

**Senator Jack Reed**  
**Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Defense Writers Group**  
**Project for Media and National Security**  
**George Washington School of Media and Public Affairs**

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**Moderator:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this session of the Defense Writers Group. I'm incredibly honored to host Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a senior member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

As always, this session is on the record but no audio or video may be rebroadcast. And as always, I'll ask the first question and then turn it over to the floor.

Once again, Senator, we are so honored to have you with us. Thank you for your time, sir.

**Senator Reed:** Thanks very much.

**Moderator:** For the first question I'd like to ask something about Ukraine.

You and your committee have given so much effort to set priorities for the Pentagon in terms of current readiness in preparations to deal with future threats. So a two-parter for you, Senator.

Do you think the US military is postured today to best help Ukraine defend itself and to deter Russia from spreading the conflict beyond Ukraine?

And what might you already have seen and learned that may guide your future efforts to give the US military greater advantage in the strategic competition with Russia?

**Senator Reed:** I think the military's done an excellent job in coordinating with NATO. One of the most significant advantages we have on Russia is we have allies and they're all mobilized effectively. And not only that, we and our allies have been sharing equipment with the Ukrainians which has been critical to their success on the battlefield against the Russians.

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I think also too what is important to emphasize, because this is really a whole of government operation. I think the President did a superb job pulling together the governments of the NATO countries and the world with a few exceptions. Diplomatic efforts were successful. Intelligence efforts were extremely successful. We were able to disclose false flag operations that the Russians were planning. They thought they could do it. And effectively preempted them. And also the economic sanctions. I think there was a great debate weeks ago about would any of these major countries do anything serious economically.

So this is a great example of whole of government, and I think the military aspects of it has been I think very well done. We've been able to, again, assist the Ukrainians by providing equipment. We've been able to mobilize NATO, operate together. We have our units together with Romanian units operating. We have a real coalition. And I think it's been a success so far.

Obviously the great credit has to go to the courage of the Ukrainian fighters. Amazing. And their efforts together with our efforts we hope will lead to a resolution of the crisis in which the Russians remove their forces and there is a political settlement.

**Moderator:** And looking to the future, Senator, anything you've already learned or seen that will shape your and the committee's efforts to best position the US military for competition with Russia?

**Senator Reed:** I think there are lots of lessons. One is the whole of government approach is absolutely key, so we can't forget that. That's something we want to apply not just in Europe but across the globe, particularly in Asia.

Also I think we will get very deeply involved in debriefs on cyber operations because our cyber operations I think -- again without specific knowledge, but my sense is they've been extremely important in informing the Ukrainians of the situation, and also of disrupting attacks by Russian cyber hackers on Ukrainian targets. So that's a lesson we'll definitely look at.

I think sort of the utility of asymmetric weapons. Russia was coming in with tanks and jets and hypersonics and what the

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Ukrainians have done with the Stinger missiles, with air defense systems they've been able to move around has been able to counter what everyone assumed before the battle would be an overwhelming attack, very fast run by the Russians into Kyiv. Again, this notion of asymmetric battle and dispersed fighting is something that we're going to take away from this.

There was a prelude to this which was the Syria-Armenian conflict, where we began to learn a lot of lessons about the use of remote drones and anti-tank operations. This is a continuation of that.

**Moderator:** Thanks Senator, so very much.

The first question from the floor is Kimberly Underwood of Signal.

**DWG:** Thanks for your time this morning, sir.

Can you talk a little bit more about how the importance of cyberspace operations will influence your budgetary outlook over the next couple of years? Congress has definitely supported cyberspace or cyber protection over the year. Can you talk about that kind of for the future? Thank you.

**Senator Reed:** Cyber is actually becoming one of the most critical aspects of the battlefield and one of the areas we have to look at very closely is maintaining and strengthening the cyber team that General Nakasone has. These cyber teams are the actual groups of individuals who go out, penetrate the system, develop the tools to do that. We want to make sure he's got the very best and he's got a sufficient number of them. That's one area.

Again, we're competing with very lucrative jobs on the outside for people with these types of skills. So that's going to require, if necessary, inducements to stay in the service and for a long time.

Now we have issues of encryption. Always. This is a constant battle going back and forth between ensuring that our systems are protected and the other folks' systems are able to be penetrated.

This is all taking a much more dramatic effect because of the

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science behind quantum physics and AI and other programs.

So we're in a race right now with our near peer competitors in quantum to scientifically get the scientific and theoretical and practical aspects of quantum so that we can start using it before our opponents.

Those are two of the major efforts.

The third I would say, and it's demonstrated somewhat in our operation in Ukraine, is developing appropriate relationships with allies and partners in terms of sharing, appropriately sharing cyber information cyber techniques. That's I think what we're going to be doing. And General Nakasone's done a superb job at CYBERCOM and we're going to work closely with him and make sure he gets all the resources.

When I was in the Army centuries ago the mantra was shoot, move and communicate. I believe today it's communicate, so you can shoot and move. And the first point of communication is you've got to have cyber so you can get your signals through and also hopefully pick up the other signals. So we're strong supporters of cyber.

**Moderator:** The next question is Tony Capaccio of Bloomberg News.

**DWG:** Good morning to you, Senator.

For all the talk of asymmetric and disbursed tactics, the US has as part of its picture of resolve towards the allies, has fielded the F-35 or deployed the F-35 over there. There's six of them flying patrols.

I need to ask you though, here in Washington the planes, they've cut the quantities in the '23 budget to 61 from a planned 94; and it is 14 months away now, delayed, from finishing its key combat testing. The last 42 percent.

You've been following that program. You know the joint simulation environment's been very important. What is your take on the program now? It's delayed in one sense and yet it's being deployed out there in a "show the flag" so to speak.

**Senator Reed:** I've heard glowing comments from pilots and

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operators of the capacity of the aircraft to perform. I've also heard issues of maintenance, issues of cost of sustainment. There's an extreme cost of sustainment.

So these aircraft are highly capable but the question that we have to ask and I think the Air Force is asking, are they sustainable, durable? And until the answer those questions I think they're not going to rush in and acquire a significant number. They're on a pace to, as you point out, acquire another group this year. There are some problems with production caused by COVID.

But one of the aspects too, going back to the beginning of the F-35, it was, and we've seen this before so we should have been a little bit brighter, I guess, but it's like the Swiss Army knife of aircraft. It's for the Marine Corps, the vertical lift; it's for the Navy carrier takeoff; it's for the Air Force who has a different concept, et cetera. We took one aircraft and thought it would be cost-effective to do one, and I think it was learned that that might not be the best approach.

But in the meantime we have, like the pilots say is a superb aircraft which we have to work through and get going, and then I think once we have reached the point of validation and particularly observing what they do in Europe, we can be more confident going forward with the system. But we're committed to that system to getting the squads in full and having it part of our operational Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy.

**DWG:** Is it troubling, though, that this joint simulation environment testing -- you last year said you wanted it don't sooner rather than later. It's going to be later. Is it troubling that it's been delayed again and the full rate production decision has been delayed. It will be another year at least.

**Senator Reed:** It's been frustrating for many years because again, this is -- and it's not the only system, unfortunately, in our inventory -- it's the [saga] of delay, of discovering unforeseen problems, difficulties with some of the components.

I know one of the reasons was difficulties with the headset which is the controlling device for the aircraft.

We tried, and here is one of the lessons we can take away. We

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learned this lesson over and over again. We should have before we go forward with a major commitment, basically the aircraft not only fully designed, but at least a prototype built and anticipate what problems there might be so that we're not caught, as I think we were with the F-35, unaware of many different situations.

We saw the same phenomenon with the Ford. We tried to load that up with a new takeoff and landing mechanism, new elevators, et cetera, and that caused cost overruns, delays, and again, part of what we're doing in the committee is to not only sort of fix these one systems, but fix the system itself.

We have put in a commission to study the PPBE system which Robert McNamara brought to the building in 1960. That was great for the industrial age. This is the post-industrial age. And we have to get systems and individuals who can work in that world.

So we're at one level looking at individual platforms and making sure or at least doing our best to get them out the door and get them into the hands of our troops, the best equipment possible. And at the other, looking at the whole system of how we plan, program budget, how we avoid the valley of death as so often it's been described with defense systems. Those two efforts are intertwined and critically important.

**Moderator:** Next questioner is Eric Schmitt of the New York Times.

**DWG:** Thanks.

President Biden has made it clear that the US military will not get directly involved in the fight in Ukraine and yet you have President Putin threatening to use chemical, biological, even tactical nuclear weapons.

Do you see a threshold perhaps where if Putin were to use any of those type of weapons that the President would be and NATO would be forced to send in some kind of force, not necessarily ground troops, but intervene militarily in the conflict in Ukraine?

**Senator Reed:** I think it would all be viewed through the lens of is this attack against a NATO country bringing in Article 5. If he uses any of these weapons of mass destruction there would

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be consequences I think that Putin impacts NATO countries. If a nuclear device is detonated and the radiation goes into adjacent countries that could very well be received as an attack against NATO. Some chemical/biological attack. It's going to be a very difficult call but it's a call that not just the President but the entire NATO Council will have to make. And there will be different aspects and different views.

The President I think did a remarkable job of unifying NATO by convincing them that this attack in Ukraine, if successful, particularly if it was successful in a very rapid and costless way to the Russians would be a prelude to other attacks directly on NATO. And I think that logic is still very compelling.

The bottom line is, this is a NATO decision. It won't be the President's decision alone. I don't think he'd want to take action unilaterally. And second, I think it really would depend upon whether there is a feeling in NATO, a conviction in NATO that NATO has been attacked or a NATO country has been attacked.

**DWG:** The US has obviously sent more than 15,000 additional troops to Europe to reassure allies on NATO's eastern flank and in the Baltics. Do you see an increased permanent presence in Europe now as a result of this conflict?

**Senator Reed:** I think there will be a presence there until the conflict is resolved, and I would think then the President and the Secretary of Defense will make an analysis of whether and what type of troops they would need. There very well could be a need for additional troops there. That's something I think will be based on conditions on the ground when this is resolved.

But as you know, we're working with Senator Inhofe, we developed the European Defense Initiative several years ago and we emphasized the importance of Europe and we got I think more attention to Europe and we were able to provide additional resources to our NATO allies, et cetera. I will give Jim credit for his foresightedness or far-sightedness, and I think that sort of set the stage for this.

So we're going to not turn away after this conflict and we are part of NATO, part of the Western alliance, and we'll make an assessment of the actual number of troops on the ground based on the facts on the ground.

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**Moderator:** The next question is to Tony Bertuca of Inside Defense.

**DWG:** Thank you, Senator, for your time.

I wanted to ask you about the defense budget. Congress just finished the FY22 defense budget that was \$30 billion above what President Biden requested. So now in a couple of days you're going to get the FY23 request. Your Republican colleagues have been pretty clear. They said they want a five percent increase plus inflation, which depending on the inflation rate you could be looking at a really big increase above FY22 if you were to do that. So all that said, how big do you think the FY22 request needs to be for defense and how do you see this playing out?

**Senator Reed:** First of all, the budget should be driven by strategy, not strategy driven by the budget. I think you have to look at the situation at the moment and the strategy that the administration is proposing. One of the issues we have and that everyone has is we don't yet have a National Security Strategy or a National Defense Strategy which includes a Nuclear Posture Review.

So we have to get the strategy, which I hope we do promptly, and then look at the budget and see if that supports the strategy. And if that sufficiently supports the strategy. We did that analysis last year and we concluded that we needed additional resources. But it was not automatic, everybody gets five percent a year, and then we throw some inflation in, et cetera.

One of the problems is that too often we just pick a number rather than say this is really what we have to do. These are the priorities.

As a result, we sometimes don't put the type of effective incentives in the budget so that the Department of Defense can make and will make decisions that are effective for national defense and also can save dollars.

One of our persistent problems, and again, this is not a result of just the people in the Department of Defense, but we have lots of legacy systems which we maintain. In many cases we maintain them because of political aspects rather than policy or strategy aspects. But we have to look at those legacy systems. Are they still functional? Do we still need them? And we've



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been learning a lot in the last few weeks in a fight against a conventional power, what do you really need? And I hope we take these lessons and apply them to the budget.

But again, my sense is as we did last year. Let's look at the strategy, let's look at the threats which drive strategy, then let's see if we have a budget that meets the threats with a sound strategy.

**DWG:** And Senator, as you said a moment ago, we've been watching the war in Ukraine play out in the last few weeks. Is there anything you've seen from the war in Ukraine that makes you think the United States should maybe change the way it is fighting or change what it is investing?

**Senator Reed:** I think what we've seen there is, we generally talk about asymmetric warfare. There are 120,000 Russian troops along the border with tanks, with missile systems, with a sophisticated aviation, and I was scratching my head because the Ukrainian forces were not as well equipped with those systems.

But what they've done, first of all the quality of their fighting personnel is superb. And again, that's something we can't lose sight of. We have to continue to recruit, train, and support the best fighting forces in the world and also fighting individual men and women who have the initiative and the drive to fight.

One of the problems I think we've seen with the Russians is their younger soldiers are not informed of what they're doing, where they are, what happens if the commander is out of action? An American unit, you've got NCOs that can jump in there and lead a company if they have to. That's a quality that's intangible and tangible. So we have to develop that.

But we're looking to, from these lessons, to ensure that we are providing all our resources in a way that will be effective against a range of threats.

Also, we have to connect better all the aspects -- land, sea, air, space, cyber, information warfare. I think that connectivity of all those sectors will give us a tremendous advantage. I suspect, I don't have the analysis yet, that if you look at the Russian approach, their connectivity wasn't that good even though they had lots of equipment; and relatively

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speaking the connectivity of Ukrainians is much much better. That might be the advantage.

**Moderator:** The next question is Rebecca Kheel of Military.com.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this.

I want to build off that idea of the Ukrainians being able to stave off Russia despite their foe being better equipped.

Given how poorly Russia is faring in Ukraine, do you think the United States overestimated Russia's military capability? And if we did overestimate Russia, do we need to be rethinking how we look at China?

**Senator Reed:** That's an interesting question. We always have to continually assess our potential opponents or potential adversaries. We saw in the Crimea a very swift and very effective operation, but there were factors there that are not present in Ukraine. The Russians actually physically had a presence in Crimea at several naval bases, so they really didn't have to roll a force [inaudible], they just had to come out of the bases. Two, the population was very, very sympathetic to Russia. Not so the Ukrainians as we're seeing. And the operation was of limited scope. It was a small area and it was conducted by their Special Forces troops.

So when you look at that you say wow, this is really well trained. Now you look at a general conventional assault on a significant level and you see fractures in the Russian forces that when you look at them are not totally divided. I think Russian forces have always fought the top down. Their leadership knows what they're doing but that information doesn't get down to the lowest individual so you don't have the ability, as I believe we have in our military, for a small unit to basically carry on the fight even if their headquarters is not communicating with them.

Then you also have the situations of logistical problems which is significant. Not getting fuel. And that's something I think we assume, frankly, would be a no-brainer. I mean they should be able to fuel their vehicles. They haven't been able to do that.

I think also, their information and intelligence of the

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Ukrainians is much less precise than what the Ukrainians have on the Russians and that might be a function, frankly, of the fact that they're fighting on Ukrainian land. The Ukrainian people know it very well. They have sources that the Russians don't have.

All these factors together I think have to be looked at and evaluated in this type of fight.

I think the other factor, too, is that we're not just looking at the Russians. China is looking at Russia too and they're beginning to ask questions about gee, these fait accompli's are a lot harder than we thought they were.

Two, I think the Chinese leadership also has a suspicion that their military has not been involved in a major combat since the Korean War or one could say the fight with Vietnam, in the late '70s or early '80s, but it has not been tested and they might be getting second thoughts about how reliable will our forces be if we do that.

So there are lots of different lessons that we have to learn and that's, we're going to put these lessons together and the committee will do our search, DoD will do the search, and it will inform the way we prepare for the next contest.

**DWG:** It sounded like what you were saying at the end there is that you think China might be rethinking its plans on Taiwan because of what they're seeing with Russia in Ukraine?

**Senator Reed:** I think China is constantly rethinking, reevaluating, readjusting. Their clear policy that's been announced since Nixon went to China, a little bit afterwards, is the One China. So this has been in their vision for decades. But they're constantly evaluating and they're constantly evaluating the response of specific powers the United States, Australia, Japan, et cetera, to their reaction. So obviously they're looking at this closely and I think it will be a lesson that I think it's one that they will absorb and continue to have a significant focus on Taiwan.

**Moderator:** The next question is Nick Shifrin of PBS Newshour.

**DWG:** Chairman, thank you.

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Let me give you my three quick ones and then you can take them in whatever order you want.

That phrase you just used about China, they might be getting second thoughts. That's a really interesting one. Do you have any evidence for that specifically as they look at Ukraine?

Number two, obviously there are eastern flank countries asking for a permanent presence, back to Eric's question. That's not something that is allowed under the NATO-Russia Founding Act, as you know. Is there a discussion for further, is there an actual discussion over permanent presence? Or is there a preference for heel-to-toe deployments in Eastern Europe?

Then on air defenses, I know there's been so much focus on S-300s, but what is your understanding of what Ukraine already has? Either SA-8s or S-300s and how they got them. Thanks.

**Senator Reed:** Let me start with the second thoughts. I think the Chinese are constantly thinking about their posture towards Taiwan. I think they understand that under the Taiwan Relations Act the United States will provide assistance to the government of Taiwan. I think they understand also that we are, we've been trying to do it for a while, but the pivot to the Pacific, that we have issues there that are beyond simply Taiwan. It's freedom of movement, it's the ability of countries to maintain their democratic systems. We've established, reestablished ties with the Philippines that were a little bit severed during the previous administration. We've finally settled on agreement with the South Koreans in terms of reimbursement and mutual support. So they're looking at that and they're constantly on the outlook.

Again, I think they're going to be very calculating, obviously. I think to point out that they think constantly about Taiwan is obvious, at least in my view, and they're doing that now.

Now they have some more data which is a major conventional power taking on a lesser power, looks something like Taiwan, and they're using the Ukrainian example.

The second question about a permanent presence, at this juncture we're there in a temporary posture until the crisis is over in terms of our deployments in, as they are now in Romania and other places. But this is an issue I think that will be brought

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up by the, as you point out, the eastern flank countries. It has to be decided by the unanimous vote of NATO if we're making a change in NATO. And also has to be compliant with treaties. So this issue I'm sure will be brought to the table and discussed. But at this point our adjustments have been to put us in the best position given the unprovoked attack on Ukraine by Russia.

The third question would be --

**DWG:** On the S-300s and the SA-8s, what Ukraine already has.

**Senator Reed:** We have supplied them with Stinger missiles which are good for low-flying aircraft, helicopters, fixed wing. Also some of our other colleagues have supplied variations of the Stinger to them. So they have that.

For higher level aircraft, the jet aircraft, they have SA-3 systems, some of which they had previously. And it's been reported publicly that we were able to discover some old systems that we sort or removed I think from Afghanistan and fixed them up and they have been passed through now. That's the systems they're comfortable with, they know how to operate, and they've so far been very effective.

**DWG:** You can confirm that the US did transfer some of those old systems.

**Senator Reed:** I can't confirm anything. I read it in the Wall Street Journal.

**Moderator:** The next question is Jeff Seldin of VOA.

**DWG:** Senator, thank you very much for doing this.

Two questions, if I may. First, to what degree, aside from cyber, do you worry that Russia is going to look to create trouble for the US and NATO outside of the Ukrainian theater? Do they even have the capacity to do something like that on their own or through proxies?

My other question is, NATO has said, and the White House has said too, that a cyber attack could trigger Article 5, but do the US and NATO have a sophisticated enough or mature enough definition of cyber warfare that would [inaudible] what type of

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cyber attack should be considered an act of war?

**Senator Reed:** First, Russia has the ability to conduct cyber operations worldwide. They've demonstrated that in the United States in 2016 where they mounted a fairly at that point sophisticated disinformation campaign for our election. It was traced right back to the Russians. And this is public knowledge, in 2018 we conducted operations to disrupt the possible interference in our election. So yes, they have the capacity. And we've all seen public reports about concerns with penetration of our utility systems and others.

There could be a cyber incident. Putin could feel he's losing it and he wants to reverse course, get us to back down, et cetera. He's been talking about cyber, been talking about even worse possible incidents.

The second question is, when does it trigger an Article 5? There's not a really good definition of that. And one of the problems with cyber is we have not written rules of the road. AS you said, we had an intrusion of our presidential election by the Russians and there was no formal mechanism to report them or to sanction them or to -- we're still in a very early stage.

My instincts are it will be a function of scale and probably of the human consequences. If there's a cyber attack that takes out a small section of electricity in an area and no one is hurt, that's a message. If it's a significant cyber attack and there are significant casualties, that's more than a message and I think that's when you would get NATO sitting at the table saying, you know, we can and we must do something. But we're on basically new ground on this.

**DWG:** Aside from cyber do you see or do you worry about Russia acting out in other kinetic ways, more traditional ways? Whether through proxies or looking to stir up trouble in other hotspots, whether in the Middle East or in Africa where it has some sort of connections or presence. Could they use vassals or try to go back to some perhaps Cold War thinking in terms of using alliances with other countries to create new pressure points for the US and the West?

**Senator Reed:** My sense is that they are so preoccupied and so overwhelmed by the situation in Ukraine that there's not enough hours in the day to come up with a lot of these sophisticated

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indirect approaches to bring pressure to bear on the United States. They went into a battle with Putin which presents his generals with at least telling him that they'd be in Kyiv in 72 hours, the Ukrainians would provide erratic opposition, et cetera, and before the dust settled he would have his government installed in Kyiv, et cetera.

Now they're looking at reports of a 10 percent reduction of their forces through attrition in battle and other issues. They're losing ground to the Ukrainians around Kyiv. The Ukrainians refuse to surrender Mariupol. This is not going well, and I suspect most of what they're trying to do is sort of right the ship. And not look at sophisticated indirect approaches.

So my sense is their focus is on Ukraine. If they do anything it won't be that subtle, unfortunately, I think it will be directed at trying to redeem themselves in Ukraine.

**Moderator:** The next question is Mitch Tanaka of Kyoto News.

**DWG:** Good morning, Senator. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity.

My question is on Ukraine and also the Indo-Pacific. Before Ukraine crisis there was much emphasis put on how to deter China [inaudible] and how to ramp up deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Now after this Ukraine crisis it seems that there's a growing voice that the US has to put more posture in Europe again.

So is the United States capable to face two fronts in [inaudible] deterrence? One in the European theater and one in the Indo-Pacific theater?

And if it is, what would the role of the allies, or Japan, would be? What would the United States expect for like the allies-US defensive play in this situation?

**Senator Reed:** I do think we have the capacity to do that and it's based upon our relationship with allies. Alone, I don't think we could do it, but when you have in Europe, for example, a NATO stepping up so strong; Germany raising its budget substantially for defense, buying F-35 aircraft so that they can have a more sophisticated air force; other NATO countries really stepping up. That NATO presence will help us and help Europe

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stabilize and be the bulwark in which we are able to accomplish our objectives.

In the Pacific we're trying to take the same lessons, if you will. We're looking closely at the Quad as integral parts of our operations. We're also I think with the AUKUS deal, was a very good not only symbol but practical way to begin to operationalize these relationships. It's not just yes, we're allies and we'll do occasional exercises together. It's, we're going to have equipment that is very compatible. We're going to have -- and when we talk about communications, and cyber, we're going to be partners to the extent we can so that we can instantaneously communicate even in contested areas.

Again, one of the lessons we're seeing in Ukraine is it looks like, and again, we have to get the real details. It looks like one of the advantages, oddly enough, for the Ukrainians is their ability to communicate internally and to move rapidly is much better than the Russians' and that's one of the major reasons they are successful.

We're trying to do the same thing in the Pacific. Communicate with our allies to move rapidly, move stealthily, be disburged, don't present targets if you can avoid it, be able to take on opponents at long distance and effectively. So I think we can do it and the key is really, we have allies. The Russians don't have real allies. And China doesn't have real allies. They have a customer [inaudible]. We have allies.

I want to make a point that touches on this, and something I think we should realize. This is an extraordinary historic moment. We have been focusing on Ukraine obviously because that is the issue of the moment, but there are two other factors that I think we have to recognize. First of all, the technological edge that the United States enjoyed since World War II has been decreased, in some cases lost, and we have to reestablish that technological edge. And a lot of the things we've been talking about are [inaudible] satellites. Contested space. Cyber. Air to ground missiles systems. Quantum computing so that we can encrypt better than the other folks. And we're looking at a situation where the West, the sort of leadership in these issues is being challenged. Particularly the Chinese.

The third issue that we've never confronted before is that we will now have a three-way nuclear race. The Cold War was



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bilateral. It was the Soviet Union and the United States. And the theories that we developed and the systems we developed were based upon basically bilateral context.

Now China is moving aggressively to develop a significant capacity, a planned air and sea nuclear weapon. So we will for the first time in the history of the world have a trilateral nuclear competition. So we have to start thinking, and we're doing this, start thinking about what's the strategy? How do we do this? So that's something else that we have to confront as we confront Russia and China on a conventional basis too.

**Moderator:** The next question is Connor O'Brien of Politico.

**DWG:** Thanks, Senator.

Congress just gave the Pentagon about \$3.5 billion to replenish its stocks of weapons, of equipment that was sent to Ukraine, and I think that was about double what the administration had actually proposed. Particularly things like Stingers, Javelins. But even in yesterday's committee hearing we heard some concern about are these production lines hot to replace things like those munitions? Is there an adequate plan to replace these stocks?

What concerns do you have about how the Pentagon is going to spend this money and replenish these stocks as it comes to things like Stingers, Javelins? What are you looking for from the Pentagon in the coming months? How quickly do you kind of expect this money to be spent down, I guess?

**Senator Reed:** I think they're going to move rapidly and we're going to encourage them, which is the polite way to say we're going to encourage them to do it rapidly.

The problems I think the problems are first of all, the lines are still open but they have not been operating at peak capacity because the demand was not there. And the real problem I think is not so much the final assembly lines, it's the subcontracts and it's parts like the electronic parts which are very difficult to get. And even more difficult now because COVID has disrupted international supply chains dramatically. So it's just reviving the subcontractors, getting the specialized parts, and then getting these lines going again so that we can replenish our stocks of particularly the Stingers and Javelins

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which are critically important weapons as has been shown by the Ukrainians.

So we're on it. They have the resources. Also they have, they get it. They don't want to say we're on alert but we don't have any resupply so good luck, guys. That's not something I think any Secretary of Defense or Chairman wants to tell the troops.

**DWG:** Just in the follow-up there was an exchange between Senator Inhofe and Dr. LaPlante yesterday where Senator Inhofe talked about should this committee, should Congress, the Pentagon, make a one-time investment this year in hot production lines for things like munitions? I'm just curious, what do you think that would look like? Is that like a reprogramming? Are you thinking about how do you plus that up in the NDAA this year? I'm just curious about that.

**Senator Reed:** It could be a reprogram which would be done through appropriations. And it depends on the scale.

But here's the issue, the first question is what is the problem? If the problem is access to esoteric microchips or supplies, maybe we consider the Defense Production Act, consider resources, but we gave them a great deal of resources. But again, I think we have to be careful to define what the problem is and then get the Pentagon to go after that problem. They've got resources already. If they need more, they can come back to us. I think we'd be very open to that.

**Moderator:** The next question is from Matthew Beinart of Defense Daily.

**DWG:** I actually have a follow-up to Connor's question, but I believe it was last week the leaders of the House Armed Services Committee sent a letter to the Pentagon urging them to kind of establish a plan for replenishing that stockpile and suggested the idea of kind of rapidly moving out on development and fielding of a potential Stinger replacement. This kind of may be opening up a window of opportunity for that. Is that an idea you would also support in terms of maybe urging that movement on a modernized system to get after that replenishing the stockpile?

**Senator Reed:** First of all we already put in, as Connor pointed out, a significant amount of money in order to get these lines

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up and running much more productively. Looking at a follow-on ground air defense system, MANPAD, if you will, like the Stinger, I think that analysis has to be done in a systematic way. How do you defend the airspace? Do we need more Stingers or do we need more mobile ground-based, longer-range missile systems? And I think we're going to learn a lot from the experience of the Ukrainians right now.

I think also the key to this is probably not just the system, the firing system. It's the target acquisition system. It's the radars. It's the long-range ability to see them before they see us and then fire.

So just jumping into another, you know, let's just get another bigger, better Stinger I think misses the point. We have to constantly be looking at the system. We have to look at the components, all the components. Can we harness satellites in an innovative way to help us guide missiles to the target? How do we get sensors on the missile systems that can find these aircraft which are more and more stealthy?

So those are the kinds of research, the constant, and that is the way I think you should look at the issue not simply let's get a super duper new Stinger.

**Moderator:** The next question is Brian Everstine of Aviation Week.

**DWG:** Senator, thank you.

As my budget question was mostly already asked I'm going to try to talk about a specific topic.

Back in 2020 when the [inaudible] were announced and the F-35 sale to UAE was announced, you and Senators Menendez raised some security concerns about that sale. Since then the sale seems to have really stalled and the UAE seems to have increased its ties with China by trainer aircraft, et cetera.

Do you think it's time to revisit this deal? And do you have any broader concerns about the partnership with the UAE as they are coming closer to China?

**Senator Reed:** Yeah, I think we have to be sensitive to the Chinese presence because it's not 100 percent benevolent.

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There's some self-interest in that, obviously. So I think we have to be careful.

One of the issues that concerned Senator Menendez and I was simple security of the aircraft and the ability to prevent third parties from having access to it, looking at it, taking pictures of it, and doing other things to it. That was a real concern.

Since that time, as you pointed out, the Emirates have been looking to China. They've had conversations, but they still remain very much aligned with us in many of our efforts. We still want to maintain a presence there. If the Pentagon or the administration wanted to reconsider the sale of those aircraft I think we'd look at it again to see if the security measures were effective. Again, that was the trigger for our opposition. It wasn't we just don't want any aircraft sold over there. It was that if they're sold we have to be assured that they will not be shared with other parties. That was our reason for our opposition.

**Moderator:** Before I turn the floor to you for final comments there's one last question from Rick Burgess of Sea Power Magazine.

**DWG:** Thank you, Senator.

My question is do you foresee Congress ever returning to a regular budget process for the defense budget after two decades of CRs, except for one year, I guess. Thank you.

**Senator Reed:** Yes. I hope so. But you're right, we've got into very bad habits over the last several years, but I hope we can get it done.

Part of it this year is the fact that we are getting this year's budget late, so that pushes back our deliberations, but the goal is to get our budgets out and get it done. That would be extremely helpful to the services.

I don't have to tell you, but most services don't, regrettably, plan to do anything in the first quarter of the new fiscal year because they assume they won't have a budget and in some cases authorization. So that's a whole quarter of just standing around tapping your feet. And in this world with these adversaries and the speed of technology, that's wasted time.

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This year it's six months they'll have. So that's not good. And it's also not an efficient way to spend money.

So for all those reasons we should do it but the problem, as Shakespeare said, is not in our stars but in ourself. In Congress we have been for many reasons distracted. It's a complicated political environment. And we have to I think, and I hope we can, sort or refocus. I must say, I share this opinion with great assurance with Senator Inhofe, that we would like to get our bill done. Senator Lahey, Senator Tester, Senator Shelby, would like to get their bill done. There are many different reasons. One is that sometimes we become a hostage to other issues, unfortunately. But again, our goal is very clearly to get it done and get it done on time.

**Moderator:** Senator Reed, I want to thank you for your time today, for a very thoughtful discussion. I can't recall the last time Shakespeare was quoted at a Defense Writers Group, so I thank you for elevating the discussion. And most sincerely, I thank you for a lifetime of public service.

Sir, the floor is yours for any wrap-up.

**Senator Reed:** Thank you, Thom. To be or not to be, that is -- sorry, I was just bowled over by your commendation.

I want to set out what I believe is the theme that we want to see in this year's NDAA and not only this year's, but recognizing that we have to build for the future as well as the moment.

We have to reimagine how we fight. We have to develop new warfighting concerns. We have new equipment, we have new areas of space and cyber that have been around, but every day they become much more critical to what we have to do.

First, let's reimagine how we fight. We have to prioritize modernization. We've got to get ahead of the other folks in terms of the best, most modern equipment possible. That means also making tough choices on legacy systems, and that's difficult.

Then we've got to look at our allies as major sources of our strength. AS I pointed out previously, on order to handle

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Europe and Asia, you can't do it alone. We could not have done World War II alone. But with allies, and particularly allies that now are extremely motivated, we can do it and we will do it. But we have to do it with allies. It has to be whole of government. And again, I think the President has demonstrated the best use of whole of government I've ever seen with diplomacy, economic pressure, military pressure, information pressure, intelligence releases. All of that working together, and we have to do that and get better at it.

Then of course ultimately we have to take care of our warfighters. One of our greatest advantages is that we have the most superb men and women with intelligence, initiative and dedication and selfless sacrifice for the country. We have to take care of them, we have to attract them into the services, we have to keep training them, we have to give them all the tools they need, both intellectual and physical to get the job done.

My experience in the military is that's our wing edge. I saw so many times in the Army when I was commanding paratroopers where it was a young soldier who stood up and got the job done. That's our strength and we have to make sure we take care of them and their families.

So those are the big sort of thematic issues we're pursuing and we'll keep pursuing them.

But thank you for what you do because without being reminded periodically, i.e. daily, of our successes and shortcomings we would not be as successful. So thank you for what you do. You're an important part of this process.

**Moderator:** Senator Reed, thank you for your time. I very much appreciate your staff support on this. And to all the correspondents who joined us, thank you so much. Have a safe day, everyone.

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