has always dared to perceive the outline of human progress, the steady growth in not just the material well-being, but the spiritual insight of mankind. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible. But in the end, they always fail [fall]." [Source: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-39th-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-new-york>]