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Deputy Secretary of Defense**

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Moderator: Greetings everyone, good morning and welcome to this very exciting Defense Writers Group. Our special guest is the Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks who is joining us at just a fantastic, interesting, important time in our history.

Your timing today, Madame Secretary, is really terrific. The new budget is out. Not many days ago you delivered the classified National Defense Strategy to Congress and released the bullet points.

If you could, as a strategic level leader of the department, talk about what priorities that sets and how you will move ahead fulfilling the National Defense Strategy.

DSD Hicks: Sure, first of all I am masked because I had a close contact six days ago, so so far, so good.

We did in fact build our budget around our strategy which as somebody who's worked a long time in this field, it's incredibly important for those of us who work in that end, ways, means matching territory to make sure we're always looking ahead to what are the capabilities we really want the United States military to be able to contribute.

With that frame in mind we started, of course, with the NDS itself. As Thom just mentioned, we've released the classified NDS. I'll note, that is the requirement by law. The NDAA establishes a requirement for a classified NDS and an unclassified summary so that is what we have done. And in that classified NDS and as the fact sheet displays, what we really do is focus on those four really enduring requirements for the military: contribute to defending the homeland, preventing, deterring strategic attack; deterring aggression while being prepared to prevail in a conflict; and then building the resilient joint force. There are a lot of key themes I think that carry from past strategies forward through those.

What's probably most notable about this strategy and as you see

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it carry through the budget is the three approaches or waves that we emphasize. The first is integrated deterrence about which you've probably heard the most, because the Secretary of Defense has been talking about that for some time. That's really about the weaving together of national capacity across the full suite of capabilities that we bring alongside our allies and partners, et cetera.

In the defense world we focus on the defense contribution to that integrated deterrence, and that's about combat credible military capability. So our budget really focuses down to the integrated deterrence part and how do we weave across the domains of warfare. Think of cyber, space, air, land, sea. And then also how we think across the spectrum of potential conflict, day to day operations all the way up through the need to manage a high end competitor. We name very clearly in the strategy, as you see in the unclassified, actually China as that pacing challenge. Again, very consistent with the last few strategies in that sense.

We also point to Russia as an acute threat. We get a lot of questions about how we thought about Russia. The events in Ukraine were very reinforcing to how we thought about this in the strategy development process. We're a month plus into that conflict that Russia has started in terms of its attacks in Ukraine, but we're seeing a lot of those themes come out in terms of its willingness to be opportunistic and upend the system and things of that sort.

That's sort of the integrated deterrence piece. So what our budget did for integrated deterrence most notably is that we put \$76 billion against procurement and research, development, test and evaluation. That's across those different domains I mentioned.

As an example, there's \$34.4 billion for the nuclear triad recapitalization. There's something like I want to say \$11 billion for space. Significant investments in cyber as well. Those are just some of those examples, the day-to-day, hear and now combat credibility.

The second main theme or approach in the strategy is campaigning. That's really getting to this issue of the spectrum of conflict and our need to be able to be much more fluid and agile across that spectrum. So you see what often is

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called the gray zone or hybrid warfare that the Russians and the Chinese have their own versions of how they approach that. We want to not only be able to deter attacks through campaigning but we want to make sure we're setting ourselves up for success and gaining advantage in a day-to-day way.

So our campaigning efforts are manifest in the budget most clearly through readiness investments. We put \$135 billion into readiness. We fully fund the Pacific Deterrence Initiative which Congress had mandated for the department. And we have substantial funds in the European Deterrence Initiative and in general we have a strong near-term focus for both the Pacific and for Europe. And I'm feeling very good about the investments that we've put into the budget in both of those places.

The third piece of that strategy, the waves, was enduring advantage. That's really where you look at what we're doing with our workforce, how we're thinking about partnering effectively on innovation, how we're investing in our people. We put a 4.6 percent pay raise, the largest pay raise in a generation for our military and for civilians. We put funds against things like childcare, more childcare access both military and civilian employees. And as I'm sure you've already heard, the largest RDT&E budget request ever, \$130 billion.

Let me just sort of stop there. I think that's an overview of how we try to nest the budget and the strategy together.

Moderator: Great. Madame Secretary, the former reporter in me has about ten follow-up questions but the current project director in me wants to be a good host so I'll immediately go to the floor.

The first request came from Tony Bertuca of Inside Defense.

DWG: Thank you, Deputy Secretary. Thank you for being with us.

We got a release this morning saying that you recently had a meeting with some defense contractors and business executives. What are you telling that community about competition, about [M&A], and most importantly, what are you telling the community about how the Defense Department can help them with the impact of inflation on their subcontractors and supply chain?

DSD Hicks: The first thing I would say is I do a lot of

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listening and I want to emphasize that. I think we have a lot to learn from the experiences our partners are having, our partners in industry as an example. So a lot of my interactions are about hearing from them, how they are experiencing their work at the department.

In terms of initiatives around competition, we have seen a substantial decline in particular in small business, so back to your consolidation point. We're down to about five prime contractors, a substantial decline over the years on the small business side in the defense industrial base, and we know, stepping back from defense, we know in the American economy that innovation largely occurs in that small business community. It's a huge driver of innovation.

So we know we face a problem there and competition can get us better results and of course competition we believe will help us manage costs effectively. Get the best value for the taxpayer.

So those are the kinds of conversations we have with them. How are they -- depending on who they are in the system -- how are they able to access the DoD market? What are the barriers to entry? We think those barriers are pretty well defined at this point, working closely with Congress to try to drive some of those down. We have newish authorities -- middle tier acquisition authorities, things of that sort. We have a lot of good drivers for small business. I think we have some challenges in enforcing that and making sure, for instance, that the small business set asides, which we do pretty well with meeting, are actually enforced when a prime brings on a small business. Are they giving them quality work? That's a lot of what we hear from small businesses, making sure that the department's acquisition contract workforce is following up throughout the life of a contract to make sure that work is going on.

Then I think the last thing I'll point to, because there are so many areas that we're trying to kind of work through the pieces, is of course the infamous valley of death problem. There I think there are a couple of different things that are going on.

The first is focusing senior level department effort around what do we need in the US to compete effectively? There's a bit sort of S&T and basic research that we invest in. That's really important. Not everything can or should transition into

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military capability, so we need a really rich pool to draw from in that innovation base. But then we need to have a good set of criteria for what's most important to us. And our joint concepts, our approach to our theory of war, if you will, how we will compete effectively, those are really good criteria for us to use. So what I'm trying to do is bring the application of clear criteria and focus.

We now have on board not only Heidi Shyu in R&E, but as of the end of this week we'll have Bill LaPlante in A&S. They work great together. They've known each other a long time. I anticipate a really strong OSD team alongside the Vice Chairman being able to come together and start to build out from a concept basis whether those key technologies and experiments with those technologies that lead to breakthroughs. And then on the congressional side, how do we get timely appropriations and how do we get so that new starts can even happen so we can bridge that valley of death. That is a huge barrier. Then how do we, once we have those appropriations, how do we make room for and create trust to go after those capabilities?

DWG: To follow up very quickly, I do know you are hearing from defense contractors about the impact of inflation on their contracts. Are you preparing for lots of requests for equitable adjustment in the coming months to help them deal with that?

DSD Hicks: We're always in conversations around equitable adjustments. We have not seen a huge influx of those. We're always looking to see what they are.

You have to recall that inflation will affect different kinds of contracts different ways. And inflation fluctuates. So one of the questions will be where is inflation going? Where is it going over what period of time? And we have to be both looking out for, ensuring we have a good contract base that wants to work with us but also, again, looking out for taxpayers so that we're not locking in rates, for example, that don't make sense to lock in today for long term contracts.

Moderator: Heidi Shyu was our guest for breakfast a couple of weeks ago. She's a real firecracker.

DSD Hicks: She's great.

Moderator: Courtney Kube, NBC.

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DWG: I'm here for NBC. I'll yield back my time.

Moderator: Of course.

Joe Gould of Defense News.

DWG: Thanks so much for doing this.

I have a question about Ukraine and Europe. Some weeks ago we heard Mark Harlan testify on the Hill that there's going to be a relook at force posture in light of what's happening in Europe and Ukraine. I wanted to see if I could get some specifics about what exactly is going on at the department in terms of looking at force posture changes and where if there's a relook going on, where is that? What are the considerations? And is there a potential budgetary impact? We heard from several folks testifying on the Hill also that the latest wasn't incorporated in the budget. Sort of the latest boots on Ukraine weren't incorporated in the budget request.

DSD Hicks: Let me step back a second to say the unsatisfying but necessary, we're always looking at posture. And we are always looking at our strategy. So posture changes are meant to be agile and adjust top what we're seeing in the environment and where we project we can gain advantage. So that's thing one.

To your specific question, since 2014 and the annexation of Crimea the Department of Defense has undertaken a number of significant posture adjustments n Europe. And we leaned into those in the last several months with this invasion of Ukraine.

What that means is we already had forces forward, for instance in the Baltics, Romania, Bulgaria on a rotational basis. And of course we had stepped up the headquarters element over that period as well in support of EUCOM and thus SACEUR's capability of managing and working with NATO.

So there's a lot of investment dollars included through that European Deterrence initiative that have gone into developing the force posture base that we used and that we are using today to operate. We flowed additional forces. That is a normal thing we do. It is also normal for us not to have costed that into our budget because those are contingency, they're not base budget. Congress on a bipartisan basis has been very forward-

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leaning in terms of its interest in making sure they can help us be whole against those requirements. So as we are able to kind of aggregate those costs, a lot of that is Army cost in terms of Army movement. We make sure to capture those costs and we're working with Congress, so that gets to the issue of what's included in the budget or not.

Looking ahead, I think there are some key questions we want to be asking along with NATO. There is a NATO summit this summer. I wouldn't anticipate any substantial announcements about US changes in posture in advance of that summit in Madrid. Rather we'll be working closely with NATO allies on a bilateral basis with countries that are interested in shifting the US, how they host US forces for example, and how that overall European posture looks.

I will end simply by saying the United States, one of the things I think everyone has found reassuring in this most recent and awful crisis is that NATO really has stepped up and you see an investment approach from a variety of allies -- Germany is an example, but not the only one -- to increase what they're doing to shift their own posture. So as the US looks at what should we be doing differently in Europe if anything from what we're doing today, we want to be very cognizant of where different allies can bring capabilities forward so it's the most effective and efficient approach.

Russia is an acute threat but China is our long-term pacing challenge and that is where we'll be thinking in terms of the qualitative advantages the United States needs to be able to see. Largely we're thinking about how to pace China.

DWG: You said we shouldn't expect anything in advance of that summit. Do you think we'll hear some announcements after that summit?

DSD Hicks: I don't think I would predict that, no. I think my point there is we want to be looking at it as an alliance and how the US footprint fits into that overall alliance footprint. Given that we're in the midst of those operations now, those operations may continue for some time as they are, and I think I wouldn't anticipate drastic changes in US posture and certainly not before there's a summit where there's a general understanding of what the allied posture is going to be.

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Moderator: John Ismay of the New York Times.

DWG: My question is about arms control related treaties. I've looked at the past two budgets and I have to believe that the INF Treaty is well and truly dead and the Pentagon has no intention of pursuing anything like the INF Treaty again since the money is there for long range precision fires that would have been banned under that treaty.

The anti-personnel landmine and the cluster munition treaties, there's no motion towards that more than [inaudible], so I think people feel like that's pretty much dead.

Is there any thought to renewed diplomacy with Russia and China perhaps on any arms-related issues such as killing off hypersonics before they have a chance to proliferate? Such as eliminating low yield nuclear warheads that the US and Russia have both recently developed? Is there any thought to that?

DSD Hicks: The answer is yes. We are always thinking about ways to generate greater stability, greater strategic stability and stability in general with the Chinese, for example, and with the Russians for example. I think that's my answer. We have to have parties who want to work with us and those are always on the table for conversation. I'll leave it at that.

DWG: Is there any motion towards efforts in that?

DSD Hicks: There are always ongoing strategic stability dialogues and conversations and venues. You're asking a question about the prospects for progress and I'm not in a position to answer that right now. What I would say to you is those dialogues continue. We have open bilateral dialogues in both cases.

DWG: Would you be open to say killing off hypersonics before they have a chance --

DSD Hicks: I think hypersonics are an important area for strategic stability and we should be having active dialogues where we can on that issue, both with our allies and partners in terms of norm setting and with those who we would be afraid would use them against us.

DWG: It's really [not a] stability if everybody has them,

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right?

DSD Hicks: I don't know where your question's going.

DWG: It's destabilizing if one side has them and another doesn't.

DSD Hicks: I don't think we are in a situation in which we're particularly worried about that right now.

Moderator: Jim Garamone of DoD news.

DWG: Back to Ukraine, the United States has been sending wave after wave of equipment and weapons to Ukraine. Putin's war may last for months, maybe years depending on what [inaudible]. Is that something you can maintain that supply? Is that something we can maintain in the long run? And how will be reconstitute or replenish the Army and the Marine Corps for these weapons? Have you broached this in your talks with industry?

DSD Hicks: The United States has provided a substantial amount of assistance, as you pointed out. Over \$2 billion in the last year. Over \$1.7 billion just since the February invasion, so in under two months. I've never seen anything like it in terms of the ability to identify, work with allies and partners, work with industry, work inside the services, and then move that capability forward and get it into Ukraine. So just an incredibly impressive set of work.

To sustain that we absolutely have to work with those allies and industry that supports us and supports them. So we have underway right now inside DoD a three-step or three lines of effort approach.

The first is the one we just talked about here and you questioned about which is the direct support to Ukraine. How do we make sure we identify what's needed? How do we work with allies and partners about who has the right capability to move expeditiously and get it in there? And right now inside the United States of course we have both drawdown authority and we have this Ukrainian Security Assistance Initiative, USAI, that Congress has authorized.

Congress and the President have both been very clear that they are happy to provide other authorities if we feel we need that.

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We know we have the ability to go back.

We are also looking to our Comptroller, where we are on spending authorities and if we need more, we'll certainly not hesitate.

That second line of effort is really how are our allies and partners doing? Because 30 nations, in addition to the United States, have been supplying Ukraine and we want to make sure we're working with all of those allies and partners to figure out where there might be some need for backfill for them. Do they have things they want from our industry? So that's a whole effort underway with armaments directors throughout NATO but beyond NATO.

The third line of effort is this industry resilience piece, the long term. There, I did an event yesterday for example, with business executives in national security. I will meet with the Raytheon CEO today. I have a CEO roundtable tomorrow on this very topic in a classified format to talk to our industry CEOs about how to best -- what can we do to help them? What do they need to generate supply?

I'm sure you already know in some specific munitions areas, for example, we know we have some obsolescence issues and some other items, but we have seen very patriotically members of industry lean forward and indicate their willingness to work together. So that's what we're getting after.

But we're moving across all three of those lines of effort, and even in that third area, I'll repeat, the White House has been very clear that the President is very happy to lean forward where we think we need help. Congress has done the same. So nothing's in our way, if you will. We're just trying to make sure we identify any challenges that we face and the move out on them.

Moderator: You mentioned Ukraine and allies. Are you concerned about replenishing US stocks should there be an unexpected --

DSD Hicks: That was really that third piece on industry. Yes. So in the third line of effort the primary focus is on how do we make sure we have what we need inside that. That will also help supply others if you will, but that's back to how do we make sure we have what we need for the long term. And also are there, as with COVID where we saw supply chain issues that were

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illuminating, let's just say, this is another case where we can start to actually in the crisis be able to see where there might be some supply chain issues that we want to get after now in that third line of effort. That helps us in the long term.

Moderator: Pat Tucker of Defense One.

DWG: Last week you went to Skunk Works and met with representatives of Lockheed Martin, talked with them a little bit about their hypersonics program. That's on the heels of a very dramatic demonstration of new air-breathing weapons.

Based on your conversations there and other conversations, how satisfied are you at the pace of US hypersonic development? And is there anything specific that you're looking at to either build on some of this year's progress or change tack or just other things you might do to accelerate that development this year?

DSD Hicks: If you had Under Secretary Shyu here you probably had some of this conversation, so I apologize if this is repeating a bit. We have had a successful test on Hawk. We have also been looking very closely and put a lot of money against long-range fires, both in the '22 budget and the '23 budget request which includes hypersonics.

But I want to just stress, the US approach on hypersonics is not to try to match dollar for dollar, although we probably do that, or munition to munition. It is to understand how hypersonic systems fit into the way in which we would prosecute the most effective operations. So that's really important to understand. We use that to then channel and focus our investments on hypersonic defense and on hypersonic systems approaches appropriately. That's back to my point earlier on about using joint concepts and how we look at the way we're going to prosecute campaigns effectively and our investments are focused in those areas.

Am I satisfied? I will say the biggest concern I would have right now is that hypersonics are a good example of an overall trend we see where the US which used to be first in class at the innovation approach inside government even at test, be willing to fail, learn a little, test again, learn. What we see in general is a real resistance to that approach and concern over whether the US investments are making a difference upon Capitol

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Hill. So you get a curtailment of programs, you get concerns over concurrency. These are technologically risky approaches sometimes and we have to be willing to fail. I think this is a place where we want to increase the trust that Congress has in the department as it goes after improvements in its capabilities.

I just want to emphasize we're also invested in capabilities on the defensive side which don't necessarily look like hypersonic investments. They might look like other types of approaches. You can think cyber, you can think of other things we might do in other domains. So that's another significant area. Warning.

DWG: Some of the variety of different hypersonics programs that the Defense Department is pursuing are turning out to be a little more successful than others. Are there any that you are now looking at with new skepticism based on the success of some relative to others.

DSD Hicks: I think we were pretty clear in our budget request how we're looking at the portfolio. I'll let that stand.

Moderator: Meredith Roaten, National Defense Magazine.

DWG: I also wanted to follow up on your trip to California. If you could specifically talk about the B-21 program and kind of what you heard from executives about what they're doing to ensure an on-time delivery and what is your confidence level in meeting those deadlines and that timeline?

DSD Hicks: Good conversations with Northrop there and with the Air Force. At this point they are on schedule and there are no, in the questioning I had, there were no barriers that jumped out to me that get in the way of Northrop staying on schedule. I thought there was a good exemplar, but not the only one, of where we're seeing some of the promise of digital threat approaches both on cost and schedule, and we'll want to continue to watch programs like B-21 to see what we can learn from those about how we use the technology of today to get better value to the taxpayer and get things out on time.

Moderator: Meghann Myers, Military Times.

DWG: Your oversight, basically, for the implementation of the independent review on the Commission on Sexual Assault findings.

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I wanted to ask since it was unveiled, the kind of progress you've made, and more specifically May 1st you have a deadline for the metrics. What kinds of metrics are you looking at, looking to measure success about unveiling the details of what they're going to be.

DSD Hicks: The biggest barrier to getting the IRC implementation Roadmap underway was the lack of appropriations. We had a substantial FY22 investment planned for the prevention workforce. We made clear at the rollout and have ever since as the IRC itself did is that prevention workforce is probably the single most important thing that the department can do to get after sexual harassment and sexual assault. And I'll just add that prevention workforce we believe will also be critical on issues like mental health and suicide prevention, other related self-harm areas.

We just got those appropriations, so now begins the journey of trying to hire that pool of talent, and of course we're doing it at a time when mental health professionals are at a premium across not just government but across the country. So I think that will be a barrier to our timelines, but we're moving out as quickly as we can in timely appropriations in '23 because we built that IRC roadmap and it's spelled out pretty clearly how we built it over multiple years is dependent on getting the funds to start the program. So that's the first thing I would say.

We do have a deadline for May for me to be presented those metrics, so I don't know the metrics until they come forward to me. Our team in personnel readiness is running that process and working closely with the services. We do have a check-in with me every quarter through the Deputies Workforce Council, and we've recently had one so again, I know they're on track, all the services are on track to meet the May 1 timeline.

The reforms with regard to the military justice system are also well underway. We are asking a little bit of relief. They're somewhat [niche] I guess, a very important issue for legislative relief in '23 in support of that. We need a list of a cap on the limits on our SES and our general officers and flag officers just to be able to put the leadership in place in accordance with the requirements on military justice that have been put in by Congress which we're happy to do. But those are some examples of barriers we could see getting in the way of execution. But

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by and large we're well down the pathway that we expected except for the appropriations issue.

DWG: The Pentagon put out a report a couple of weeks ago, an installations report, and the Office of Force Resiliency sort of characterized the prevention framework as being in its early development, even though the SAPR program is 17 years old. What kind of reaction did you have to that characterization and how would you like to move things along?

DSD Hicks: I think this is part of the problem, is that SAPR is about response and we want a prevention workforce. And they're not the same. They're not trained the same way, they shouldn't be the same personnel. And we're talking about a prevention workforce outside of the chain of command. So the OC report that you're referencing, we are going to continually do these OC reports. So we'll be looking, and we have decent data, we'll get better data as time goes on at where there are installations, where there might be units, and we can dig down below the installation level and even look at where there are units maybe that are particularly challenged, and how do we target prevention professionals to those areas. An example that came up in that report was Rota and the Navy followed up right away after the OSD-led team went out and started working right away on what some of those mitigations might be.

Moderator: Matt Beinart of Defense Daily.

DWG: I wanted to ask about the RDER effort and the rapid experimentation campaign that goes along with that. Both you and Heidi Shyu have talked about kind of how that will aim to address the kind of challenges that have lingered a bit in terms of the speed at which you can address the valley of death and outreach to the smaller innovative companies.

In what tangible ways does it get after solving those challenges?

DSD Hicks: Let me tell you what RDER is. RDER is more than anything a process inside the building that we use to connect joint concepts to innovative solutions to address those concepts that we can experiment with. So it hits at a particular point or portion, slice of the innovation life cycle. As I've said elsewhere, you could not have a more complicated system probably than what we have in DoD in terms of the handoffs across that

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sort of innovation approach. What RDER does is it injects at a point at which there are capabilities identified, there are solutions identified to joint problems.

We can have multiple services who are interested in having that problem addressed and bringing solutions forward, and we're assessing the viability of transition. It doesn't mean that we have to have transition identified. We don't have to necessarily know who's going to take it on, but we run a process that Heidi and her team run through the Innovation Steering Group that I stood up which she leads, so it involves the Joint Staff from the joint concept side; it involves COCOMs and services looking at this problem set and saying this is an interesting solution we want to experiment with.

What RDER does is it brings those solutions to me so I can tee up for the Secretary these are solutions that are worth us investing some OSD Secretary reserves, Secretary dollars against. We decide to do that and then you see it in the budget. There's no mystery in that. The budget, across the '23 budget there are a variety of experiment elements that are nested inside different components overseen in execution by R&E. And when those transition, those that do transition, they will then again show up as a PE in a service, et cetera.

That's what RDER is. It is one, as I always tell the services, the bulk of the funds for experimentation in the department reside with the services. There should be a huge amount of experimentation going on on any given day. What we're trying to do with RDER is bring the incentive that we can bring from the center by putting money against, putting some priority money against those solutions that look like they're particularly well suited to going against challenges, whether it be in the context of a China scenario or some other contested logistics. One of those challenge sets that we know we have to stare down in order to be effective in the future.

DWG: I believe in FY24 there's going to be the first effort that will expand to industry, soliciting their ideas --

DSD Hicks: Correct.

DWG: -- get the ball rolling to get to that point. So where does it stand right now in terms of that outreach?

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DSD Hicks: Under Secretary Shyu is in that process right now. So the cycle is such that we are beginning the process now for the '24 experiments. The '24 cycle as you know, manifests as a budget next February, so we are exactly at that point where she is soliciting from industry.

Moderator: Next is [Rio Kiomia] of [Inaudible] [Shinboom].

DWG: [Inaudible]. -- challenge of China, are [inaudible] in terms of [inaudible]?

DSD Hicks: In terms of -- as I said before, the strategy as with the last several strategies, has really tried to put a very strong spotlight on the comparative advantage the United States possesses by virtue of being part of a network of alliances and partnerships, and the lead in that.

As you look at the combination of the strategy and its emphasis on allies and partners, our focus on China is the pacing challenge and the Pacific Deterrence Initiative as an example of some of the investments we're making West of the dateline, international dateline. I think you start to see the answer to some of your questions around how we think about integrated deterrence campaigning and enduring advantage and how we're going to work with allies and partners to do that. Japan, of course, foremost among US allies and incredibly important in terms of what we're doing bilaterally in terms of posture improvements, in terms of capability improvements, and then what we're doing together -- I'll just stick to the defense piece of it -- in terms of the Quad and other approaches that try to create more stability inside the Western Pacific in particular, but then going out into the Indo-Pacific.

So I think there's a lot of continuity, if you will, of how we think about Japan, the Indo-Pacific and alliances, but I think we're putting our money where that priority statement is and I think the Biden administration has been particularly manifesting that allied approach, our approach in Ukraine for example, is very much about working closely with allies and soliciting input. The Japanese have come forward on Ukraine in a very impressive way themselves.

Moderator: Sandra Irwin, Space News.

DWG: I wanted to ask you about, another question on your trip

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to California. The DoD press release said that you met with SpaceWERX, the [inaudible] out there. I was wondering what was their take on their working with [inaudible] to that?

DSD Hicks: It was an impressive, a brief but impressive set of exchanges with SpaceWERX both in terms of meeting with their personnel, understanding their approach, the facilities they maintain there in order to bring industry in, and then they hosted a roundtable with industry while I was there. It was clear from the exchange with the partners from industry that there was a lot of trust and understanding mutually about what Space Force views are and how the commercial space and related industries can come forward with solutions and use innovative contracting vehicles in order to bring those solutions forward.

SpaceWERX, again, cannot in and of itself, none of these individual pieces of our innovation ecosystem in DoD are going to be able to manage across that whole basic S&T all the way to transition to a program of record. So they have a slice of that in which I think they're being extremely effective.

The challenge for me at the enterprise level is to be able to see that system all the way across and start to build some -- understand where the lynchpin challenges are and start to build some capability and capacity there. That's where my focus is going to be in the coming months.

DWG: So what did they have to show you when you [inaudible] in terms of visibility and [inaudible] so you can see --

DSD Hicks: I mentioned before, the Innovation Steering Group. One of the first tasks I gave the Innovation Steering Group under Ms. Shyu was to develop a map of the DoD ecosystem so we could start to understand who believes they are innovation units for the department, how do they define that, and what are they doing? And we will be launching by early next week a new website that they developed that does the beginning, it's a minimum viable product but it's pretty good. I've already looked at it. It shows that ecosystem. That's step one, that'd kind of the front door approach if you're familiar with that framework which is just tell us how to access DoD. If you're a prime you know how to do that. If you're a small company that works in commercial space who's never thought of working with DoD before, the idea is to lower those barriers and start to explain who does what and who should you contact.

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So that is an example where SpaceWERX is one of those elements within the innovation ecosystem.

So we start with mapping and then from the mapping we get to kay, where are those barriers to the system? I do not believe right now that SpaceWERX is anything other than a lower -- an entity that lowers barriers. So I have no concerns about how SpaceWERX operates.

Again, my concern is more looking across all these. Do we have gaps in that system from an end-to-end perspective? And then are there particular pain points where from the enterprise level we can relieve those pain points to help folks get through the system.

Moderator: Julian Barnes of the Times.

DWG: I wanted to follow up on Garamone's question earlier and the US did very well early on getting Javelins and Stingers to Ukraine. We know we're entering a different phase of the war. Some independent analysts have said Ukraine needs the ability to take out Russian airfields or degrade Russian airfields. So the broader question is, what are the kinds of systems that the US would be willing to do that could help in this next phase of war? And then the narrower question is, is it a bridge too far for the Biden administration to give any weapon that would allow the Ukrainians to attack into Russia even if it was just across the border?

DSD Hicks: We are in a continual dialogue with the Ukrainians, with the Brits and others. As I said, over 30 countries who are contributing to look at how to provide the capabilities the Ukrainians request and that we believe ensure that the United States maintains, as the President has said from the beginning, a clear signal in terms of the US-Russia dynamic.

Are we looking at a wide range of systems in doing that? Yes.

I will say we still see areas like artillery rounds, not even a Stinger and Javelin per se, but other kinds of ammunition rounds as being incredibly important. We've moved a lot of that. We will continue to do so. We know the intel support that we provide has been vital. The Ukrainians have been very clear about that publicly as well. We will continue to do that, which

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I consider to be pretty high end.

And yes, we will continue to look at the types of capabilities that the Ukrainians are asking for in terms of how to give them a little more range and distance.

Until those packages are announced, I don't want to get in front of those. Those are presidential decisions. But we are moving those packages very quickly and I think you'll see more come out in the coming days.

DWG: So at least there's a willingness to consider longer-range armaments that have been heretofore given.

DSD Hicks: The answer is yes.

Moderator: Madame Secretary, in our final minutes I invite you for any closing comments and then I will draw this thing to a close.

DSD Hicks: I just appreciate the engagement. I think just by virtue of the kinds of questions that were asked here today, we have a lot going on and you all are reporting on a lot of it.

It would be great as we go through this year to talk more about how we get after not only the Ukraine crisis but also some of those enduring challenges the department's faced and how we have a more -- we're in a [prestigious] time in terms of bilateral support for what we're doing in defense. I think the question is can we convert that into real shifts in opportunity at a time when we have challengers, particularly China, that's moving forward aggressively on military capability.

Moderator: I thank you most sincerely for your time and your wisdom. If you could take one message back to the building, it's just that we are grateful for these kinds of engagements. You educate not just the reporters in the room, but all of their readers. And again, as you know, not just in the US but in Asia and Europe and elsewhere. So thank you for your time.

DSD Hicks: Thank you all. I appreciate it.

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