

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

July 10, 2024

Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

I write with concern over reports that the Biden administration will prioritize the delivery of Patriot, National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS), and associated interceptor missiles to Ukraine, even at the expense of the U.S. military and our allies.¹

The tradeoff between sending weapons to Ukraine and supporting U.S. forces and allies in the Pacific can no longer be denied. Air and missile defenses, above all Patriot and NASAMS systems, are vital to deterring or denying a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. This is not news. For years, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense has asked the U.S. to let them purchase additional air and missile defenses to protect themselves from such an invasion.² Despite their pleas, this administration has instead prioritized Ukraine. Americans concerned about the state of U.S. deterrence in the Pacific have been repeatedly lectured that there is no tradeoff between Ukraine and Taiwan.³ Yet while Taiwan enters its *third year* waiting for \$2.81 billion in Patriot-related articles and services via the glacial Foreign Military Sales regime,⁴ your Department has sent a third Patriot battery to Ukraine directly from U.S. military stocks, and we now hear the United States will prioritize Ukraine to receive additional Patriot interceptors and other air and missile defenses.⁵

¹ Christopher Miller, James Politi, and Felicia Schwartz, "US to redirect Patriot air defence orders to Ukraine," *Financial Times*, June 20, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/89fe9d6b-3a0f-42a5-af50-cff7f457a126>.

² "Taiwan looking to buy NASAMS air defence system from US," *Reuters*, July 18, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-says-looking-buy-nasams-air-defence-system-us-2023-07-18/>; "Ministry of National Defense," Republic of China Ministry of National Defense, <https://www.mnd.gov.tw/english/Publish.aspx?p=74731&title=About%20MND&SelectStyle=Ministry%20of%20National%20Defense>.

³ See generally Jaushieh Joseph Wu, "Defend Taiwan by Defending Ukraine: The Interconnected Fate of the World's Democracies," *Foreign Affairs*, May 9, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/defending-taiwan-ukraine-jaushieh-joseph-wu>; Jim Garamone, "Austin: How the U.S. Walks, Chews Gum at the Same Time," *Department of Defense*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3061381/austin-how-the-us-walks-chews-gum-at-the-same-time/>; Damien Cave, "Ukraine. Israel. Can America Support Two Wars and Still Handle China?" *New York Times*, November 9, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/09/world/asia/gaza-israel-asia.html>.

⁴ Anthony Capaccio, "U.S. Upgrades Taiwan Weapons Package with Newer Patriot Missiles," *Bloomberg*, December 5, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-05/us-upgrades-taiwan-weapons-package-with-newer-patriot-missiles>.

⁵ Helene Cooper, *et al.*, "U.S. to Send Another Patriot Missile Battery to Ukraine," *New York Times*, June 11, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/11/us/politics/patriot-missiles-ukraine-war.html>.

The Biden administration's actions do not just place Taiwan at risk: these actions will endanger U.S. forces in the Pacific. Air and missile defenses are critical to protect U.S. forces from a potential Chinese attack. China's rocket forces have greatly advanced in recent years, in both quantity and quality. Within the first hours of an invasion of Taiwan, Chinese missile barrages could successfully strike U.S. bases at least as far as Guam.⁶ The U.S. missile defense architecture in the Western Pacific is currently insufficient to deter China from potential attacks in the coming years. Moreover, if the Joint Force is to credibly execute the Joint Warfighting Concept and Agile Combat Employment against China, it needs more air and missile defenses to protect a distributed basing architecture across the Pacific. At a time when air and missile defense stockpiles are dangerously low,⁷ sending additional Patriot batteries and interceptors to Europe rather than the Pacific will further embolden China's ambitions.

This is not the first time the United States has sacrificed air and missile defense in Asia for Ukraine. Last year, this administration pressured Japan and South Korea to send their own stocks of Patriot interceptors to Ukraine.⁸ It is no wonder that the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission concluded that the United States' shipments of "existing stocks of weapons and munitions to Ukraine" has "undermin[ed] the island's [Taiwan's] readiness" against a Chinese invasion.⁹

Let us be clear: China, not Russia, poses the greatest threat to American security. This should not be controversial: your own Department's National Defense Strategy affirms that you will prioritize China ahead of Russia, even after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.¹⁰ Despite this rhetoric, the Biden administration has repeatedly diverted weapons to Europe and away from Asia.

If China successfully invades Taiwan, Beijing will be primed to dismantle America's alliance network in East Asia and eventually dominate the region. And time is short to deter China. Last year, Secretary of State Antony Blinken testified that China will be able to invade, and even seize, Taiwan by 2027—less than three years from today.¹¹

⁶ United States Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2023," October 19, 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>, p.67.

⁷ Doug Cameron, "Patriot Games: Mideast Turmoil Prompts Shuffle of Prized Defense Systems," *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/patriot-games-mideast-turmoil-prompts-shuffle-of-prized-defense-systems-753fff92>.

⁸ Ellen Nakashima, "Running Short on Ukraine Air Defenses, U.S. Looks to Japan," *The Washington Post*, December 19, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/12/19/us-japan-patriot-missiles-ukraine/>.

⁹ 2022 Annual Report to Congress, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, November 15, 2022, <https://www.uscc.gov/annual-report/2022-annual-report-congress>, 618.

¹⁰ "2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America," U.S. Department of Defense, October 27, 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>

¹¹ Khushboo Razdan, "Antony Blinken Says China Seeks to be Capable of Invading Taiwan by 2027, Stresses US Arms Sales," *South China Morning Post*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3214500/antony-blinken-says-china-will-be-capable-invading-taiwan-2027>.

These concerns in mind, I request your written responses to the following questions no later than August 9, 2024:

1. From which intended recipients will air and missile defense systems be diverted to Ukraine? Please include a full list of allies and partners, as well as quantities and types of Patriot, NASAMS, and any other systems.
2. Given the heavy delays in the defense industrial base already, by how long will this diversion delay U.S. military force development efforts to optimize the Joint Force for a denial defense along the first island chain? Please include assessments with respect to both air and missile defense platforms and munitions stocks.
3. How does the Joint Force propose to execute the Joint Warfighting Concept—especially Agile Combat Employment—in the Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility against China given the consequent deficiencies in air and missile defense forces?
4. When can Taiwan expect to receive additional Patriot, NASAMS, and other air and missile defense systems on which it is still waiting?
5. What is your assessment of the military balance between the United States and China, and U.S. forces' current ability to defeat a Chinese invasion of Taiwan?
6. How would the fall of Taiwan affect America's ability to deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific? Is DoD developing plans for a scenario in which China has seized Taiwan?

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator

CC:
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