

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

GENERAL CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR., USAF

21ST CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET HEARING

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OVERVIEW

I am honored to represent our dedicated Joint Force, Department of Defense civilians, and their families who are focused on ensuring and supporting our national security. I thank Congress for your support and collective commitment to addressing our most pressing national security challenges. The Joint Force acknowledges and appreciates the diligent efforts of our Congressional members in securing the vital resources necessary to train, equip, and maintain our readiness, while also modernizing to prepare for the future.

The President's \$849.8 billion defense budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 reflects our shared commitment to facing today's security challenges head-on, while also laying the groundwork to confront the uncertainties of tomorrow. This budget includes targeted program reductions to meet funding levels approved by Congress under the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. Under these caps, this budget prioritizes Joint Force readiness and taking care of our people while reducing programs that will deliver future combat capability in the 2030s.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the evolving security challenges that the Department must address to safeguard our national interests. Implementing the NDS requires the Joint Force address these challenges while simultaneously accelerating modernization to maintain our strategic advantages. This budget resources our strategy and enables the Joint Force to invest in capabilities to remain the most capable military force in the world for decades to come. The NDS articulates four key priorities essential to our national security:

- Defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC)
- Deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners
- Deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary
- Building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem

The NDS makes it clear that the PRC remains our pacing challenge and "our most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades." The PRC is the only state with the intent as well as the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to reshape its region and the global order. The Joint Force will focus efforts on addressing our pacing challenge while simultaneously preparing for and responding to the acute Russian threat and the challenges posed by North Korea, Iran, and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs).

This budget is threat-informed and built to ensure that our strategic planning, resource distribution, and capability development are responsive to current challenges as well as future threats. Through aligning this budget with the strategic and operational landscape, the Joint Force is postured to remain versatile, resilient, and capable to protect the American people, our prosperity, and our way of life.

Each branch and component of our Armed Forces plays a pivotal role in supporting and upholding these priorities. The connections from this budget request to the NDS, National

Military Strategy (NMS), and the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) are clear and deliberate. The JWC, informed by the current threat environment, has linkages to our resource allocation and requirement planning processes.

The current strategic environment requires that our force continue to advance and adapt to the changing character of war. We must always be prepared to fight and win our Nation's next war. Our current strategic advantage gives us confidence against any adversary. We must continue to strengthen our national security and our warfighting advantage because our competitors and adversaries have not stopped advancing their capabilities.

I am confident in our Joint Force. Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, and civilian teammates form the most capable fighting force in the world—bar none. In my 2 October 2023, *Message to the Joint Force*, I articulated my expectations for the Joint Force:

- **Honing our warfighting skill has primacy in all we do**
- **Modernizing and aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches**
- **Trust is the foundation of our profession**

The Joint Force can only remain the world's most capable force if it is supported by the necessary resources to organize, train, equip, exercise, and employ the Total Force. We can only accomplish our mission and maintain our advantage with stable, predictable, and timely budgets. By passing an on-time budget, Congress enables the Department to execute our strategy with a full-year appropriation. We are challenged to implement our strategy and stay ahead of our pacing challenge when we are not resourced with an on-time full-year appropriation and funding is delayed due to another Continuing Resolution.

Our service members and their families sacrifice for our Nation and we owe them the tools they need to be successful in a dynamic, evolving strategic environment.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The global security environment is extremely complex. The international order and its principles of sovereignty, democracy, and rule of law have underpinned global security for almost 80 years. Today, this system is under threat. The NDS identifies five key challenges that threaten U.S. national interests and our way of life: the PRC, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and VEOs. All five of these challenges are currently active at the same time and in some cases working together.

I have served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for more than 6 months and during this time, each of our NDS challenges have confronted our defense and security goals. The PRC continues to undertake coercive and risky military behavior in the South China Sea, across the Indo-Pacific, and around the globe. Russia's unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine has entered its third year seeking to overthrow a sovereign neighbor that posed no threat. Iran sponsors and supports militia groups and terrorist activity threatening regional

stability and U.S. forces. North Korea continues to test ballistic missiles and technology while also transferring ballistic missiles to Russia in direct violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. VEO activities around the globe spread violence, sow terror, and cause unnecessary suffering. These actors work to exploit perceived gaps in U.S. military might, seeking to expand their influence and challenge the global order.

Today's current global strategic environment requires the Joint Force to both address the pacing challenge of the PRC and focus efforts on the rest of the globe. We can and will do both.

People's Republic of China: The PRC's increasingly aggressive military actions in the South China Sea; actions to assist Russia, North Korea, and Iran; and increasing economic influence around the globe threaten to destabilize the global security environment. The PRC continues to expand military capabilities across multiple domains. We are entering a decisive decade where the PRC is challenging the future of the international order and the United's States' place in the world.

Though the Joint Force focuses on being ready for conflict, our goal is to deter and stay in competition. On 21 December 2023, I held a video teleconference with my PRC counterpart to discuss the importance of responsibly managing competition and avoiding miscalculations. Communication lines have reopened with the PRC across various levels across the U.S. Government, engaging in substantive dialogue which can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and inadvertent escalations.

Russia: Russia's war in Ukraine not only threatens European stability but also aims to undermine the global order to benefit its interests. The international community's support for Ukraine has been pivotal, emphasizing the global commitment to sovereignty and deterring future aggression around the world. Russia's focus on expanding and modernizing its nuclear arsenal further complicates the global security dynamic.

North Korea: North Korea's advancing nuclear program threatens U.S. interests and regional stability. Its ongoing and increasingly aggressive ballistic missile research and testing represent a threat to our homeland and to our Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, recent information has indicated that North Korea provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and ballistic missiles, which is a notable and concerning escalation in North Korean support for Russia.

Iran: Iran-backed militia groups have used the HAMAS terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 to increase attacks on U.S. forces in Syria, Iraq, the Red Sea, and across the region. Iran's support for and involvement in these attacks contributes to larger regional instability. Additionally, Iranian aid has enabled the Houthis to initiate a campaign of missile attacks, since November 2023, against commercial ships in the Red Sea. Iran is also taking actions to improve its missile forces and continues to retain programs that would enable nuclear

weapon production. Finally, Iran provides support to Russia's aggression and continues to operate across the gray zone with coercive and malign activities.

Violent Extremist Organizations: Against the backdrop of these state actors, VEOs continue to sow terror and instability, with recent escalations further threatening regional peace. On 7 October 2023, HAMAS conducted a heinous and brutal attack on the people of Israel. The U.S. remains committed to supporting Israel's right to defend itself while actions to protect and provide humanitarian aid to the civilians in Gaza must increase. The threat landscape is further complicated by transnational extremist organizations such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and others across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific. Despite experiencing significant setbacks, these groups persist in their violent campaigns, leveraging instability to expand their presence, manipulate populations, and disseminate radical ideologies.

The interconnectedness of these challenges necessitates a strategic approach that addresses the immediate threats while also preparing for future contingencies. The U.S. and its Allies must navigate this complex environment with a combination of military readiness, diplomatic engagement, and a commitment to the principles that have historically underpinned global order.

WARFIGHTING

Our military exists to fight and win our Nation's wars. That is why I'm adamant, honing our warfighting skill has primacy in all we do. We train and prepare every day to ensure we are so good at what we do, that we deter any adversary from engaging the U.S. in conflict. The FY 2025 budget will enable our force to train across the full spectrum of operations at varied levels of scope, scale, and complexity. The Joint Force works to implement the NDS through campaigning by linking together training, exercises, and activities to reach our defined objectives. This budget enables the necessary investments to carry out our Joint Force's crucial work and to do so with tactical and technical proficiency.

First and foremost, our service members are expected to master the warfighting skills of their individual service. Our service members must focus on being an adversary's worst nightmare in a fight. As the tactical expert in each domain of warfare, our service members are then required to integrate individual mission areas into a cohesive fighting force. With the changing character of war, future conflicts will be fought across all warfighting domains – land, sea, air, space, and information. Therefore, eliminating gaps and seams in Joint Force readiness will be a priority. This requires proper resourcing for training aides, employment ranges, and equipment to be able to practice like we fight across events from daily training evolutions to fully integrated high fidelity international exercises. This budget requests \$147 billion to sustain readiness and ensure the Department can counter near-term threats and prevail in long-term strategic competition.

In addition, any future armed conflict will be fought alongside Allies and partners, necessitating our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Guardians be able to integrate

across the joint and combined force. My expectation is that America's service members are able to execute tactically while also understanding the larger operational context and geostrategic environment in which they operate.

Finally, our service members understand that the United States military is only one component of our whole of government efforts to support and protect our interests in the global order. The U.S. must act with one end goal in mind and holistically bring together all our elements of national power.

Allies and Partners: The United States has an incredible network of Allies and partners with whom we integrate to achieve our security objectives. We can better leverage their contributions and capabilities by building them into our plans from the beginning. We cannot expect success when we focus on building U.S.-only capability and then adding on Allies and partners at the end. We must start at the beginning with the end in mind and account for our Allies and partners earlier in our planning, requirement, and acquisition processes. The FY 2025 budget will enable the Joint Force to plan, train, and exercise alongside our Allies and partners worldwide. It will also enable further research, development, and testing for joint capabilities and the integration of partner capabilities to collectively address global security challenges. Our Allies and partners are a powerful force multiplier and are crucial for our continued security.

Working together as a combined force enhances our capabilities immensely, demonstrated by the collective effort of Allies and partners around the world in delivering more than \$88 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2022. This security assistance has not only supported Ukraine, but it has also reaffirmed our resolve to work with our Allies and partners around the world as closely as ever. We have strengthened NATO, enhanced and recommitted our support to Israel and Taiwan against regional threats, and advanced efforts in the tri-lateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S (AUKUS). This budget includes \$2.9 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative and \$9.9 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. This will fund capabilities to expand security cooperation with Allies and partners across Europe and the Indo-Pacific, ballistic missile defense activities in support of Guam, improved infrastructure, exercises, training, and experimentation activities. The \$4.0 billion for the submarine industrial base will strengthen the health and capacity of the submarine force and further advances AUKUS. In our globally interconnected world, relationships matter. None matter more than our close-knit ties with our Allies and partners.

During my more than 6 months in this job, I have had more than 145 engagements with my counterparts from around the world. My engagements have revalidated a well-known fact. U.S. leadership is wanted, needed, and watched. U.S. efforts are a catalyst for change—what we do drives action.

MODERNIZATION AND NEW CONCEPTS

Our Nation needs us to both be ready to fight today's battles and prepare for tomorrow's wars. We must prepare by modernizing and aggressively leading with new concepts and approaches. The JWC provides a framework for how the Joint Force will modernize and how we will fight in a future conflict. The JWC guides the Department's future force development, design, and warfighting approach to ensure we have the right people, equipment, training, roles, and doctrine to deter and if necessary, win in a future conflict. We must modernize our force, through innovation and by building a bridge to the defense industry to deliver capability in a timely manner.

As we work to shorten the timeline between prototype and program of record, there is growing importance for collaboration between the Services and our industry partners to deliver at scale, develop training programs, and provide required sustainment so our warfighters can operationalize the delivered capabilities. With rapidly evolving threats and technologies, accelerating our modernization is crucial. Our adversaries are advancing quickly, and it is imperative that we equip our Joint Force with the most advanced tools and capabilities available.

Readiness and modernization depend upon consistent on-time, full year appropriations. We thank Congress for passing FY 2024 appropriations and we will work with Congress to deliver on-time appropriations for FY 2025. Continuing Resolutions of any length have long lasting impacts on the Joint Force. They significantly impact and degrade our ability to defend the United States. They slow progress, prevent new starts of programs, and delay our force modernization efforts. They damage our relationships with the defense industrial base, eroding trust and driving up costs as industry hedges against funding inconsistency. We have operated under Continuing Resolutions for 14 of the last 15 years, totaling 5 years' worth of lost time. Time we cannot get back.

Force Modernization: We continue the execution of several programs essential to Joint Force modernization, focusing on advanced platforms, long-range fires, and uncrewed systems. The Department continues to invest in capabilities and effects to outpace our competitors while divesting costly legacy platforms that no longer best meet our needs. While these choices may be challenging, they are crucial for directing resources towards the optimal mix of programs to fill the portfolio of requirements essential for our security.

In the FY 2025 budget, \$167.5 billion is strategically allocated towards procurement, solidifying our commitment to equip the Joint Force with unparalleled combat capabilities across every domain. Our air power will be elevated through a fleet of advanced fighter aircraft, the B-21 bomber, and tanker aircraft. Our sea power is strengthened with the construction of six battle force ships as well as the continued production of Ford-class aircraft carriers and Columbia ballistic missile submarines. Our combat force in the land domain will be modernized and reinforced with the most advanced equipment available including the Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle, Amphibious Combat Vehicle, and the XM30 Combat Vehicle. This budget also includes significant development in uncrewed and

autonomous systems to expand reach, access, and payload for operations across all domains. Together, these systems along with advanced weapons will challenge, target, and neutralize adversary capabilities while also affirming our technological edge in an era of strategic competition.

Additionally, this budget significantly advances our long-range fires capabilities with \$9.8 billion for the development and procurement of multi-domain hypersonic weapons and the improvement of long-range survivable subsonic weapon systems. These strategic investments ensure our Joint Force maintains a decisive edge in delivering precise strikes over vast distances to outpace emerging threats and support future warfighting concepts.

Across all domains, we continue to invest in the capabilities and technologies that will position the Joint Force to meet the pacing challenge of the PRC and the acute threat of a newly aggressive Russia. Furthermore, the Joint Force recognizes the importance of the space and cyber domains and is focused on those areas promising the largest return on investment in the near-term, such as space domain awareness, space command and control, space resiliency, cyber security, and the Cyber Mission Force. The \$143.2 billion FY 2025 budget request for research, development, test, and evaluation will enable the Department to develop the technology, innovative capabilities, and modernized approaches for the Joint Force to gain and exploit positions of advantage.

Nuclear Modernization: In alignment with our overarching strategy for Joint Force modernization, the FY 2025 budget underscores our commitment to the comprehensive recapitalization of our Nation's strategic deterrent. This deterrent not only protects the United States but also many Allies who depend on extended deterrence and assurance. We are in the midst of a generational change, undertaking the modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad simultaneously with the development of the sea-based Columbia-class submarine, the airborne B-21 bomber aircraft, and the land-based Sentinel Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). These systems will form the backbone of our Joint Force's ability to maintain a safe, secure, effective, and credible nuclear deterrent. Concurrently, we are enhancing and modernizing our Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) systems to ensure they remain secure and reliable amidst evolving threats.

This concerted effort in nuclear modernization is foundational, enabling the broader strategic capabilities that underpin our national defense. It fortifies our extended deterrence commitments, amplifying the strength and cohesion of our global alliances and partnerships. A modernized, safe, secure, and effective nuclear triad provides an outsized return on investment to assure our Allies, deter aggression, and preserve our national security.

Our investment in nuclear capabilities reflects a judicious balance between advancing cutting-edge technologies and phasing out legacy capabilities. Nuclear modernization is a critical component of our strategy, ensuring the Joint Force remains equipped to navigate the complexities of modern warfare and emerging global threats.

Digital Innovation: The Joint Force is also advancing our digital modernization, acknowledging decision advantage will be a key offset in future conflicts. The Joint Force remains committed to realizing a fully capable Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) environment and leveraging initiatives being demonstrated today in our Global Information Dominance Experiments (GIDE). A modernized and technologically advanced Joint Force will communicate seamlessly across platforms in all domains. This will ensure we quickly identify viable paths capable of delivering command and decision dominance. CJADC2 will enhance warfighting readiness through improved access to and the interoperability of joint data at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. This budget requests over \$1.3 billion to develop and improve our CJADC2 capabilities.

With investments in digital innovation, from command and control to modeling and simulation, digital modernization can improve all Department work, advance intelligence collection, streamline processes, and enable better data-informed decision making. The FY 2025 budget prioritizes artificial intelligence (AI), investing \$1.8 billion in research, development, test, and evaluation funds and in operations and maintenance funds, highlighting the strategic importance of AI to our Joint Force for both the near- and long-term.

Additionally, this budget allocates \$14.5 billion for cyberspace activities, supporting the Joint Force's defensive and offensive cyberspace operations capabilities and cyber strategy. This funding will enable the Joint Force to move at the pace of technology. Investments and relationships help the Joint Force accelerate software and technology production to scale ideas and move from concept to combat capability.

Munitions: This budget sends a strong signal to the defense industrial base through \$29.8 billion for munitions and the use of multi-year procurement authorities for critical munitions. Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's operations in Gaza highlight the strategic nature of how munitions stockpiles directly impact battlefield operations. Producing advanced munitions can take years and depends on complex production lines with a skilled workforce that cannot be started overnight. To ensure the Joint Force is prepared for challenges around the globe, we must build out robust production capacity to stay ahead of need to address any emerging crisis. This budget continues to strengthen the defense industrial base and will support several investments to improve its capacity to meet current and future demands.

This budget prioritizes addressing our pacing challenge, the PRC, with procurement of the most relevant munitions—long-range cruise missiles, anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, torpedoes, and air-to-air missiles. The Joint Force takes a holistic approach to ensure we have the optimal balance of capabilities and capacity including hypersonic as well as subsonic, survivable, and large payload weapons. We continually manage and assess our stockpiles and procurement to ensure we have the munitions that our warfighters need.

Expanded multi-year procurement authorities for critical munitions will continue to enable us to deepen our inventories and decrease operational risk. Multi-year procurement authorities are essential to proactively address challenges with complex supply chains, long lead-time

components, obsolescence, workforce shortages, and infrastructure shortfalls that must be overcome. These authorities directly support the capabilities we need to execute our strategy while managing and mitigating risks during crisis and conflict.

Defense Industrial Base: A strong and robust defense industrial base including logistical systems and global supply chains will enable the production of technologies and capabilities critical for our national defense. To fully modernize the Joint Force, we must provide a consistent demand signal to the defense industrial base through clearly articulated priorities and resourcing. Doing so activates the defense industrial base to expand capabilities and capacity helping to enable contract performance and on-time deliveries.

This budget allocates investments towards revitalizing and expanding the defense industrial base, ensuring it is prepared to meet production demands required for current and future operations. Over \$8 billion is requested to fund several key defense industrial base sectors, including \$375 million for microelectronics, \$369 million for castings and forgings, \$193 million for strategic and critical materials, \$243 million for kinetic capabilities, \$3 million for energy storage and batteries, \$125 million for bio-manufacturing, \$4.0 billion for the submarine industrial base, and a \$112 million investment into a skilled industrial workforce. A strong and robust defense industrial base contributes to deterrence and provides a foundation for surging in the event of crises or conflicts.

TRUST

Trust is the foundation of our profession. The Joint Force must build upon and uphold the trust in each other, the trust with our families, the trust of our elected leaders, and the trust of our Nation. I am proud to lead a Joint Force that continually demonstrates dedication to the oaths we took to serve our Nation and to the professional standards expected by our Nation and its leaders. We strive every day to reinforce the trust placed in us, by the American people, to safeguard our country's values and interests.

Our Joint Force leaders have a responsibility to foster a cohesive environment where every service member has the opportunity to reach their full potential. I am committed to removing barriers to success, such as any type of discrimination, harassment, or assault, especially sexual harassment and sexual assault. The profession of arms is based on trust. We must maintain that trust by serving with integrity and professionalism.

Force Development: Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, civilians, and their families are the Joint Force's asymmetric advantage against our adversaries. Technology and capabilities are important, but the mission cannot be accomplished without a professional, organized, and trained Joint Force. The proposed budget includes strategic investments in critical areas such as advanced training programs, health and wellness initiatives, and career development opportunities to ensure our forces are not only prepared but also thriving. This includes improved pay to reflect the dedication and risks undertaken by our service members, enhanced healthcare services, and continued educational benefits for them and their families. We also remain committed to supporting spouse employment

initiatives, career guidance, and licensure reimbursement. These investments are a clear signal of our unwavering commitment to maintaining the readiness and resilience of our forces.

Quality of Service and Quality of Life: Our service members and their families sacrifice a great deal for our Nation. It is our obligation, as leaders, to take care of them and ensure their success. Our Quality of Service efforts support and enable our service members by providing them the means and capability to hone their warfighting skills and to be ready when the Nation calls. Our Quality of Life investments support our service members when they are outside of work and takes care of their families.

I am committed to improving Quality of Service and Quality of Life, through proper force development initiatives mentioned above, various housing initiatives, improved childcare programs, enhanced mental health resources, and robust programs to combat sexual harassment and sexual assault. The FY 2025 budget dedicates \$1.2 billion to sexual assault prevention and response efforts, including building a full-time workforce of over 2,500 dedicated prevention personnel. We remain committed to suicide prevention and this budget allocates \$547 million to reinforce and expand suicide prevention strategies, ensuring every service member feels supported in seeking help. Additionally, this budget includes \$2.3 billion for construction of barracks, dormitories, medical clinics, and childcare facilities as well as another \$2.0 billion for family housing construction and operations to ensure we have quality facilities for our service members and their families. It is our duty to provide our service members and families with comprehensive support and resources for their well-being and success.

Recruiting and Retention: We must provide the right capabilities, training, and education to recruit and retain a talented workforce. To be as effective as possible on the battlefield, we must leverage the strengths of everyone on our Joint Team. While the Services continue to encounter a challenging, but improving recruiting environment, retention remains high, indicating that our people are finding fulfillment and meaning as they proudly serve their Nation. We can make an impact on recruiting by engaging with the public. Only one percent of our society has served in the military and much of our society is not as connected to the Armed Forces as they once were. Our Joint Force and our veterans have an obligation to engage in their communities, providing an important connection between our military and the society that we serve. Whether in uniform or in some other capacity, we all have the responsibility to inspire the next generation to serve to the benefit of our Nation and our security.

CONCLUSION

Our Joint Force is the most capable and lethal fighting force in the world, and they will defend, deter, and if necessary, fight and win our Nation's wars. They are ready to respond to the myriad of challenges that currently exist across the globe. Our military strength is a crucial element of our national security, and it is most effective when used in concert with the full spectrum of our national power.

The PRC continues its expansion of its military, pursues increasingly aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region, and threatens the international order. Russia remains an acute threat as it seeks to impose its imperial order and expand its sphere of influence. Continued unrest in the Middle East also represents a challenge to our Joint Force, as we withstand and respond to attacks against our forces.

The FY 2025 budget ensures that the Joint Force can effectively address these challenges and all our NDS priorities. I thank Congress for its continued support and partnership in our shared mission to defend our Nation, protect our citizens, and preserve our way of life. This budget request is not just a financial document; it is a clear statement of NDS implementation and our collective resolve to face the challenges of today and prepare for those of tomorrow. It is a commitment to our service members and their families, ensuring they have the tools, training, and support necessary to succeed. Given the convergence of the five NDS challenges, our Joint Force depends on long-term, stable, predictable, and timely funding. We are living in a consequential time. There is no time to waste.