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Well, good morning, everyone. It is indeed great to be back here for another Shangri-La Dialogue. Let me thank John and everyone at IISS for their efforts to deepen our dialogue on the Indo-Pacific. This is my third time speaking in Singapore at a IISS event. So it is becoming a habit there, John.

I also want to thank our national host, Singapore, for your tremendous hospitality. It is great to see Senior Minister Teo and Minister Ng, and other distinguished guests from our host here today. And I am glad that we are joined by so many defence ministers and leaders from around the Indo-Pacific and around the world.

One minister of defence made a special effort to be here today, that is my good friend Oleksii Reznikov of Ukraine. Oleksii's seat is currently empty. I am sure he is working in a room somewhere around here. But Oleksii, if you can hear me, I would just tell you that your presence here reminds us that we can never take our peace and security for granted. I am also delighted to be here with Director Haines and many of our US military leaders. And so thanks to everyone for being here today.

This Dialogue is always a great opportunity to exchange views. The only thing more wide-ranging than a conference agenda is a breakfast buffet. This forum began two decades ago in a very difficult geopolitical climate. And today, we are meeting at another moment of significant consequence. More and more of the countries of the Indo-Pacific have come together around a compelling vision of the future. And they are advancing it in unprecedented ways.

It is a vision of a region in which all countries are free to thrive on their own terms, without coercion or intimidation or bullying. It is a vision of a free and open and secure Indo-Pacific, within a world of rules and rights. And that vision is anchored in some key principles: respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law, transparency and openness, the free flow of commerce and ideas, human rights and human dignity, equal rights for all states large and small, and resolving disputes through peaceful dialogue and not coercion or conquests.

Since the last time that I was in Singapore, we made some tremendous progress towards our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. This is actually my seventh trip to the region as Secretary of Defense and my fourth trip to Southeast Asia. And each time, I have had the privilege to listen to leaders expressing their hopes for their countries and their people.

And those conversations reinforce a simple truth. And that truth is that no one country can reach this future alone. As we all heard from Prime Minister Albanese last night, each country has a role to play. And the choices made by countries across the region reflect a deepening commitment to the shared principles.

Throughout the Biden administration, we have demonstrated what my first speech in Singapore called 'The Power of Partnership'. We forge new friendships and deepen old alliances. We have reinforced deterrence to prevent conflict. We have defended the rules and norms that protect us all. And we have moved closer to that bright future that the people of this region want and the one that they deserve.

So today, I would like to talk about the historic progress that we have made together over the past year. I will talk about what the countries of the region are doing to fulfil that vision, what the United States is doing and, most importantly, what we are doing together.

Clearly, we have much more to do. But our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific is truly shared and truly achievable. This vision is not the vision of a single country or the initiative of a single country. It is a common and compelling aspiration. It is about building the basic conditions that let people live their lives without fear and pursue their dreams without limit. And that matters to citizens across the region.

Some 60% of the world's young people live in this region. And they rightly demand the free flow of ideas. Fishing communities in the Philippines and Vietnam and the Pacific Islands depend on open waterways for their livelihoods. And innovators here in Singapore depend on the rule of law to keep propelling the global economy forward. So these shared principles matter for men, women and children all around this region. And they cannot be taken for granted. And neither can this region's security or prosperity be taken for granted.

Just look at the crisis caused by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin's indefensible war of choice stands as the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. And Russia's shocking aggression has brought home to people everywhere how dangerous our world would be if big countries could just invade their neighbours with impunity.

Russia's invasion shows us all the dangers of disorder and the cost of chaos. And that is why so many countries represented here have supported Ukraine's brave defenders against Russia's war of imperial aggression. And that is why countries of the Indo-Pacific have cast their vote time and again for a future of peace, prosperity and progress.

This year, as president of the G7, Japan has focused on connectivity and on bridging the gap with developing countries. That includes pledging to invest \$75 billion in public and private funds for regional infrastructure that can weather the storms of climate change. And India took the helm of the G20 and called on its members to work together to lift up the most vulnerable. And for the first time, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) completed a new maritime exercise together.

Last year, the Republic of Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy declared that international norms and international order were keys to our shared security and prosperity. Indonesia and Vietnam took bold steps toward resolving their maritime-boundary dispute. And this is after 12 hard years of negotiations. And so, around the region, countries are matching their words with their actions. And they are insisting on resolving differences through dialogue and calling for even closer cooperation. And so are we.

As you may know, I had a brief 41-year career in the US Army. And I learned over and over again that alliances and partnerships make us all stronger. The United States is working together with our friends more closely every day. We are doubling down on our alliances, and our partnerships. And our National Defense Strategy calls for us to work more closely with our allies and partners at every stage of defence planning. So that spirit of partnership drove our work together to help the region recover from the worst days of the pandemic, including providing more than 360 million safe and effective vaccine doses. And that same spirit will help us tackle other shared threats, from climate change to nuclear proliferation.

And so our shared goals are clear: to deter aggression, and to deepen the rules and norms that promote prosperity and prevent conflict. We are stepping up planning and coordination and training with our

friends from the East China Sea to the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. That includes staunch allies such as Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Thailand. It includes as well such valued partners as India, Indonesia, Vietnam and clearly our host here today in Singapore.

Consider the historic strides forward in the US–Philippines alliance. As you have heard, the United States and the Philippines recently designated four new locations under our Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. And so, this will let our forces work together to strengthen Philippines security, continue to modernise the Philippine military, and to deliver humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

We also recently completed the largest and most complex exercise, *Balikatan*, ever. More than 17,000 troops participated, and that is nearly twice as many as last year. And for the first time, the exercise featured cyber elements, HIMARS rocket systems and *Patriot* surface-to-air missiles. We are also still standing with our Japanese allies as they make historic changes to their National Security Strategy. This will mean major new investments in Japan’s defence, including moves to develop a counter-strike capability. And we are upgrading our joint exercises, like *Keen Sword* and *Resolute Dragon*, to include more complex and realistic scenarios.

We also salute the bold steps taken by Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to work more closely together. Strong ties between Tokyo and Seoul are good for both countries and for the region. We have made tremendous progress in our own trilateral cooperation with Japan and the ROK including more regular military exercises and greater information sharing.

As North Korea continues its nuclear threats and missile tests and other dangerous provocations, we are deepening our extended deterrence with our allies in the Republic of Korea. That includes increased deployments of our most advanced assets, and the historic Washington Declaration issued by President Biden and President Yoon. And we are cooperating more deeply than ever with the ROK on joint planning exercises and information sharing and more.

At the same time, we are working closely with our allies to upgrade our force posture in the region. We are making our presence more distributed, more agile and more resilient. And that will bring greater stability and security to the region. We are committed to ensuring that every country can fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows. And every country, large and small, must remain free to conduct lawful maritime activities.

We are modernising our presence so that we can all continue to exercise these rights each and every day. We will forward-station our 12th Marine Littoral Regiment, which is the most advanced formation in the United States Marine Corps, in Japan by 2025, to deepen stability in the first island chain.

We have committed to increase the rotational presence of US forces in Australia, including rotations of fighters and bombers task forces, as well as future rotations of ground and maritime capabilities. We are also deeply committed to ensuring that our allies and partners have the capabilities that they need to deter aggression and to increase stability. You see, more capable allies and partners magnify all of our security. So we are making extraordinary investments in our capabilities alongside our allies and partners to reinforce peace and prosperity in this region.

President Biden's fiscal year 2024 budget, his budget request, includes the largest procurement request in the history of the Department of Defense, and the largest investment ever in research and development. His budget also includes a 40% increase over last year's requests for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. And that's an all-time high of \$9.1bn.

We are making bold investments in airpower, including an additional \$61bn for our F-35s and F-22s and uncrewed aircraft, and not to mention the B-21 *Raider*. And we are investing in an expanded fleet of subs, carriers and destroyers, as well as in space and cyberspace, and long-range fires including hypersonics. And at every point, we are committed to sharing the advances that we have made to help our partners.

For example, our initiative on critical and emerging technology with India lets us explore new ways to co-develop key defence platforms. With Japan, we are working closely together on uncrewed combat air systems and counter-hypersonics in air-defence and missile-defence technologies. With the Philippines, we are negotiating a new security-sector assistance road map that will bring our alliance into a new era.

And through the historic AUKUS partnership, we are cooperating with Australia and the United Kingdom on a range of path-breaking capabilities. And of course, earlier this year, we announced how AUKUS will deliver conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, all with the purpose of upholding peace and security. And just since 2020, we have invested nearly \$1.2bn in security-cooperation funding to ensure that Indo-Pacific countries can detect malign actors and deter coercion.

So America's partnerships are bringing the region closer together to help keep it free and open and secure. And you can see that in new forms of trilateral cooperation. United States, Australia and Japan are operating together more closely than ever and finding ways to enhance our science and technology cooperation.

The United States, Japan and the ROK are strengthening our inter-operability and exploring ways to better share information about missile threats from North Korea. And later today, I will talk with my Australian, Japanese and Philippine counterparts about stronger cooperation, especially in the maritime domain. We have also made some important strides forward with Australia, India and Japan through the Quad.

And the Quad is strengthening its maritime cooperation and its work on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. And all four Quad partners will participate in exercise *Malabar*, which will take place off the coast of Australia for the first time this summer.

In many other regions, other top exercises are expanding as more countries come together around our shared principles. Last year, our annual *Garuda Shield* expanded from a bilateral exercise with Indonesia to include 14 countries with more than 4,000 troops. And this year, more than 19 flags will fly over *Super Garuda Shield*.

Next month's exercise *Talisman Sabre* with Australia will bring 14 countries together. It will be the largest iteration ever, with more than 30,000 people participating, including a significant contingent

from Japan. And it is yet another way that European countries like France and Germany and the UK are standing up for our shared values in the Indo-Pacific.

And so, building nimble coalitions to advance our shared vision makes the Indo-Pacific more stable and more resilient. The United States is absolutely proud to expand our cooperation with ASEAN. We remain staunch supporters of ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. And we stepped up our work through the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus, including new programmes to support the next generation of Southeast Asian defence leaders.

We are also continuing to expand our marquee maritime initiative with the Quad. The Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness will help our partners across the region better monitor the waters near their shores, and that will help them combat illegal fishing and better respond to natural disasters.

Finally, we are building important new ties in the Pacific Islands. We are working with our Pacific partners to combat illegal and unregulated and unreported fishing through more training and cooperation, such as the US Coast Guard's Ship Rider programme. We are working together to strengthen maritime-domain awareness and expand the capacity of our Pacific Island partners.

And we recently signed a historic Defense Cooperation Agreement with Papua New Guinea. It will modernise our security cooperation and help us to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the region.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, our work together has made this region stronger and safer. Now we understand the headwinds that we face. But we will not let those headwinds blow us off course. We will continue to stand by our allies and partners as they uphold their rights. We will maintain our vigorous and responsible presence across the Indo-Pacific. And we will continue to work to ensure that no one country can assert control over shared waterways.

In the South China Sea, we will continue to work with our allies and partners to uphold the freedom of navigation and overflight. And let me again underscore the importance of the 2016 ruling by the arbitral tribunal. It is legally binding and it is final. We will not be deterred by dangerous operational behaviour at sea or in international airspace.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to conduct an alarming number of risky intercepts of US and allied aircraft flying lawfully in international airspace. We have all just seen another troubling case of aggressive and unprofessional flying by the PRC. So we will support our allies and partners as they defend themselves against coercion and bullying. To be clear, we do not seek conflict or confrontation, but we will not flinch in the face of bullying or coercion. Now, all of this is especially important in the Taiwan Strait.

Also, I would like to be clear about another point. The United States remains deeply committed to preserving the status quo in the strait, consistent with our long-standing One China policy and with fulfilling our well-established obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act. Our policy is constant and firm. It has held true across US administrations, and we will continue to categorically oppose unilateral changes to the status quo from either side.

I also highlight that conflict is neither imminent nor inevitable. Deterrence is strong today. And it is our job to keep it that way. The whole world has a stake in maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait – the whole world. The security of commercial shipping lanes and global supply chains depends on it. And so does freedom of navigation worldwide. But make no mistake, conflict in the Taiwan Strait would be devastating. So we are determined to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. And so are a number of other countries around the world, and that number continues to grow.

President Biden has been clear: the United States does not seek a new cold war. And competition must not spill over into conflict. And the region should never be split into hostile blocs. Instead, we are working to strengthen the guard rails against conflict and to redouble our diplomacy and to bolster peace and security and stability in the region.

The United States believes that open lines of communication with the People's Republic of China are essential, especially between our defence and military leaders. For responsible defence leaders, the right time to talk is any time. The right time to talk is every time. The right time to talk is now.

Dialogue is not a reward. It is a necessity. A cordial handshake over dinner is no substitute for substantive engagement. And the more that we talk, the more we can avoid the misunderstandings and miscalculations that could lead to crisis or conflict.

I am deeply concerned that the PRC has been unwilling to engage more seriously on better mechanisms for crisis management between our two militaries. But I hope that will change, and soon. I have said it before, and I will say it again. Great powers must be beacons of transparency and responsibility. And the United States is deeply committed to doing our part, and we are determined to keep this region open, peaceful and prosperous.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Indo-Pacific has become an extraordinary example of human progress and peaceful cooperation. I am proud to be here with you, and the United States is proud to be your partner. As I said before, conflict and strife are not inevitable. But peace and security are not automatic.

The region's growing openness and prosperity show the importance of working together and not allowing ourselves to be split apart. The people of the Indo-Pacific have a wider view and a wider vision. So together, we can deepen the region's security. Together, we can expand the circle of opportunity. And together, we can ensure that every citizen of this region has a chance to thrive.

So let us continue to draw on the power of partnership. Let us continue to come together on common purpose. Let us continue to build a region of prosperity and openness and freedom. It is a real pleasure to stand in your ranks. Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.