

Transcript from the April 24, 2023, conversation between Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), and Stacie Pettyjohn, Senior Fellow and Director of the Defense program at the Center for a New American Security.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Good afternoon. Thanks to our in-person and our virtual audience for being here today. I'm Dr. Stacie Pettyjohn, the director of the Defense Program at the Center for a New American Security. I'm honored to have with me here today Senator Jack Reed, the Democrat from Rhode Island and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Before I turn the podium over to Senator Reed to offer a few opening remarks, I'm going to go through a couple quick administrative notes. This is a public conversation. It's being recorded. It will be posted on our website after the fact. We're going to take questions from the in-person audience and the virtual audience. If you want to submit a question, you can do so either on Twitter using the #CNAS2023, or you can use the chat box at the bottom of your screen. So, if you have questions, start putting them in. I'm going to turn the podium over now to Senator Reed. Thank you so much for being here today.

Sen. Sen. Jack Reed Well, thank you, Stacie very much for that kind introduction, but also for your role here and all of the CNAS contingent that are here today to welcome me and I really appreciate it very much. Let me take an initial moment to acknowledge the terrible ongoing war in the Ukraine. The Ukrainians have fought with incredible courage and great skill for more than a year to repel the Russian's positions.

Sen. Sen. Jack Reed Stacie, thank you. CNAS, thank you. And I want to return to my initial thought, which is the recognition of the incredible sacrifice and suffering of the Ukrainian people, their courage. They are defending the same values and freedoms that we stand for and they have achieved some notable successes, but everyone recognizes there is a difficult path ahead for the Ukraine. I'll let there be no doubt the United States will continue to help Ukraine succeed on the battlefield. America's assistance to Ukraine is also an investment in our own national security and the security of our NATO allies and indeed the whole world. And we also know that this conflict is being observed all across the globe, including by China, and in that sense, there is another force or impetus for our support.

If you look back, there's a common understanding among America's defense leaders that the future of our national security is tied to the success of our competition with China. This competition is occurring across every field of national power, military, economic, political, technological, and more and across every region of the world. To maintain our edge, the United States must dedicate urgent and sustained attention to each of these efforts. In particular, US defense leaders must evolve the way we compete in the Indo-Pacific. The Department of Defense has long built its comprehensive mindset around the

idea of winning in an armed conflict and deterring China through military dominance, and this is no longer enough. The game has changed and our capacity for outright victory through military strength should not be our only measure of success. The Defense Department needs to better understand how China is competing, developing new tools for competition with the Chinese, and integrate our activities with those of our allies and partners.

To understand China's way of competing, we need to look at its objectives. For several decades, the People's Liberation Army has studied the United States' way of war and focused its efforts on countering our advantages. China has invested in offsetting technologies like anti-access and aerial denial systems, artificial intelligence, hypersonics, and, of course, increasing their nuclear weapons. Further, the PRC has leveraged a combination of military and civil power against its neighbors, including statecraft, economic tools, coercion and deception. Beijing has found ways to compete just below the threshold of armed conflict with the United States or with our allies.

As the Defense Department's new joint concept for competing puts it, "China seeks to win without fighting." The strategy warns that if we do not adapt our approach to compete more effectively, the United States risks ceding strategic influence, advantage, and leverage while preparing for a war that never occurs. Indeed, the document warns that the US could lose without fighting.

Just as Chinese leaders have studied our way of war, we need to study theirs. The Defense Department, as well as the United States defense industry and inter-agencies, should develop asymmetric capabilities of our own. The joint concept for competing provides a valuable framework for approaching this challenge. Certainly, we will continue to prepare our military to be ready to fight and win in an armed conflict if needed, but we must recognize that a war with China could be devastating for both of our nations and the world and winning could be a Pyrrhic victory.

With that in mind, the concept asserts that strategic competition is an enduring condition to be managed, not a problem to be solved. The paradigm change should push defense leaders to pursue every available opportunity to advance our national interest, including through smart investments in infrastructure and technology. Critical to this effort will be our ability to build jointness throughout the force.

I am encouraged by the department's efforts on the Joint All-Domain Command and Control or JADC2 concept, which would be a force multiplier in this regard. JADC2 will enable a joint force to detect, analyze, and act on information across the battle space quickly using automation, artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics. The concept will help our forces acquire targets as early as possible and rapidly deliver information to the best shooter on air, land, or sea. If we mask these techniques, then we must quickly include our allies and partners in the system.

Indeed, our network of allies and partners will be the decisive factor in this competition. We have seen the power of this approach in the coalition efforts to support Ukraine and it should be pursued in the Indo-Pacific as well. Particularly as we strive to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan. We are making good progress through a network like AUKUS and the Quad with each providing valuable blueprints for future potential partnerships.

There has also been momentum in a number of other relationships, including our new basing agreement with the Philippines, a remarkable transformation in Japan's defense strategy, and historic cooperation announcements between South Korea and Japan. In just a few days, South Korean President Yoon will address a joint session of Congress here in Washington as part of his state visit. Just the second of President Biden's term. I hope that developments like these will provide more opportunities to engage other regional partners.

Ultimately, our strategic competition with China is not just a rivalry of military or economic power, but also a competition of ideas. This requires us to develop an understanding of our adversary's philosophies, objectives, strengths, weaknesses, and cultures as well as our own. Knowing their culture and understanding our culture are challenges that affect us in every conflict we've engaged with. In fact, in many times they have been, if not decisive, certainly critically important. And again, that's where the work of the Center for New American Security is so valuable. Looking beyond the stereotypes, getting into the details of the cultural forces, the bureaucratic forces, the economic forces, the technological forces that come together and give an opponent a certain status and certainly hopefully give the United States an even more credible and even more decisive advantage. Thank you again for CNAS for hosting this conversation, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

Stacie Pettyjohn:

Thank you for those tremendous opening remarks that covered a lot of ground. I think I was struck by your focus on competition with China and the fact that there is this whole of government competition going on, which I completely agree with, but I am more narrowly focused on the defense side, so I'm going to drive us there right now. And one area where it is clear that Congress and the Pentagon could do a lot more right now to strengthen deterrence against China and shore up the military balance in the Indo-Pacific is munitions and posture.

We've seen with Ukraine how quickly key munitions are being consumed and that our stockpiles are almost certainly inadequate. Hannah Dennis, and I have studied the presidential budget request the last two years and focused in on key PGMs and we found that we are not planning to purchase and certainly have not stockpiled enough of many of the key weapons that we'd need in the Pacific. We at CNAS ran a TTX for the House Select Committee on Competition with China last week, and within three days, bombers ran out of key anti-ship weapons.

So, there's been a lot of focus on munitions and a lot of effort on figuring out how to shore up defense industry so that it can actually surge and expand

production quickly. What do you think we can do to improve the health of the defense industrial base and the ability to ramp up production especially of key weapons?

Sen. Sen. Jack Reed: Well, we've already taken some steps in the fiscal year 2023 NDAA. We provided multi-year procurement authority for the Department of Defense for munitions, so that gives or sends a signal to the industry that we're in it for the long term, that they can be confident of having a demand so they can adequately staff and adequately supply their industries and produce these weapon systems. That's one of the key factors, and again, we're looking very, very closely during this NDA at what other steps we can take to enhance the munition's infrastructure in the United States, the industrial base, in fact, the entire defense industrial base.

Just one footnote is that, beginning decades ago, we developed the AirLand Battle and that proved to be a very short term effort because of precision weapons, because of our ability to overwhelm and control the skies. And, as a result, I think the concept was, well, we didn't need that elaborate defense industrial base with munitions because these are very swift victories and now with the Ukraine, we see, given that situation and the huge volume of munitions consumed by both sides, is that we have to alter our plans and invest in our industrial base again.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Absolutely. My colleague Andrew Metrick is writing about the illusions of short war and sort of the perhaps inappropriate lessons that were drawn from the First Gulf War in particular and why we need to be thinking about protracted conflict and competition with countries like China.

I want to push you on the multi-year procurement. I think this is a wonderful initiative and authorizers seem to be very much in support of it, but it really comes down to will appropriators actually provide the resources for the multi-year procurement contracts and the large production idea that DOD has put forward. Do you think that-

Sen. Jack Reed: I have a foot in both camps, so I really do think that there is an understanding now, after the Ukraine and continuing in the Ukraine, the needs for these weapons systems and I think there will be the support throughout the Congress and I think on a bipartisan basis also to rehabilitate, reinvigorate our industrial base for military procurement. It makes quite a bit of sense.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Good. That's reassuring. I'm glad to hear that because Hannah and I argue in our report that multi-year procurement contracts shouldn't be seen really as cost saving measures. They're all about the strategic effect on our defense industry.

Sen. Jack Reed: No, again, I think 20 years ago, a potential opponent would say, "Oh, they have sophisticated aircraft, precision missiles, they can move anywhere. We can't resist them in the sky. They will overwhelm us." Now they're saying, "Hmm.

Given the constraints, it'll get down to siege warfare," almost like World War I and you need a lot of ammunition and a lot of other weapon systems.

Stacie Pettyjohn: At the same time that we need these near term capabilities, we are obviously trying to develop these advanced technologies and tap into the commercial sector with entities like the Defense Innovation Unit and others, and there are trade-offs because the Pentagon and the Biden administration are arguing that they need the ability to retire some of the less relevant weapons that we have today in order to use those resources to invest in the new capabilities. Do you think that this is a good approach and that Congress is going to support the continued reallocation of money towards really advanced future technologies?

Sen. Jack Reed Well, I don't think we have a choice. I mean, again, we have to build up technology that not only competes with but surpasses our opponents. That's a significant aspect of deterrence. If the other folks believe that we can take them out and we have much better equipment, then that's critical, so there's not really the way to ignore that. And yes, we have to make within the Department of Defense critical decisions about not only what new systems to invest in, but what systems are not particularly capable to engage in this new type of warfare. Over the last several years, we've been looking closely at the LCS, for example, littoral combat ship.

I'm old enough to remember when Admiral Cebrowski, who was the genius behind it, and he was quite a bright man and former president of the Naval War College, came down and that was a time we were thinking about brown-water navies going after terrorists in the Philippines or in islands or et cetera, and for that moment, the concept was good. Unfortunately, the modularity they tried to build in that was never quite successful, but that's an example of a system now that is probably not going to be as relevant to a fight against China on the blue water as it was intended to when it was created, and so we have to make those difficult decisions.

Stacie Pettyjohn: That's definitely the shifting geopolitical and threat landscape is one that has, I think, thrown some of our procurement strategies for a loop, especially when they have such long timelines to come to maturation. My other favorite topic is posture, and you had mentioned some of the great developments that we've seen successes from the Biden administration in terms of the Philippines and the new EDCA sites, a bunch of initiatives with Japan to expand access and sort of modernize the Marine Corp presence on Okinawa by turning it into a marine littoral regiment with Australia as well.

But posture's one of those issues that has been a bit contentious on The Hill and more generally there are critics who've argued that the Pacific Deterrence Initiative has been shortchanged because it's just an accounting mechanism. It doesn't actually have its own resources and appropriations and that too much money is still going to Europe. Do you expect there to be any changes this year with respect to PDI or any push from The Hill to ensure that the Pentagon follows through on these posture initiatives that is just starting?

Sen. Jack Reed There will be a continued emphasis on PDI. I think it allowed us to focus on what was going into the INDOPACOM theater and also to emphasize not just hardware platforms, but coordination with allies, operations, both tabletop exercises and physical operations, which is a key to our success and that has allowed us to do a great deal. The resources that will follow, I think will be a result of some of the conclusions that have been drawn by all the exercises and the work that's been done out there. Admiral Aquilino was just with us a few days ago and he made the case very strongly for the need to, not adequately but sufficiently, I can't remember, searching for good adjectives, give the resources he needs to deter and, if necessary, to defeat China.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah, that's good to hear. I want to now turn to a topic that I know is near and dear to your heart and one of the areas that the US military has an asymmetric advantage, which is undersea warfare.

Sen. Jack Reed That's right.

Stacie Pettyjohn: You've been very out front in terms of supporting efforts to strengthen the shipbuilding industry and sort of the maintenance pipelines for our attack submarines. We had the recent announcement with AUKUS Pillar One, which is this grand deal that it has really long time horizons and sends a potentially really strong signal of combined resolve on the part of the United States, Australia, and the UK to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific and also can enhance their combined undersea capabilities. But you rightly noted that this could put strain on the US shipbuilding industry, which has been struggling to produce the two attack submarines a year along with the Columbia-class nuclear arm boomer. Are you feeling better about Pillar One now? Do you think that there have been enough steps taken and enough resources devoted that it's going to enable the US shipbuilding industry to meet this challenge?

Sen. Jack Reed Well, starting in 2017 on a bipartisan basis, we identified about \$150 million a year for the submarine industrial base to use for training for use to go to subcontractors and help them perfect their techniques so that the systems they provided could be just put right into the ship. The Navy has picked that up now and that's now part of their formal program. I think it's the only sector of military construction that focuses on the industrial base at this moment, and it's critical because we are behind, but we'd be much, much further behind if we didn't do that. I'm beginning to hear that there is more progress in the yards in terms of attracting workers, the efficiency of production, but we can't be content or satisfied until we get back to our two attack submarines a year and see the successful completion on time and on budget of Columbia.

And we have a long, long process. There are, and I think, very sensible discussions of increasing the size of our current submarine fleet because it's such a critical weapon system, particularly against the Chinese. And, of course, Columbia, we have to be able to replace our seaborne part of the triad, our ships are wearing out, our Ohio-class are wearing out, so we have to go ahead and get the Columbia in the water. This requires not just resources, but more

efficiency. And one of the stumbling blocks has been, and this is not an exclusive to any type of military program, is just the shortage of skilled workers. That has been a significant impediment to staying on schedule, to staying on time where they're beginning to see, I think, a little bit more better recruitment, et cetera.

One of the things we did, by the way, with the money that we appropriated starting in 2017 is working with Electric Boat in Rhode Island. We created a training center where we have people from 18 to 60 learning how to be welded as machinists and they go right from there to the floor in Electric Boat, and that's been a great source of input. We have to do more of that, not just in one place, but in many other places.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah. The labor problems have been, I think, a problem across different industries and different countries. You've seen it's been raised as an issue potentially with Australia, too.

Sen. Jack Reed Oh, absolutely.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Even though they want the jobs.

Sen. Jack Reed With the Australians, fortunately Kevin Rudd is the ambassador who's incredibly talented gentleman and very experienced in China and every place else, but AUKUS is going to be a key feature first that there's just the declared cooperation between Australia, Great Britain, the United States, and the commitment sends a strong signal to the Chinese and then we can work together. The hope would be that as the first step, we could set up with the Australian depots in Australia that could do some work on our submarines. So, this, and while we're doing that, these individuals are learning how to build and maintain ships of the class that they're likely to get. So, we're starting a very important voyage with them.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Definitely. You can see there's a range of potential benefits. Since we're talking about the Australians and allies and partners, and that was something that you emphasized in your remarks as well as being really critical to prevailing in this competition. Couldn't agree more. Becca Wasser and I have written about how the department should operationalize integrated deterrents with allies and partners and a lot of the barriers that exist to actually realizing this vision, whether it's in joint all domain command and control, bringing them in as a part of that so we can continue to operate as a coalition in the future or on the technology sharing side, which is critical to Pillar Two of AUKUS. And one of the impediments that keeps coming up is ITAR and export controls. Do you see any movement to potentially try to reform ITAR so that we can ensure that Pillar Two of AUKUS and other efforts with allies and partners succeed?

Sen. Jack Reed I think we have to do that. Let me recognize that obviously that's the jurisdiction of the foreign relations committee primarily, but there's two aspects. One's ITAR and one is foreign military sales. We have to get both into a position where we

don't compromise our security and the security of our weapons systems, but that we're able to more efficiently effectively deliver systems to our allies and to those who want to be our allies. One of the things that the Chinese do, and when you speak to COCOM commanders, they'll tell you they're able to deliver equipment which is not as good as ours, but they can do it in a very short period of time and that gives them a step into the doorway, if you will.

And we want to be able, I think, to counter that by giving, providing equipment on a much more dependable and rapid basis and also in going back to our industrial base, if we can get these, expedite these foreign military sales, then our companies can book them much quicker. So, when they look at their potential demand, it's very satisfactory in terms of maintaining labor, expanding, doing the things they have to do that'll help us as well as our allies.

Stacie Pettyjohn: That's a great point. Right now, we often say that they should rely on poor military sales, but they're really uncertain when they'll actually be approved and be able to go through, so it's hard to run a business with hope as your strategy then.

Sen. Jack Reed Yeah, you can, but if we can get to it's much more predictable that they can go ahead and put it in their demand schedules and gear up for the work, that is going to be a step forward, too. It's a collateral benefit.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah. I've started to see some questions coming in online and I promise I'm going to turn to the audience shortly. I want to, before I do so, however, jump to Ukraine, which I know has been a priority issue for you. You went and visited to Ukraine earlier this year and met with President Zelenskyy. You've also been an outspoken advocate on providing Ukraine what they actually need to defeat Russia. And in your view that isn't necessarily Western fighter aircraft like F-16s. It might be more long range missiles. What would you like to see in the next round of US military aid to Ukraine, and do you think that there will be continued support for arming Ukraine going forward on The Hill?

Sen. Jack Reed First, I think the greatest need is air defense systems. When I was with President Zelenskyy, he explained that if they could create, nothing is ever in impenetrable, but a nearly impenetrable air defense system around Kiev, they could bring back lots of people, they could revive the economy, and it would be very decisive for them. So, that's I think the first priority and we have to look everywhere, not only our own systems, but systems of allies and help them with their air defense system. I think that's job number one.

There is every anticipation that there'll be offensive operations in the next several weeks or a month, and that's going to be led by armored personnel tanks, et cetera, that are supplied by a host of different countries, and that's going to be a critical moment. One of the things that has, I think, really bolstered support, not only the fact that they're fighting for our values, but they're also doing very well and nothing succeeds like success. If they're successful, I think that'll help bolster support and it's necessary because Putin's

plan is not simply Ukraine, it's to restore the Russian empire. He'll be Vladimir the first, tsar of the new Russia, I guess, but so we have to be very conscious and then whatever happens there is seen around the world. What's our credibility, what's our ability, and particularly by the Chinese.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah, there's definitely an influx of maneuver capabilities that the Ukrainians are about to gain. And then the air defenses have proven to be so critical, and if you look at what the Ukrainian government has been reporting, they've been shooting down the vast majority of the incoming missiles as well as the drones that Russia has been using. There's some things they can't intercept like the Kinzhal, but they've done a really effective job at using a patchwork of systems from a lot of different places

Sen. Jack Reed No. They're extraordinarily dedicated people. The stories I've heard when I've been over there from our military offices is that they've been brought to Germany for training on some of the systems that we've given them and training stops at 6:00 for supper and then they go back. Our folks go back and find them working on the systems at 7:00 or 8:00 at night because it's about their countries, it's about their families, it's about everything they hold dear.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Absolutely. Does anyone in the audience right now have a question they'd like ... Up here.

Ashley Roque: Hi, Senator.

Sen. Jack Reed I had the same problem.

Ashley Roque: Hi, Senator. Ashley Roque with Breaking Defense. I wanted to ask you about the hold on nominees right now before your committee ... Can you hear me?

Sen. Jack Reed Mm-hmm.

Ashley Roque: I wanted to ask about the hold on the nominations right now. You now have an Army secretary or Army chief of staff nominee before you. You're going to have the other services and then the joint staff coming. Where do things stand right now? Has there been any movement and how do you sort of see this playing out over the next couple of weeks and months?

Sen. Jack Reed Yeah, I think this is a very serious and intrusion of politics into what should be a professional military decision. It's virtually unprecedented and it's going to eventually harm the military. Right now, we have the nominee for the commander of the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and the Fifth Fleet in CENTCOM. We have our representative of NATO. These are professional offices that who, after 30 years of dedicated service, multiple detours and combat, et cetera, are being told you're hostages for a political issue. That should not be. And it sets a very, very dangerous precedent because there's only really one rule in the United States Senate. What goes around comes around. So, if there is a

situation in the future where someone has a social policy, they disagree, free health care for all, et cetera, well, if this succeeds, I'll just pull the plug on general offices.

And this will be a cumulative effect for the next few months. The department will manage because the commanders in place will stay in place, but at some point you reach a juncture where they can't do that. They have commitments outside. Their nominal successes that says, I'm not waiting anymore. I have a job offer outside, I'm leaving. And that will be a very corrosive effect on the military. And again, the combination of the disruption of leadership and the politicization of military professionals is something that we can't abide and we've got to get off this and get people confirmed. And then if we're dealing with an initial policy, deal with as it should be by a vote on policy.

Stacie Pettyjohn: I will take another question in the audience, but first from the virtual audience, Jaylen is asking about a domain we haven't spoken about thus far. "How critical of a role will space play in any future conflict with China? Do you believe that the Space Force and Space Command are moving fast enough?"

Sen. Jack Reed I think space will be absolutely critical. In some respects, the next fight will be in the spectrum and a lot of our spectrum runs through satellites. Again, I think it's an absolutely critical aspect. Space Command I think is evolving very effectively. They're attracting very sophisticated professionals. They're developing their relationships with other departments and other services, and the whole point is to have this uninterrupted connectivity by communication. The space plays a huge, huge role in that. So, that is the domain that we will prevail in, but it will take additional resources and also additional efforts on behalf of our Space Command.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah, it's an interesting space, literally, pun intended, in terms of having stood up a new command and a new service, which is a pretty rare event. My colleague Hannah Dennis is looking at what sort of culture the Space Force is trying to create and what implications that has for its behavior going forward. Roxanna?

Roxanna: Hi, Senator.

Sen. Jack Reed Hi, Roxanna. How are you?

Roxanna: I'm good. How are you? Change of scenery. Wanted to ask you a little bit how the wrangling over the debt limit, the whole debate over the debt limit and the house bill that obviously cuts discretionary spending to 2022 levels is going to affect the defense bill and the defense top line and what you see coming down the line, whether we're going to be stuck in a continuing resolution, everything you've talked about the multi years, anything that needs to be funded, what's your assessment of how this might play out?

Sen. Jack Reed

Well, first of all, the worst option the Defense Department can face is a continuing resolution, and that has been strenuously voiced to us by every commander that's come before the panel. That would be extraordinarily detrimental to everything we've talked about. How do we prepare for China, how do we integrate new technologies, how do we build up our industrial base? So, that's just point one. Point two, we are working as we always have collectively with our Republican colleagues on our national defense authorization bill, which would include a top line that's going to be negotiated. I think the president sent up a bill that is a 3.2% overall increase. There are many folks that want to go higher. We've seen an unfunded priorities list of about \$17 billion.

So, there's some flexibility, I would hope. In the past working with my colleague at that point, Senator Inhofe, we were able to reach a number that was satisfactory and also did not punish domestic spending. And I think one legitimate concern here is that if we're able to move the defense number up, but there is no attempt at all to fund valuable programs for non-defense, that's going to cause a tremendous controversy to be playing.

The other thing I think we have to realize, too, is if we're looking at our military longer term, basically we need dedicated young Americans who are educated, who are fit, who are committed to service. And so, if you're not investing in education, if you're not investing in health care, if you're not investing in those things, we're not going to have the kind of personnel that we need. And the technology that we're going to need comes out of technical institutions, higher learning institutions. They need investments in there. And then, the ultimate question too, I served for about 12 years on active duty is what are we all struggling for? Is it so that very, very wealthy people can be more wealthy or is it so that relatively poor children can go to school and have a meal at school? I would argue that I fought for the latter or I did not fight. I was not in Vietnam, but I served for the latter.

Stacie Pettyjohn:

So, Senator, you just hit on a topic that Kevin has asked about and I know is near and dear to the heart of Kate Kuzminski and her team here at CNAS, which is the services recruitment challenges, which are across the board right now. And it's recruiting the right people and then being able to retain them over the long haul, given the challenges that it presents to military spouses and families, having to relocate all the time. Do you think that there are structural changes that are needed to inspire a new generation to serve?

Sen. Jack Reed

Well, just sort of laid out the terrain. One is we only have about 200 plus thousand young people who are eligibly, to intellectually or physically. That's a rather narrow group of folks to target. And then, of course, with 3% unemployment, with the discussions we had before about it's hard to get people to work in a shipyard where they're paying very good wages, that is also a factor. We're also seeing sort of a demographic kind of shift. Roughly, I think it's close to 80%, at least 60% of the new recruits have some close relative who's a member of the military. So, it's becoming almost a family business. And

locationally, there's very fewer recruits from the northeast and from other places because the military is not there physically present. It's not obvious in many cases. So, we're confronting these problems.

And then, I think there's also some data showing that the propensity to serve is lower than it's been in a long, long time. And reflecting this too is, when I go home, they're having a difficult time recruiting police departments and fire departments. So, this notion of service and particularly service that involves real sacrifice is under a lot of pressure now.

So, we have to reinvigorate that. We have to have a much more aggressive out recruiting. We have to use some of the traditional programs, Junior ROTC. Also, I think I've sort of suggested at least looking at junior colleges as a place you could focus, but we have to be much more aggressive. The military is rolling out different campaigns to advertise, et cetera. And again, I think, too, the disparagement of the military that we've seen woke military and all that, certainly has an effect on young people saying, "Well, why should I go to there?"

So, I think we have many things to do. We're focusing our efforts on them. I know this is the number one issue for all the service chiefs. How do we recruit and how do we retain and we want to work closely with them. That's another reason why we need a national defense bill because there's going to be a lot of programs we'd have to put in there that don't exist today to help them with the recruiting issues.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Other questions from the in-person audience?

Sen. Jack Reed I'm going to steal some water.

Stewart Latwin: Good afternoon, Senator. Stu Latwin. I'm a military fellow at CNAS. We've talked a little bit about the shipbuilding procurement. You mentioned the submarines per year. I know that the Navy has put forward their plans long term. We've been trying to get to a 355 ship Navy and for the budget plans that they've come forward, two of the three paths don't ever meet that. And the third one is expected 2042. How are we looking to ensure that we are able to meet the requirements, if not by the actual size, but of the makeup of the ships [inaudible 00:44:02]?

Sen. Jack Reed No, I think that's an excellent point. There are three plans that go forward. The third, as you mentioned, has a robust lead, but it takes a long time to get there. My sense is that, one, you have to invest in what is your most significant weapon system. And I would argue that's a submarine. Then I think we have to look more seriously and more effectively at autonomous vehicles that could be produced much cheaper. And also, in the words of Dave Petraeus, don't send a soldier where you can send a bullet. Don't send a manned ship where you can send an autonomous vehicle to do the task. So, I think that that approach could help us immensely.

And again, it goes back to one of the other questions we have. We've got to determine, the Navy has to determine what's the most effective systems that we have and how many do we need? And there are some systems that I believe they were determined as not necessary or effective, and we have to have the political will. And sometimes frankly, we don't to accept those suggestions by the Navy.

The other issue I think, which we sometimes overlook, which could be the most critical issue, is contested logistics. The ability to move supplies over water is going to be a real challenge. And it would be ironic beyond words if we had 380 ships, but none of them had fuel and none of them had supplies because we didn't invest in any type of logistical framework. In fact, I think right now congested logistics might be one of the most important topics the Navy's facing as well as their ship structure.

Stacie Pettyjohn: I would argue all the services are, and in fact, CNAS former senior fellow Chris Dougherty just published a report, *Buying Time*, that was focused on contested logistics and thinking about the connectors that are needed, the posture, the prepositioned equipment, and how you actually go about doing the hard work to support distributed operations and making sure that it isn't something that you can do for a day or two, and then you're unable to continue and sustain operations.

Sen. Jack Reed No, and particularly in the context we spoke about before of the increased dependency on significant munitions in place, whereas in the Desert Storm days, it was going to be a four-day quick route, and then we were over with and that's it. And we could move without impeded air threats against us, et cetera. That's not it. And we have to be much more ingenious about what we do in these contrasted logistics.

Stacie Pettyjohn: And capabilities. We've sort of lost, like we don't have many submarine tenders or figuring out how to reload VLS cells at underway. That would be really important to keep submarines, one of our key advantages, active in the fight.

So, we have a question here from Sam about Ukraine. He is focused on Ukraine's request for cluster munitions, which are an effective antipersonnel weapon and they think would help them in to defeat the Russians. Do you think the US should send cluster munitions to Ukraine?

Sen. Jack Reed Oh, I think we have an obvious issue. One of the great strengths is the unified effort of our NATO allies to join with us to sacrifice, and we often don't realize the extent of their sacrifice. We look simply at, well, how much military? And we forget the millions of refugees the Poles have taken in, that other countries have taken in, the subsidies they're giving to those people. That's real money, et cetera. And many of those nations are signatories to the treaty that would ban cluster weapons. I think that is a factor that we've been going back and forth with constantly and we've yet to resolve it. And so, that I think is what's holding it up. I think because it's being held up, we're trying to see if there are

compensatory weapon systems that will be just as effective and be acceptable to our allies.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Find something that's compliant with the current-

Sen. Jack Reed With the treaty. But, I think that's the key point is the solidarity of the coalition. Do you want to inject something that would be useful to the Ukrainians, but perhaps not essential, but would jeopardize even one or two nations of them saying, "I'm sorry, we can't participate."

Stacie Pettyjohn: Yeah. No, that's an interesting and important trade-off to consider. Questions from the audience here? I have one that ... Or Iskander.

Iskander Rehman: Hello. My name's Iskander Rehman, a fellow at the Kissinger Center. Thanks very much for being with us here today. To go back to the question of maritime capacity, shipyard capacity, et cetera, I was wondering if perhaps you could speak a little bit more to the importance of the commercial sector and how concerned should we be about the general decline of the US Merchant Marine in recent years, and what that means just in terms of both commercial shipyard capacity that could be made available or sealift capacity in times of crisis.

Sen. Jack Reed No, I think we've had real concerns about our shipyard capacity, both public shipyards and the commercial shipyards. We certainly have nothing compared to the Chinese. I'm told they have 16 huge shipyards which can produce ships which are easily convertible from civilian to military uses, ROROs and things like that. We have to be concerned. We've taken tiny, tiny little steps. I recall when I served as a ranking member of the appropriation subcommittee for transportation, we were able to get program for grants to small shipyards to buy them equipment, but those shipyard typically are in the Jones Act business, ferry boats and smaller ships. We really don't have this kind of major shipyards we had in World War II where you could turn out a Liberty ship in two days, in some cases, three days, et cetera. That's the concern. And it goes back to this congested logistics issue of how do we move material across the ocean?

We have to start thinking outside the box. I mean, we have arrangements with commercial ship owners. They're part of our maritime reserve. Do we need more of them? How do we treat vessels under foreign flags? I don't have an answer, but there are a lot more foreign flag vessels than there are American flag vessels. So, we have to think seriously about this. And that's on our list, but I can't give you a QED underlined twice in red, and that's the answer.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Cynthia.

Sen. Jack Reed By the way, I've just exposed everything I've learned in mathematics at West Point. QED, underline.

Cynthia Cook : Hi, Senator. Cynthia Cook from CSIS. I want to follow up on that capacity issue. To what extent is the US looking at working with allies and partners and ally shoring or friend shoring capabilities where US industry doesn't currently have an adequate industrial base? And how is Congress thinking about that and perhaps trying to eliminate any roadblocks on the way? Thank you.

Sen. Jack Reed Well, I think this takes us a little bit back to AUKUS. Part of what we're going to do with the Australians is to co-develop production facilities there because eventually they'll want to build significant parts of the submarine that is the Australian submarine. But I think your point is extremely well taken. We have to look around and do first an inventory of what's the capacity of yards in countries that are very friendly to the United States. Could they be pressed into service? Can we contract with them? And then, that raises significant questions because our first emphasis is keeping our yards going, and that's usually the question we deal with and try our best to do that. But I think we do have to look beyond, and particularly with countries like Australia, Great Britain, Canada, other countries that would be with us, we're quite sure, and would be able to provide increased capacity.

Stacie Pettyjohn: Okay, we're getting close to the end. So, I'm going to take the moderator's perspective and ask you one final question. And it is also about allies and partners, but there are some folks who have claimed that the United States cannot continue supporting Ukraine in the way that it has thus far and also prepare for the Pacific, and that it's sort of a zero sum game between arming Ukraine and arming Taiwan and preparing for a potential China contingency. Do you believe this is the case? Why or why not?

Sen. Jack Reed No, I don't believe it's the case because I think if we abandoned Ukraine, one thought would quickly cross the mind of Xi Jinping. If they can't stick by Ukraine, who's fighting, basically beating the Russians at their own game, are they going to come by and stick by the Taiwanese? So, that's one issue in a very practical sense.

Second issue is that this is an opportunity to send a clear message to the whole world that we will support the Democratic enterprise across the globe, and that we will not retreat back into the 1930s where we watched a growing threat to the world order and we stayed out of it until we were attacked. So, I think in many different ways, this is a fight that goes way beyond the Ukraine and it's necessary. And I think we can manage very effectively to reorganize ourselves for the fight, potentially, hopefully not ever, but potentially in the Pacific.

That requires ingenuity, technology. We're certainly investing with the Pacific Defense Initiative and other programs resources. So, it's not merely talk. And I think also, too, the lessons we're learning from Ukraine about how one fights in this new age of social media, of space, of all these other factors are valuable lessons that we're learning, probably much more astutely than the Chinese were observing from a little further away. And that's going to help us

tremendously. But this often comes down to will we stand up for what we believe? And if we don't stand up there, why will we stand up any other place?

Stacie Pettyjohn: All right. With that, we're going to come to a close today. Thank you, Senator Reed-

Sen. Jack Reed Thank you.

Stacie Pettyjohn: ... for offering your thoughts on such a wide range of topics.