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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6050

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

Accelerating the development and adoption of autonomous and AI-enabled capabilities at home and with our partners and allies abroad is critical to U.S. military personnel maintaining decision advantage across all warfighting domains. AI capabilities, in particular, promise to deliver increased situational awareness to warfighters on the battlefield, improved decision-making, extended range and lethality, and myriad operational efficiencies.

At the same time, AI-enabled tools will change the pace and nature of threats we face from adversaries. Our adversaries will seek to use this powerful technology against us and exploit our lack of agility in adopting these technologies, which imperils national security, and overall strategic stability.

In December, you joined the defense ministers of Australia and the United Kingdom to announce new efforts under Pillar 2 of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) agreement. Among other things, these efforts include experimentation and exercise series of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled technologies. We welcome continued collaboration with our international allies and partners on the development of advanced military capabilities and the opportunity to reinforce deterrence and promote security through these activities.

However, mitigating risks to adversarial AI and developing resilient, indigenous AI systems is critical to achieving the objectives of the AUKUS security partnership. Lessons learned from this particular effort will pave the way for industrial cooperation activities with other allies and partners on AI-enabled capabilities.

We therefore respectfully request that you answer the following questions about AUKUS Pillar 2 activities no later than April 12, 2024. Beyond keeping Congress apprised of the AI capabilities under development within AUKUS Pillar 2, the responses provided will also help inform other efforts to promote U.S. values and interests regarding AI-enabled capabilities through international cooperation.

Governance and Stakeholders:
1. Who from DOD is leading the work on AI and autonomy experimentation and exercises in context of AUKUS Pillar 2?
2. How will the "Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence" inform DOD's approach?
3. How will DOD be capturing lessons-learned to inform work with other international partners and allies?
4. How will DOD identify and involve industry partners to participate?
5. How will AI-enabled systems and capabilities be selected to participate?
6. How and to what extent will the experimentation and exercises include large language models (LLM)? How will those be selected and used?

Capability Development and Sustainment
7. Please describe how experimentation and exercises will address the traditional development and operational test and evaluation activities.
8. More broadly, please describe the test and evaluation approach for AI-enabled systems, including infrastructure and testing methodologies.
9. To what extent is operator training for AI capabilities being considered, including assessment of the cognitive impact on operators?
10. What are your plans to scale AI and autonomous capabilities developed to other geographic areas of responsibility?

Data Access, Management, and Security:
11. How are the stakeholders identifying data that could be used to develop AI capabilities?
12. What are the practices that govern stakeholders' access to that data throughout the campaign and afterwards? For example, how will government and proprietary data be accessed and appropriately protected?
13. If open-source software and systems are being considered for participation, how will safety and security be maintained?
14. How is the cybersecurity of the capabilities under development being addressed and what is U.S. Cyber Command's role?
15. How are current established records management laws potentially inhibiting AI system training and deployment?

Thank you for your prompt attention to these questions. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Roger Wicker
Ranking Member

Jack Reed
Chairman