

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2024

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

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to you inquiring how the Department of Defense is implementing Section 1250 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This provision of law requires you to consider whether a NATO partner “has achieved defense spending of not less than 2 percent of its gross domestic product” when weighing decisions related to U.S. military basing, training, and exercises within the alliance.

We are committed to the historic NATO alliance and are encouraged that NATO countries collectively increased defense spending by 11 percent in 2023. However, a total of only 11 out of 32 NATO countries presently meet their defense spending commitments under the 2014 Wales and 2023 Vilnius Summit Declarations. According to optimistic estimates, 18 NATO nations are expected to meet their defense spending commitments this year. This means that barely half of NATO members will meet the deadline to increase defense spending to a minimum of 2 percent of gross domestic product—a deadline that was self-imposed and agreed to by unanimous consent.

Many wealthy NATO members have chronically shortchanged their own militaries and relied on other members of the alliance, particularly the United States, to make the investments necessary to achieve collective defense. The United States cannot be expected to satisfy its financial obligation if other NATO members are unwilling or unable to do the same. Our government must hold these allies accountable and Section 1250 of the FY24 NDAA is an important step in that direction.

NATO is not a charity; it’s a military alliance. All NATO members must bear a meaningful share of the burdens of collective defense.

We therefore request an update no later than April 25 on how the Department of Defense evaluates U.S. activities as they relate to NATO members’ defense expenditures, in compliance with the requirement in the FY24 NDAA.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Katie Boyd Britt
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator

United States Senate

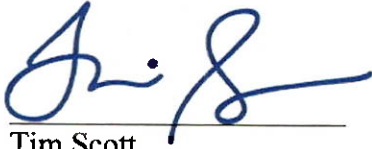
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Bill Hagerty
United States Senator



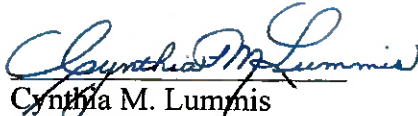
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



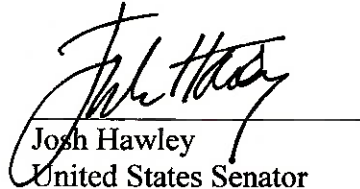
Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Josh Hawley
United States Senator