

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken
Senate Appropriations Committee
FY 2024 National Security Supplemental Opening Statement
October 31, 2023

Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Two and a half years ago, our adversaries assessed the United States was becoming permanently divided at home, and alienated from our allies and partners abroad. Working together, we have demonstrated that America's resilience, strength, and leadership in the world remain unmatched.

We've made historic investments in the sources of America's strength at home: our democracy, infrastructure, and economic and technological competitiveness. We've invested in the modernization of our military. And we've invested in our greatest strategic asset abroad: our network of allies and partners, which is growing larger, stronger, more united, and more capable than ever.

We're standing up for our interests and values – not shrinking back. Not in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Not in the face of intensifying strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. Not in the face of terrorism and its state sponsors. And America does not stand alone: we've built extraordinary coalitions with friends who carry their share of the burden.

Our adversaries and competitors recognize our strategies are working – and they continue to do everything they can to disrupt us. We now stand at a moment where many are again making the bet that the United States is too divided or distracted at home to stay the course. That is what is at stake with President Biden's national security supplemental funding request.

The President's request would secure the urgent resources America needs to continue to lead. Secretary Austin and I believed it is important for us to be here together, because, in this mission, as in so much we do to advance America's national security, our defense, diplomacy, and development must work hand-in-hand.

The President's funding request has four key elements:

First: it provides for our enduring support to Israel and Ukraine, two democracies under brutal assault by actors determined to wipe their nations off the map.

It will ensure Israel can continue to defend its people, by building on the diplomatic, security, and intelligence support the United States has surged since Hamas's appalling slaughter. I know several Committee members have traveled to Israel over the last three weeks – and heard directly from Israeli officials what they need to defend their people and prevent another attack like this. And that is what this supplemental provides, with \$3.7 billion for security needs including to help Israel bolster its air and missile defense systems. The supplemental also requests additional authority to drawdown DOD stocks, and enhances U.S. embassy security.

As President Biden has made clear from the outset, while Israel has the right – and indeed, the obligation – to defend itself, the way it does so matters. In our discussions with the Israeli Government, the President and I have both stressed the need for Israel to operate by the law of war and in accordance with international humanitarian law, and to take all possible measures to avoid civilian casualties.

For Ukraine, President Biden is requesting \$16.3 billion for State and USAID to ensure Ukraine can sustain the economic base and recovery its war effort depends on and to supply its defense – without which, Russia will move quickly to try to seize and exploit any possible opening.

This funding will not only rebuild Ukraine's economy and offset the damage wrought by Russia, but also reimagine it: investing in new industries, infrastructure, and supply chains connected to Europe and the world... secure and resilient clean energy... anti-corruption bodies, civil society, and media. To be strong enough to deter and defend against aggressors beyond its borders, Ukraine needs a resilient economy and vibrant democracy within its borders.

Since Russia launched its war, the robust funding supported by Congress has enabled the people of Ukraine in their courageous fight to defend their nation. It has helped make sure Russia's invasion is a strategic debacle, making it weaker in

nearly every way. And it has rallied the world in defense of Ukraine and of the principles at the heart of the UN Charter – sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. Our partners are making significant contributions to share the burden of assistance – turning our backs on their efforts would have lasting implications for our security and standing in the world.

The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have clear links. Since we cut off Russia’s traditional means of supplying its military, it has turned more and more to Iran for assistance. In return, Moscow has supplied Iran with increasingly advanced military technology, which poses a threat to Israel’s security. Allowing Russia to prevail with Iran’s support will embolden both Moscow and Tehran.

Second, this funding will enable us to tackle grave humanitarian needs created by autocrats and terrorists, as well as by conflict and natural disasters in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Armenia, and other places around the world. Food, water, medicine, and other essential humanitarian assistance for civilians must be able to flow into Gaza. Civilians must be able to stay out of harm’s way – a task made even more difficult as Hamas uses civilians as human shields. And humanitarian pauses must be considered.

Helping prevent a worsening humanitarian catastrophe aligns with our nation’s most deeply held principles, including our belief that every civilian life is equally valuable, and equally worthy of protection. Without swift and sustained humanitarian relief, the conflict is much more likely to spread, suffering will grow, and Hamas and its sponsors will benefit by fashioning themselves as the saviors of the very desperation they created.

Humanitarian assistance is also vital to Israel’s security. Providing immediate aid and protection for Palestinian civilians in the conflict is a necessary foundation for finding partners in Gaza who have a different vision for the future than Hamas – and who are willing to help make it real.

Third, this funding is critical to outcompeting our strategic rivals. This request will bolster deterrence. It will support our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific to address threats from an increasingly assertive PRC and to meet emerging challenges. It will uphold our commitments to our allies, including under our trilateral security partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom, AUKUS. And

it will help countries transition to military and defense equipment that's made in America.

The President's request also includes resources for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to provide alternatives to China's coercive financing for our partners in the developing world. It will also help ease the impact of spillovers of Russia's war on food and energy security for the world's most vulnerable. The proposed \$2 billion appropriation and requested authorizations would generate almost \$50 billion in additional development funding capacity for the World Bank and IMF — an enormous return on our investment that demonstrates U.S. leadership in meeting urgent global challenges.

And fourth, the supplemental will make critical investments to protect the security of Americans at home. That includes addressing the hemispheric challenge of irregular migration, and strengthening our defense industrial base to ensure our military continues to be the most ready, capable, and best equipped fighting force the world has ever seen, and that we remain the arsenal for democracy. More than \$50 billion of the security assistance funding will replenish U.S. military stocks, strengthen our domestic defense industrial base, and will be spent through American businesses.

Each of these investments work together to achieve our mission: a stronger, safer, brighter future, where America can lead from a position of strength. Let us come together and demonstrate to one another and to the world that we can rise to the moment.

Finally, before I close, I'd like to thank Senators for their vote today to send the President's ambassadorial nominee Jack Lew to Israel at this critical time. And I encourage the Senate to do the same for the 26 other nominees waiting for their vote.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.