



# THE HONORABLE LLOYD J. AUSTIN III

## Secretary of Defense

Senate Committee on Appropriations Hearing

Opening Testimony

October 31, 2023

Good morning, Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to discuss our urgent need for supplemental funding to both strengthen our national security and support our allies and partners.

On October 7, Hamas terrorists murdered more than 1,400 Israelis—and at least 36 Americans—and took more than 200 hostages. It was the deadliest attack deliberately targeting civilians in Israel's history. It was cruel, hateful, and repugnant. And as a former head of Central Command, these Hamas atrocities remind me powerfully of the outrages committed by ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

As President Biden has told Prime Minister Netanyahu, any democracy would respond swiftly and decisively to such a despicable terrorist assault. I traveled to Israel earlier this month to express my deep condolences to the Israeli people—and to underscore America's ironclad commitment to Israel's security.

Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people, and we mourn the loss of Palestinian lives. I have repeatedly made clear to Israel's leaders that protecting civilians in Gaza is both a moral responsibility and a strategic imperative. Hamas militants intentionally mix with women and children, but democracies like ours are stronger and more secure because we uphold the law of war and protect civilians.

Tensions across the region remain exceptionally high. So let me briefly outline the Department's four key lines of effort:

First, we will continue to protect American forces and citizens in the region. Our personnel have come under repeated attack in recent days by Iranian-backed militia groups. These unacceptable Iranian-backed attacks against U.S. forces must stop. At the President's direction, U.S. forces have conducted precision self-defense strikes on facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its affiliates. If Iranian backed groups continue to attack U.S. forces, we will not hesitate to take further necessary measures in the region to protect our people.

We have also raised force-protection measures across the region. I have deployed a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense battery, as well as additional Patriot batteries, to further protect our people.

Second, we are flowing security assistance to Israel at the speed of war. We are providing air-defense capabilities, precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, and other key equipment, including more interceptors for the lifesaving Iron Dome system.

Third, we're coordinating closely with Israel to help secure the release of every man, woman, and child seized by Hamas—including American citizens. As President Biden told the families of the missing Americans, we have no higher priority than the safe return of their loved ones. We immediately provided U.S. military advisers to offer best practices for integrating hostage recovery into Israel's operations.

And finally, we swiftly strengthened our force posture in the region to deter any state or non-state actor from escalating this crisis beyond Gaza. Two Carrier Strike Groups are now in the region. Last week, an additional F-16 Squadron arrived in the region, complementing other fighter squadrons already in the theater. All this underscores the President's clear warning: no government or group that wishes Israel harm should try to widen this crisis or shed more blood.

Now, Hamas attacked Israel at a moment of global challenge. Even as we surge support to Israel, we remain focused on Ukraine. And thanks to bipartisan support in Congress, the United States has stood with the Ukrainian people and helped them fight back against Russia's aggression.

Nearly 20 months into Putin's failed campaign of conquest, the Russian military has been badly weakened and Ukraine has inspired the world. Ukrainian forces have taken back more than half of the territory seized by Russian invaders since February 2022. That was made possible by bold and principled U.S. leadership—and the coalition of some 50 allies and partners standing with Ukraine. But Putin has not yet stopped his aggression. Ukraine is still under attack, and must still defend itself.

In both Israel and Ukraine, democracies are fighting ruthless foes bent on their annihilation. We will not let Hamas or Putin win. Today's battles against aggression and terrorism will define global security for years to come. Only firm American leadership can ensure that tyrants, thugs, and terrorists worldwide are not emboldened to commit more aggression and atrocities. So our actions today will shape the world that our children and grandchildren inherit.

That is why we have submitted an urgent supplemental budget request to help fund America's national security needs, stand by our partners, and invest in our defense industrial base.

So, we are requesting \$10.6 billion to sharpen Israel's ability to defend itself. This includes \$5.2 billion to help Israel increase the capacity of its Iron Dome and other air-defense systems; \$4.4 billion to replenish DOD stocks provided to Israel; and \$1 billion to boost our own capacity to produce critical munitions, especially 155-millimeter artillery.

The supplemental also requests \$44.4 billion to ensure that Ukraine can continue to defend itself against Russia's aggression. This includes \$12 billion for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative to directly fund acquisition of key weapons for Ukraine; \$18 billion to replace DOD stocks provided to Ukraine; \$10.7 billion for cybersecurity and intelligence support, as well as for the enhanced presence of U.S. personnel deployed in Europe; and \$3.7 billion to expand production capacity in our industrial base.

We're also requesting \$3.3 billion to meet U.S. military requirements in our submarine industrial base (SIB). The Administration's supplemental request ensures that we maintain our focus on strengthening deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region and supporting key allies and partners as part of our efforts to maintain peace and stability.

For the Department of Defense, the \$3.3 billion for the SIB will accelerate build and sustainment rates for attack submarines, one of our most effective capabilities for maintaining deterrence. While this funding is necessary to support U.S. national needs from our submarine industrial base, these investments will also support U.S. commitments under AUKUS, of which the first major deliverable is to support Australia in acquiring contentiously-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Now, this supplemental request does not just help meet today's urgent security challenges. It also makes key investments in our own defense industrial base.

When we send our friends munitions from our stockpiles, the money to replenish our supplies strengthens our military readiness—and we invest in American industry and American workers. That also holds true for funding for Israel or Ukraine to procure new equipment off the production line. Some \$50 billion of this

supplemental request would flow through our defense industrial base, rushing aid to our partners while creating good American jobs in more than 30 states.

These investments will also significantly improve our production capacities far into the future—and help ensure that we are ready to tackle security challenges worldwide. And all that means greater prosperity at home and greater security worldwide.

Finally, let me thank you all for your leadership. Your bipartisan support ensures that we can defend America and stand by the allies and partners who magnify our strength.

I am also deeply committed to working with you all to enact a full-year appropriations bill to keep America secure.

As President Biden said, “American leadership is what holds the world together.” If we fail to lead, the cost and the threats to the United States will only grow. We must not give our friends, our rivals, or our foes any reason to doubt America’s resolve.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all to support Israel and Ukraine and to bolster our defense industrial base—and to keep America secure, prosperous, and strong. Thank you.