

1 OPEN/CLOSED: TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE DEPARTMENT OF
2 DEFENSE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND THE FUTURE
3 YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

4

5 Thursday, April 30, 2026

6

7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Washington, D.C.

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11 The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:04 a.m.,
12 in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
13 Wicker, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

14 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer,
15 Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Rick Scott,
16 Schmitt, Banks, Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand,
17 Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth,
18 Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.

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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3 Chairman Wicker: All right. The hearing is in order.
4 We completed a productive classified session down in the
5 SCIF, and now we will begin the public portion of this
6 hearing.

7 I welcome back Secretary Hegseth, General Caine, and
8 our acting comptroller, Mr. Jay Hurst. I thank all of
9 them, including their families, for their service.

10 For the dozens of Americans that regularly watch our
11 hearings, my next remarks will be no surprise, but for new
12 viewers I want to reiterate some context from our remarks.
13 I have said this at almost every hearing. We live in the
14 most dangerous security environment since World War II.
15 Every uniformed officer who has come before this committee
16 has agreed with that statement.

17 First and foremost, we are locked in a competition
18 with Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party. The
19 competition is high stakes, and it is about whether this
20 will be an American-led century or a century defined by
21 authoritarian autocratic regimes that care little for the
22 needs of their citizens or those in neighboring countries.

23 The Chinese Communist Party has accelerated its
24 historic military buildup and its predatory economic
25 practices against Americans and countries the world over.

1 Xi Jinping leads not only China but also an axis of
2 aggressors. This growing alliance cannot be denied. It
3 includes China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. They are
4 united around this goal, to oppose America's interests and
5 the interests of other like-minded Democratic countries
6 across the globe.

7 Vladimir Putin's war of choice in Ukraine has now
8 entered its fifth year. In Putin's objectives we hear
9 echoes of the imperialistic ambitions of World War II's
10 aggressors, including Adolf Hitler. Vladimir Putin has
11 suffered 1.2 million casualties and failed miserably in his
12 military objectives. Along the way, he has transformed
13 Russia's economy into one fueled by war, raising the
14 prospect of an even more aggressive Moscow for the
15 foreseeable future.

16 Most of Iran's leaders are now deceased, but they and
17 those who have survived them have consistently sought
18 violence against America, Israel, our Gulf allies, and the
19 Iranian people. We saw this during the October 7 massacre,
20 during their continued support for Hezbollah and Hamas, and
21 in their desire to engage in nuclear blackmail. Iran's
22 ayatollahs have consistently represented a threat to
23 American interest.

24 Kim Jong Un has joined Mr. Putin's war of aggression.
25 He continues a military and nuclear buildup that threatens

1 South Korea, Japan, and the United States.

2 Ties have never been closer among these four
3 dictatorships. They support each other's aggressive
4 endeavors, they prop each other up financially, and they
5 scheme to undermine America's objectives. We should expect
6 them to continue this behavior.

7 This context plays out across every dimension of
8 national power, the economy, technology, diplomacy, and
9 more. But today, we are here to talk about the military
10 dimension of this competition. These regimes have
11 regularly tried to take by force what they cannot secure
12 through the political process. For that reason, we must be
13 ready to deter conflicts and, if necessary, to win them.

14 President Trump has used the U.S. military
15 appropriately and effectively for American interests. He
16 has viewed our adversaries as a united block and has taken
17 action in light of that reality. In Operation Absolute
18 Resolve and associated statecraft, the President removed an
19 aspiring dictator off the board and set up Venezuela for a
20 future aligned with democratic interests.

21 In Operation Midnight Hammer, he sought to eliminate
22 the Ayatollah's nuclear program. When the Ayatollah chose
23 to double down, the President launched Operation Epic Fury.
24 In that mission, he has worked to remove the regime's
25 conventional military capabilities and force it back to the

1 table for a permanent solution.

2 While we all mourn the tragic loss of the 14 service
3 members who have lost their lives in this conflict, we do
4 so knowing the world is safer without a nuclear Iran. All
5 of these actions are part of a peace-through-strength
6 strategy. In this approach, we seek first to avoid war,
7 but we take military action when necessary to achieve U.S.
8 interests.

9 And so, Mr. Secretary, I am pleased that you are here
10 testifying today in support of President Trump's historic
11 \$1.5 trillion defense budget request. That sum will go a
12 long way toward rebuilding our military capabilities for a
13 generation.

14 I should say up front that this may be a long hearing.
15 There is much to discuss. This \$1.5 trillion request is
16 chockful of important programs and initiatives that are
17 absolutely necessary to secure American interests in the
18 21st century.

19 I think this funding underpins and accentuates three
20 comparative advantages the United States possesses over the
21 axis of aggressors. The first comparative advantage
22 America enjoys over our adversaries is that we have the
23 best innovation and industry in the world. So I hope our
24 witnesses today will cover the progress we have made in
25 just the past year rebuilding the American arsenal.

1 Last year, our reconciliation bill, combined with
2 bipartisan appropriation bills, achieved about \$1 trillion
3 defense budget. This year's request would represent a near
4 50 percent increase. Every penny of it should be money
5 well spent making down payments on crucial,
6 transformational capabilities such as drone warfare, low-
7 cost munitions, and missile defense.

8 Also last year, Congress and the executive branch
9 achieved historic acquisition reforms. Consequently, we
10 are well positioned to make huge gains on efficiency this
11 year and in the years to come, making it much more flexible
12 and a more timely process. I look forward to discussing
13 how we might accelerate implementation of these actions.
14 In particular, I would like to see the Pentagon do more
15 this year to drive competition in the defense industrial
16 base. Competition absolutely drives better outcomes for
17 our service members and taxpayers.

18 Of course, our people are the final comparative
19 advantage we have over our adversaries. We have enjoyed
20 significant improvements in recruitment and retention, but
21 we need to solidify a merit-based environment that fully
22 cares for our personnel. I commend you, Mr. Secretary, for
23 your efforts over the past year to do just that. That task
24 will never be finished, of course, but we embrace it
25 gladly, and we salute the progress. We will always be

1 striving to care for and equip American service members as
2 much as possible. I look forward to more work between this
3 Committee and the Department this coming year.

4 With that, I turn to my friend and colleague, Ranking
5 Member Jack Reed.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE
2 ISLAND

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 And Secretary Hegseth, General Caine, Mr. Hurst,
6 welcome. And please convey my appreciation, all of our
7 appreciation to our military service members and defense
8 civilians. We owe them our deepest sense of gratitude.

9 Mr. Secretary, this is your first public appearance
10 before this Committee in nearly a year. Since your last
11 public testimony, you and President Trump have unwisely
12 taken the United States to war with Iran. You ordered an
13 attack on Venezuela and have directed an ongoing illegal
14 boat strike campaign in the Caribbean and Pacific. At your
15 direction, our forces have bombed Yemen, Somalia, Iraq,
16 Syria, Nigeria, and Ecuador. In the United States, you
17 have deployed thousands of troops to cities like
18 Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Portland to police
19 American citizens. And you have personally intervened to
20 end the careers of dozens of military leaders without
21 explanation. These actions will have significant and long-
22 term consequences.

23 Now you appear before us to ask for a \$1.5 trillion
24 budget, a 45 percent increase above last year. I must say
25 I am skeptical, and such a request demands intense

1 scrutiny.

2 Sixty-one days ago, President Trump unilaterally began
3 the war in Iran. He had no coherent strategy. He refused
4 to make a case to the American people or consult Congress.
5 He failed to present any evidence of an immediate threat,
6 and he ignored the advice of military and intelligence
7 experts who warned him of the consequences.

8 Today, our nation is in a worse strategic position.
9 The Strait of Hormuz was open. Now it is closed. Thirteen
10 service members have tragically lost their lives, and more
11 than 400 have been wounded. We have lost dozens of
12 aircraft, sustained significant damage to our bases in the
13 area, and expended an alarming amount of our missile
14 inventory. Morale and readiness across the force,
15 especially among over-deployed units and vessels like the
16 USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, have suffered.
17 Gasoline and fertilizer prices throughout the world have
18 surged. American families are bearing the cost of a war
19 they wanted nothing to do with and have gained nothing
20 from. And yet, Secretary Hegseth, you declared victory a
21 month ago. On April 8, you said, in your words, "Operation
22 Epic Fury was a historic and overwhelming victory." By any
23 measure, Epic Fury decimated Iran's military and rendered
24 its combat forces ineffective for years to come.

25 Let me be clear. Tactically, the United States'

1 military performance against Iran has been remarkable, and
2 I salute the service members who have executed this mission
3 with skill and bravery. The problem with your statements,
4 Mr. Secretary, is they are dangerously exaggerated. Iran's
5 hardline regime remains in place, it still retains
6 stockpiles of enriched uranium, and its nuclear program
7 remains viable. Iran's military retains enough combat
8 effectiveness to keep the conflict at an impasse. Its
9 missiles and drones remain a far greater threat than you
10 have acknowledged, and the regime has demonstrated it can
11 effectively control the Strait of Hormuz when it chooses.

12 Mr. Secretary, I am concerned that you have been
13 telling the President what he wants to hear instead of what
14 he needs to hear. Bold assurances of success are a
15 disservice to both the Commander-in-Chief and the troops
16 who risk their lives based on them.

17 Our military has performed heroically, but military
18 force without a sound strategy is a path to long-term
19 defeat. I would like to know what options you are
20 considering now, given the cost from this war and the
21 stalemate President Trump has put us in.

22 More broadly, Mr. Secretary, too often you have made
23 dangerous statements that are counterproductive to the
24 mission. You boasted about "no stupid rules of engagement"
25 just days after hundreds of Iranian schoolgirls were

1 tragically killed in a missile strike. You have made
2 troubling statements about showing "no mercy" and "no
3 quarter" to the Iranians, orders that would constitute war
4 crimes.

5 As importantly, while our men and women are fighting
6 and dying overseas, you have focused unduly on your own
7 personal agenda. In the past two months alone, you have
8 taken upon yourself to overhaul the Chaplain Corps, cancel
9 flu vaccine requirements, repeal firearm restrictions on
10 military posts, and bar service members from attending
11 certain universities.

12 Just this week, you brought performer Kid Rock to an
13 Army base to go for a joyride on an Apache helicopter after
14 dismissing an earlier investigation into the pilots who
15 recklessly chose to hover above his home. That runs
16 directly counter to the chain of command and maintaining
17 good order and discipline.

18 Most disturbingly, during your tenure, you have fired
19 dozens of our most senior military leaders and personally
20 intervened to block the promotions of many others. That is
21 a betrayal of the merit-based system that forms the
22 foundation of our military. You are hollowing out the
23 military's bench of experience and highest-performing
24 senior officers while making young officers wonder if they
25 should continue to serve.

1 My colleagues and I have heard from countless service
2 members throughout the ranks, many of whom will be watching
3 right now, who are confused and disturbed by your actions.
4 Hopefully, you can explain them today.

5 Additionally, this Committee expects a fulsome update
6 on Operation Southern Spear. This ongoing campaign against
7 suspected drug trafficking boats has resulted in nearly 200
8 fatalities. The administration has failed to explain the
9 long-term objectives of this mission or provide any
10 evidence of reduced drug flows into the United States. I
11 would ask for a credible answer to this most fundamental
12 question. What is the operation actually meant to
13 accomplish?

14 Mr. Secretary, you are here to promote the President's
15 \$1.5 trillion defense budget. While this budget provides
16 funding for necessary programs, including shipbuilding and
17 drone manufacturing, many other critical programs like
18 barracks repair and aircraft procurement would rely on the
19 passage of a party-line reconciliation bill. Further, this
20 budget slashes research and development, provides no
21 funding for Ukraine, and includes no funding for losses
22 incurred from the Iran war.

23 Yesterday, Mr. Hurst testified that Operation Epic
24 Fury has cost \$25 billion. If nothing else, that helps
25 clarify that we certainly do not need a supplemental

1 anywhere near \$100 billion, much less \$200 billion.

2 And in this record-breaking budget, there are no pay
3 adjustments for the civilian workforce, and with inflation,
4 that is a pay cut. After a year of DOGE layoffs and a
5 hiring freeze across the Department, this is an insult to
6 the 800,000 men and women who support our warfighters every
7 day. I cannot imagine a faster way to erode readiness and
8 distract from our abilities to deter our adversaries.

9 Ultimately, Mr. Secretary, I believe you are causing
10 lasting harm to the military. Like many members of this
11 Committee, I had the opportunity and the privilege to serve
12 in the military. And every officer knows they are duty-
13 bound to give their best professional advice, even if it is
14 not what their superiors want to hear because when leaders
15 fear to speak honestly, people die, missions fail, wars are
16 lost.

17 The American people's trust in our military took 250
18 years to build. You are dismantling it in a fraction of
19 that time. And trust, once gone, can take generations to
20 rebuild. Mr. Secretary, today, I hope you will take a step
21 forward toward rebuilding the trust that has been lost.

22 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Secretary, you are now
24 recognized for your opening statement, sir.

1 STATEMENT OF PETER B. HEGSETH, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
2 ACCOMPANIED BY JULES W. HURST III, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF
3 THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER)/CHIEF
4 FINANCIAL OFFICER

5 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member
6 Reed, Senators, thank you for the opportunity to testify in
7 support of President Trump's historic -- as you said, Mr.
8 Chairman -- \$1.5 trillion fiscal year 2027 budget for the
9 Department of War. The President's budget request reflects
10 the urgency of the moment, addressing both the deferment of
11 longstanding problems as well as positioning our forces for
12 the current and future fights.

13 I am honored to appear alongside General Dan Caine,
14 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Jay Hurst, our
15 chief financial officer and comptroller.

16 I would like to start by thanking this Committee and
17 Congress for your partnership in securing the investments
18 needed for a stronger, prouder, and more secure military.
19 Your focus on acquisitions, your focus on efficiency are
20 the reflection in our department as well and in this
21 budget. A nation's ability to build, to innovate, and to
22 support the critical needs of its warfighters, at speed and
23 at scale, is the foundation upon which its deterrence and
24 survival rests.

25 However, upon taking office on January 20, 2025,

1 President Trump inherited a defense industrial base that
2 had been hollowed out by years of America-last policies,
3 resulting in a diminished capacity to project strength.
4 Under the previous administration, we were offshoring,
5 outsourcing, beset by cost overruns and degraded
6 capabilities. But under the leadership of President Trump,
7 our Builder-in-Chief, we are reversing this systemic decay
8 and putting our defense industrial base back on a wartime
9 footing.

10 Urgency informs everything we do. We are rebuilding a
11 military that the American people can be proud of, one that
12 instills nothing less than unrelenting fear in our
13 adversaries and inspires historic morale and recruiting in
14 its ranks. We fight to win in every scenario.

15 The \$1.5 trillion budget put forward by the President
16 will build upon a previous \$1 trillion FY26 topline and
17 will continue to reverse the four years of underinvestment
18 and mismanagement of the Biden administration. The \$1.5
19 trillion budget will ensure that the United States
20 continues to maintain the world's most powerful and capable
21 military as we grapple with a complex threat environment
22 across multiple theaters. Not to mention the budget also
23 includes a historic troop pay increase, 7 percent for
24 junior enlisted, and the budget eliminates all poor or
25 failing barracks. Quality of life for our troops is front

1 and center in this budget.

2 By supercharging our defense industrial capacity and
3 transforming how the Department does business, we are
4 restoring American commercial dominance at a pace unseen in
5 generations, transforming the defense industrial base from
6 the broken, slow-moving systems of the past. We have
7 flipped the Pentagon acquisition process from a
8 bureaucratic model to a business model, decisively moving
9 from an acquisitions environment paralyzed by bureaucratic
10 red tape into an outcomes-driven organization focused on
11 delivering the most for taxpayer dollars.

12 Over the past year, through historic multiyear
13 procurement agreements that this Committee supported, we
14 have cut smart business deals that have sent unambiguous
15 demand signals to industry to build more and build faster.
16 The result has been a surge, a revitalization of our great
17 American factories and a massive reinvestment in the
18 skilled American workers who serve as the industrial muscle
19 behind our warriors.

20 [Disturbance in hearing room.]

21 Chairman Wicker: Further interruptions of our hearing
22 will be treated in a like manner. We appreciate the First
23 Amendment rights of Americans to express themselves, but
24 disruption of this hearing will not be tolerated.

25 So, Mr. Secretary, you may continue.

1 Secretary Hegseth: I will briefly provide some
2 concrete high-level metrics of what we have accomplished
3 over just the past few months. These are announced new
4 facilities and investments to support American warfighters.
5 The Department has helped stimulate more than 250 private
6 investment deals in 39 States, 180 cities, and 150
7 companies worth more than \$50 billion. It has resulted in
8 280 new or expanded facilities, more than 18 million new
9 square feet of American manufacturing, and more than 70,000
10 new jobs.

11 These \$50 billion in investments in new plants, new
12 assembly lines, and new factories are private investments,
13 not taxpayer dollars. By completely transforming our
14 Department's business model, American companies are
15 investing in America with their own dollars, a historic
16 demonstration of American manufacturing and defense
17 revitalization, all with their money, not Uncle Sam's.
18 This has never been done before and is long overdue from a
19 bureaucratic model to a business model. These investments
20 equal great things for America, for American families, and
21 American workers, to ensure that our warfighters have
22 everything they need, all American made.

23 Together, with the help of the policy updates and
24 appropriations passed by Congress, President Trump's War
25 Department has begun to turn the lights back on in our

1 manufacturing towns across this country, forging a lethal
2 arsenal of freedom. Every policy we pursue, every
3 budgetary item we request serves to ensure that this
4 Department remains laser-focused on increasing lethality
5 and survivability from the frontlines to the factory floor.

6 This is a historic budget, as you said, Mr. Chairman.
7 This is a fiscally responsible budget. And this is a
8 warfighting budget.

9 Speaking of warfighting, the topic of Iran I am sure
10 will come up often today, which I welcome. I look forward
11 to sharing the incredible success of our military effort,
12 achieved in a matter of weeks. President Trump has the
13 courage, has had, unlike other Presidents, to ensure that
14 Iran never gets a nuclear weapon and that their nuclear
15 blackmail never succeeds. We have the best negotiator in
16 the world driving a great deal.

17 Unfortunately, as I said yesterday and I will say it
18 again today, the biggest adversary we face at this point
19 are the reckless naysayers and defeatist words of
20 Congressional Democrats and some Republicans, defeatists
21 from the cheap seats who two months in seek to undermine
22 the incredible efforts that have been undertaken and the
23 historic nature of taking on a 47-year threat with the
24 courage no other President has had, to great success and
25 great opportunity for preventing Iran from having a nuclear

1 weapon.

2 Despite this, under President Trump, we are restoring
3 the unbreakable might of American manufacturing. We are
4 providing for our warfighters, and we are putting the
5 people and interests of this country first.

6 May Almighty God continue to watch over our troops
7 wherever they are, and may we honor the legacy of those
8 brave Americans that we have lost.

9 This is our sacred mission and this is what we will
10 continue to execute on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 [The prepared statement of Secretary Hegseth follows:]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you for that statement, Mr.
2 Secretary.

3 General Caine, you are recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL J. DANIEL CAINE, USAF, CHAIRMAN
2 OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

3 General Caine: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking
4 Member Reed, members of the Committee, and your staff who
5 we never get to say thanks to. Thanks for having me today.
6 I am honored to be here alongside the Honorable Pete
7 Hegseth and the Honorable Jay Hurst to testify on the
8 President's fiscal 2027 budget.

9 I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today,
10 and I am thankful for your continued partnership and
11 support of our warfighters defending the homeland and our
12 interests around the world.

13 It is a privilege to speak with you today about the
14 foundation of America's strength, the 2.8 million members
15 of our joint force. And I am continually inspired by the
16 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardians, Coast
17 Guardsmen, and civilians standing the watch for the nation,
18 supported always by their families. They could have chosen
19 a much easier path, any other path, but they volunteered
20 for a life of purpose and passion and service. And every
21 single day they rise to meet the nation's challenges, from
22 combat operations to critical support roles with the
23 courage, tenacity, and grit that keeps our nation strong
24 and secure.

25 I would also like to express my deep gratitude for the

1 39 members of the joint force who have passed in
2 operations, combat, and training during my time as the
3 chairman, and specifically highlight the 14 who have passed
4 in Operation Epic Fury. The Secretary and I are deeply
5 grateful for each of them and their families, and their
6 names will never be forgotten.

7 As the chairman, my duty is to ensure our civilian
8 leadership has a comprehensive range of military options
9 and the associated risks required to make the nation's
10 hardest and most complex decisions. I owe the President,
11 the Secretary, and the Congress the truth at every turn,
12 and my blueprint for this role has always been that of
13 General George C. Marshall. His firm commitment to
14 civilian control and a nonpartisan military remains my
15 constant standard, and I strive to emulate his candor,
16 delivering the facts leaders need to hear, not always what
17 they want to hear, and once a decision is made, executing
18 it with the absolute dedication while keeping the joint
19 force precisely where it should be. That is the demand of
20 our profession.

21 As I sit before you today representing our incredible
22 joint force, I want to emphasize my commitment to this
23 Committee and to the Congress. I will always follow
24 General Marshall's steadfast example by providing clear and
25 candid nonpartisan military advice, working together to

1 ensure the military remains squarely focused on one thing,
2 being prepared to deter and, if called upon, fight and win
3 our nation's war. And that is our mission.

4 America's joint force is operational at its core,
5 purpose-built for the realities in a complex world. We are
6 organized, trained, and equipped to execute the most
7 demanding missions across the globe with unrivaled
8 precision. And over the past year, our warfighters have
9 consistently demonstrated exactly what it means to be the
10 most capable and most professional force on Earth. Our
11 shared goal is to ensure the joint force sustains the
12 strategic initiative and advantage and ability to project
13 power to respond to the global challenges on our nation's
14 terms.

15 During Operation Rough Rider, Midnight Hammer,
16 Southern Spear, Absolute Resolve, and Epic Fury, the joint
17 force executed globally integrated missions alongside our
18 interagency and international partners. And once our
19 leaders made a decision, our forces demonstrated the
20 unmatched ability to seamlessly synchronize actions and
21 activities from the seabed to cislunar space. We are able
22 to accomplish these complex things that we are asked to do
23 because we draw from a deep reservoir of training,
24 professionalism, and commitment. Our operational tempo is
25 high, but we are designed to sustain it, rebuilding

1 readiness every day, training professionals every day, and
2 sharpening our edge every day. And I am incredibly proud
3 of this joint force team and the leaders at every echelon
4 who command it.

5 As the Chairman said, we are living in a complex
6 environment. Today, I look forward to discussing how we
7 can sustain America's military advantage. And I know this
8 Committee recognizes the challenges and the urgency in the
9 environment that we face. We are operating in delicate and
10 dangerous times where risk is scaling, and the complexity
11 of the modern battlefield demands America's constant
12 adaptation, innovation, and partnership with Congress. As
13 a joint force, we are up to the challenge. We are built
14 for this environment.

15 However, our continued success is not guaranteed by
16 our past achievements. We must continue to be forward-
17 looking and innovate together with the Congress. To drive
18 the pace of change and maintain our superiority requires
19 timely, predictable, and sustained investment. And the
20 resources we are going to discuss today are critical to
21 modernizing the joint force and ensuring whatever threats
22 might emerge, we are prepared to defeat them, to protect
23 our interests, and defend the nation and win.

24 This President's Budget for 2027 supports the
25 Secretary and the Department's goal of reinvigorating,

1 recharging the defense industrial base and the national
2 industrial base, enhancing our readiness, and securing our
3 military advantage to ensure that our warfighters are
4 properly armed, globally integrated, and ready, while
5 always taking care of our people. And that is what truly
6 sets America's joint force apart from each other,
7 especially the 1.8 million members, enlisted members, of
8 our joint force. It is them, the character, the competence
9 of that force that transforms our capabilities into a
10 decisive advantage.

11 And our enlisted force is represented today by the
12 senior enlisted advisor to the chairman, United States Navy
13 Fleet Master Chief Dave Isom, sitting behind me, a teammate
14 who I greatly appreciate and many of you on this Committee
15 know from his time in the Indo-Pacific.

16 While we face dynamic and dangerous times, I have
17 absolute trust and confidence in the extraordinary men and
18 women within our joint force who every day execute the
19 missions we ask them to quietly and with precision. And
20 coupled with the American spirit to out-think, out-compete,
21 and relentlessly innovate, we will maintain our decisive
22 edge, but doing so requires your continued partnership. We
23 stand ready today to answer the nation's call.

24 I humbly ask that as we are here today in this
25 hearing, we remember those deployed service members who are

1 out there right now doing our nation's work. And may we
2 always remember our fallen and never forget them or their
3 families who continue to show us what courage looks like.

4 Thank you for your enduring support, and I look
5 forward to your questions.

6 [The prepared statement of General Caine follows:]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, General. We
2 appreciate your service.

3 Let's jump right in. Secretary Hegseth, let's talk
4 about the money from Reconciliation 1.0 last year. There
5 have been some complaints about the speed, but not
6 everything we hear is actually accurate. How much of the
7 \$154 billion from reconciliation has the Pentagon put on
8 contract?

9 Secretary Hegseth: My understanding, Mr. Chairman --
10 oh, first, I would like to say what an important vehicle
11 reconciliation was for us and how it gave us a chance
12 coming out of FY25 to advance the President's priorities,
13 whether it is drone dominance, Golden Dome for America,
14 shipbuilding, the defense industrial base. It was a
15 critical vehicle for us. The number you are looking for is
16 about -- what I am looking at -- about \$26 billion right
17 now, but we have got the floodgates about to open and apply
18 to those priorities.

19 Chairman Wicker: Okay. So unfortunately, you are
20 starting a bit late through no fault of your own because
21 the money was not sent timely by the Office of Management
22 and Budget to the Department until last month. That is
23 over and done with, but it should be mentioned.

24 Mr. Secretary, where are we on the obligation rates as
25 far as a normal appropriation bill? Are we a little

1 behind, a little ahead, or what?

2 Secretary Hegseth: I would say probably a little bit
3 behind as it pertains to reconciliation, but part of that,
4 as you know, this is a new funding vehicle for the
5 Department. And twofold, one, you have got to make sure
6 you do it right and do it in a fiscally responsible way in
7 conjunction with the Congress to ensure that we meet
8 congressional intent, but also that we have been using it
9 to energize our ability to exercise new pathways, to get at
10 problems in different and more dynamic ways that don't get
11 stovepiped or stuck in the bureaucracy. So yes, there have
12 been some delays, but ultimately, I think it is all
13 goodness on the other side, given the new nature of this
14 funding vehicle.

15 Chairman Wicker: Right, yes, and things have been
16 done differently, and we appreciate that.

17 But Mr. Secretary, will you commit to us that you will
18 keep the Committee informed frequently of your efforts to
19 get all this money out the door so our industrial base can
20 start building as you have described in this new
21 flexibility that we have provided them?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Absolutely.

23 Chairman Wicker: And you mentioned a few things in
24 reconciliation that you think have been gamechangers. I
25 don't think we have talked enough about some of the

1 gamechangers. For years, we failed to take action on
2 rebuilding America's drone industrial base and critical
3 mineral supply chains. After the last reconciliation bill
4 and the National Defense Authorization Act, we are in a
5 very different position on drones and critical mineral
6 supply chains, are we not?

7 Secretary Hegseth: Very much so. Mineral supply
8 chains, drones, we went from JIATF-401 to an autonomous
9 warfare group. We are looking at the concept of a sub-
10 unified command, and you are looking at \$54 billion in the
11 FY27 budget dedicated to drone dominance. UAS, counter-
12 UAS, ensuring we can scale not just exquisite drones, but
13 also the attributable ones that are proliferating on the
14 battlefield today. We need to be ahead.

15 Chairman Wicker: Are there any other initiatives from
16 last year's bill that you want to point out? And you only
17 have --

18 Secretary Hegseth: No, I think --

19 Chairman Wicker: -- a minute and a half.

20 Secretary Hegseth: No, the investment in Golden Dome
21 for America --

22 Chairman Wicker: Right.

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- the ability to get running on
24 that, and we are on schedule to deliver capabilities inside
25 this administration. Minerals and shoring up supply chains

1 on minerals, the Office of Strategic Capital, which its
2 ability to loan gives 10X to new entrants into the
3 Department, the opportunity to fund things that wouldn't
4 normally meet the threshold for the Department but give
5 them the running room to invest in those capabilities, and
6 we have already seen fruit from that as well.

7 Chairman Wicker: And briefly, General Caine, there is
8 no question that Vladimir Putin's Russia is taking serious
9 action to undermine our efforts for success in Iran. Is
10 there any question about that?

11 General Caine: Senator, I think their actions and
12 activities that are -- mindful of the hearing room we are
13 in, but there is definitely some action there.

14 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

15 Senator Reed, you are recognized.

16 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

17 Mr. Secretary, you recently fired the Army Chief of
18 Staff, General Randy George, who is one of the most
19 distinguished and decorated officers of this generation.
20 General George's nomination came before us, we reviewed it
21 thoroughly, and we concurred. Why did you fire General
22 George?

23 Secretary Hegseth: Well, as I did then, and I will
24 say now, we thank General George for his service. And out
25 of respect to him and other officers, we never talk about

1 the nature of why certain officers are asked to step down.
2 But we all serve at the pleasure of the President.

3 And ultimately, my view in coming into this
4 Department, as I stated in my confirmation hearing, was to
5 change the culture of the Department. And it is ultimately
6 challenging to change the culture of a department with the
7 same people who are a part of or in that department. So I
8 have made many changes with general officers. We will
9 continue to make changes as necessary with general
10 officers. And they will be in keeping with the trajectory
11 of where we would like to take the Department, but it
12 doesn't take away from the service of those. And I think
13 you will note that every officer that has been asked to
14 leave has been treated with respect.

15 Senator Reed: Interesting. Of the two dozen officers
16 that you have fired for reasons unrelated to performance,
17 since you have not indicated any cause, 60 percent are
18 Black or females. Now, did the President direct you to
19 single out female and Black officers to be dismissed?

20 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, of course not. And as we
21 have emphasized at this department from the beginning, the
22 only metric is merit. Members on this Committee and the
23 previous leadership of this department were focused on, you
24 know, social engineering, race and gender, in ways that we
25 think were unhealthy for the Department, focusing on those

1 things, making decisions based on those things. In
2 President Trump's War Department, we make decisions based
3 on only one thing, merit. And that is how we have made
4 decisions going forward. That is how we have made them,
5 and that is how we will make them going forward.

6 Senator Reed: Well, let me go back to General George.
7 What did he fail in terms of his lack of merit to continue
8 serving?

9 Secretary Hegseth: As I said, I don't talk about the
10 nature of dismissal --

11 Senator Reed: No, you used that --

12 Secretary Hegseth: -- out of respect for these
13 officers --

14 Senator Reed: -- as an excuse, and then you don't
15 talk about it.

16 Secretary Hegseth: -- but ultimately, we want to take
17 the Department in a particular direction, certain services
18 in a particular direction. And we want leadership that is
19 running as fast in that direction as possible. And in some
20 cases, we make changes accordingly, but do so out of
21 respect to those officers.

22 Senator Reed: Well, I think that direction from your
23 behavior is an intense interest in Christianity, in
24 nationalism, and in not recognizing the talents of women
25 and non-White gentlemen, and that is the wrong direction.

1 Secretary Hegseth: I don't know what you are
2 insinuating, Senator, but I am not ashamed of my faith in
3 Jesus Christ. No, I am not.

4 Senator Reed: Well, you shouldn't be ashamed.

5 Secretary Hegseth: And if you want to shame me for
6 it, go ahead.

7 Senator Reed: I am not shaming you. But are you
8 critical of other faiths?

9 Secretary Hegseth: I am a believer. I am quite open
10 in that. And our department allows for a multitude of
11 faiths, so I don't know what you are suggesting. I have
12 heard the likes of things that people like you suggest to
13 try to smear my character, and I won't give in to it.

14 Senator Reed: No. I am sorry, Mr. Secretary, but
15 broadcasting before the National Religious Broadcasters,
16 stressing the need for more Christianity in the military
17 forces doesn't seem like a neutral position in which you
18 tolerate and accept all religions.

19 Let me move on. The strategic aspects of this
20 operation in Iran, the President declared that "We are
21 going to destroy their missiles and raze their missile
22 industry to the ground." And after more than 13,000
23 strikes, unclassified assessments conclude that Iran
24 retains more than 40 percent of its drone arsenal and 60
25 percent of its ballistic missile launches compared with

1 pre-war levels. That is one of his objectives.

2 The second objective was regime change. "To the great
3 proud people of Iran, I say tonight that the hour of your
4 freedom is at hand, and when we finish, we will take over
5 your government." That has not succeeded.

6 And then one of his other things is at the onset of
7 the war, the President said, "We will ensure that Iran does
8 not obtain a nuclear weapon. Military operations to Iran
9 have not achieved that goal yet." And it also seems to
10 indicate that his pronouncements about Operation Midnight
11 Hammer obliterating the nuclear policy and structure of the
12 Iranians was false. So you have not achieved any of the
13 objectives yet, as the President mentioned.

14 Secretary Hegseth: Well, in this setting, I won't
15 talk about the nature of metrics, which are classified, as
16 you know, Senator. But I can say that looking at the
17 objectives we set out to achieve from the beginning, some
18 of which you laid out, our military objectives have been
19 stunningly effective.

20 Take, for example, their defense industrial base.
21 They are completely incapable at scale, at any level, of
22 reconstituting the capabilities you referred to, which is a
23 devastating result for any country, especially one whose
24 ambitions are as wide as Iran's. So we have put the
25 President in a very strong position to ensure Iran never

1 gets a nuclear weapon.

2 That is the takeaway that has been underneath every
3 single aspect of this. For 47 years, Iran is trying to
4 blackmail its way to a nuclear weapon. They were closer
5 than ever before because of bad deals under previous
6 administration. President Trump was willing to do
7 something about it and not allow their conventional missile
8 shield. That is the North Korea strategy. That is, to be
9 clear, what Iran was pursuing, hiding their nuclear
10 ambitions, revealing them over time, and then building a
11 conventional shield of missiles so powerful that no country
12 would challenge them for fear of what would happen if they
13 unleashed that arsenal.

14 Weakened after the 12-day war in Midnight Hammer,
15 which did obliterate their sites, President Trump saw an
16 opportunity because their ambitions continued to ensure
17 that umbrella of nuclear blackmail did not allow them to
18 get to a nuclear weapon. And the world is safer because of
19 his bold and historic choice.

20 Senator Reed: Mr. Secretary, I think that is
21 rhetorical but not factual. Thank you.

22 Senator Fischer. [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator
23 Reed.

24 Mr. Secretary, Mr. Hurst, General Caine, welcome.
25 Over the last several months, I have worked closely with

1 some of the new direct reporting program managers, and I
2 have been encouraged by how they are approaching the
3 Department's most complex acquisition systems.

4 General White has pulled forward the next milestone
5 for the Sentinel program by at least six months. General
6 Guetlein has completed the initial blueprint for the Golden
7 Dome architecture and is beginning to build it out. For
8 years, this Committee has known that we must improve our
9 ability to defend our homeland against a wider variety of
10 threats, and we finally have a partner with the full
11 backing of the Department to lead the charge.

12 Mr. Secretary, what is the advantage of this new type
13 of program management structure?

14 Secretary Hegseth: Well, thank you for the question,
15 Senator. It is acquisition authority, technical authority,
16 contracting authority. It is consolidating decision making
17 in one place under a highly screened, highly capable
18 general in General White and General Guetlein who know that
19 terrain extremely well and understand what mistakes have
20 been made in the past in programs of that magnitude and
21 then are given the authority to cut through the red tape.
22 That is the key. Success or failure lands with them, and
23 they know it.

24 And as a result, they are incentivized to ensure that
25 program -- and then given every dollar and authority needed

1 to move it as quickly as possible. So whether it is
2 Sentinel, whether it is F-47, whether it is Golden Dome for
3 America, these critical strategic assets, the direct report
4 construct, along with Deputy Secretary Feinberg, who is a
5 national treasurer and is changing the way we do business
6 at this department, is giving us a chance to ensure these
7 critical systems are delivered.

8 Senator Fischer. Thank you. And General Caine, can
9 you give us your thoughts on why the Golden Dome
10 received -- why they must receive that requested \$17
11 billion in funding for the fiscal year '27?

12 General Caine: Well, Senator, as you know, it is an
13 essential part of our homeland security layered defense.
14 And as General Guetlein begins to do the work that you are
15 asking about, and frankly, helping to advance, you know,
16 the insurance around that down payment, charging the
17 defense industrial base with those capital allocations will
18 allow them to get after it much, much quicker. We
19 appreciate the help.

20 Senator Fischer. And if there is a delay in that
21 funding?

22 General Caine: Well, hopefully, there won't be,
23 Senator --

24 Senator Fischer. Hopefully, there won't be.

25 General Caine: -- because we have got a leader on

1 that account 24/7/365. But if we do, we will always, of
2 course, come back and talk to the Congress, but also figure
3 out what has to be true to help that constraint get removed
4 in that production system. And that is really what we are
5 asking these leaders to do is to be able to get past the
6 theory of constraints.

7 Senator Fischer. Okay, thank you.

8 Secretary Hegseth, I agree with your statement on
9 nuclear deterrence when you said nothing else matters if we
10 don't get this right, so we will. We need a modernized
11 nuclear triad and NC3 architecture that can credibly deter
12 multiple adversaries instead of an insufficient nuclear
13 force structure based on fundamentally flawed assumptions
14 made 16 years ago. Our Presidents must also have a more
15 diverse set of options so that they can effectively manage
16 more complex nuclear escalation dynamics.

17 So, Mr. Secretary, how does this budget request
18 achieve those objectives?

19 Secretary Hegseth: Well, thank you for your
20 leadership on this issue for a very long time. First and
21 foremost, it invests in it, \$71 billion in our nuclear
22 triad and NC3, understanding that if you get that wrong,
23 you get everything else wrong. Frankly, it is why the Iran
24 effort is so important. Imagine what the situation in the
25 region would look like if Iran also wielded a nuclear

1 weapon and the limits it would put on our capabilities in
2 those situations. Our adversaries have to deal with that
3 dilemma because of the strength of our nuclear triad. So
4 that \$71 billion investment, the DRPMs that have been put
5 over top of it to move those systems left, as you
6 acknowledged, it has just been a priority since we came
7 into the building, and we are funding it accordingly.

8 Senator Fischer. And Chairman Kaine, Secretary
9 Hegseth, whoever would like to answer this, should our
10 nuclear command, control, and communication systems like
11 the SAOC be given the same level of priority as Congress
12 considers the Department's budget request as our triad?

13 Secretary Hegseth: I think so, but I defer to the
14 Chairman.

15 General Caine: Yes, ma'am. We have got to be able to
16 see to anything, so, yes, ma'am.

17 Senator Fischer. Thank you.

18 Senator Shaheen, you are recognized.

19 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 Secretary Hegseth, Congress enacted \$400 million to
21 provide security assistance to Ukraine in January. Now,
22 the Committee received a notification just yesterday
23 confirming only that the funding would go toward Ukraine.
24 It contained no details about the type of equipment, no
25 delivery timelines, nothing that is typically included in

1 these notifications. And when asked about the delay in
2 funding, the Committee was told that Bridge Colby was
3 developing a spend plan, but we have received nothing. So
4 when can we expect the full spend plan for this
5 appropriation?

6 And Madam Chair, if this is not already part of the
7 record for the Committee, can I enter it into the record?

8 Senator Fischer: Without objection.

9 [The information follows:]

10 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Secretary Hegseth: We acknowledge and are executing
2 on the European capacity building amount of \$400 million
3 that you referred to. Undersecretary Colby has done a
4 great job looking at options and worked very closely with
5 our European commander, General Grynkewich. So his
6 requests of what makes the most sense will inform what
7 ultimately is invested in.

8 Senator Shaheen: Well, this notification says that
9 EUCOM coordinated on the spend plan in March, but General
10 Grynkewich told this Committee on April 16 that he had not
11 yet been asked to review any spend plan for this
12 appropriation. So General Caine, have you received the
13 spend plan for funds in Ukraine? And have you asked the
14 EUCOM commander for his concurrence?

15 General Caine: I do not believe so, but I will find
16 out, Senator, and get back to you by the end of the day.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

18 And yesterday, Mr. Hurst, you told the House that you
19 needed to seek legal review to appropriate the funds as
20 Congress intended. So can you share with us what the
21 nature of that legal review is? And seems to me the law
22 was pretty clear. I saw it. It was part of the defense
23 appropriations bill that we passed in January. And as you
24 know, violating congressional intent on appropriating funds
25 is a violation of the Impoundment Control Act. So what is

1 the nature of the legal review that you have to get?

2 Mr. Hurst: Thanks for the question, Senator. What we
3 are looking at is if we could use the funds in the same
4 manner as USAI, and we had our counsel look at that. And
5 so they provided us a legal opinion on how the funds could
6 be used to support European capacity building.

7 Senator Shaheen: And can you share with this
8 Committee what that legal opinion is?

9 Mr. Hurst: I mean, I don't have a copy of that, but
10 we can ask the OGC office if they can supply it to you.

11 Senator Shaheen: Madam Chair, can we ask that that
12 legal opinion is shared with the Committee officially?

13 Senator Fischer: I believe you just did.

14 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

15 Also, I don't know who can answer this, but it says
16 that "Consistent with the President's priority to shift the
17 financial burden of Ukraine support to European partners,
18 the United States will seek commensurate financial
19 contributions via the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements
20 List, or PURL, from the European partners for this
21 program." So what is the justification for using PURL when
22 there is \$400 million in appropriated funds? Can somebody
23 answer --

24 Secretary Hegseth: PURL is a reflection of the
25 President's priority and the belief that --

1 Senator Shaheen: No, I understand that.

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- any weapons that are supplied
3 are paid for by European partners and used as they see fit,
4 whether it is Ukraine or somewhere else.

5 Senator Shaheen: But that was not the intent of
6 Congress in providing that \$400 million. As I understand
7 the PURL program, the Europeans purchase those weapons from
8 the United States and they pay for them. But this
9 appropriation was \$400 million that Congress expected to be
10 provided to Ukraine, not paid for by the Europeans, but
11 provided from the United States to support Ukraine. So
12 again, I don't understand what the justification is for
13 using PURL when that is not the intent that Congress
14 provided.

15 Secretary Hegseth: We are following the intent of
16 European capacity building, but at the same time
17 recognizing that wherever PURL can be utilized so that the
18 Europeans contribute to that fight per the burden-sharing
19 approach this President takes --

20 Senator Shaheen: But that is not --

21 Secretary Hegseth: -- is important.

22 Senator Shaheen: -- congressional intent. And that
23 is what I am asking you, why are you using PURL to do
24 something that Congress intended to go directly to Ukraine?

25 Secretary Hegseth: Well, we look forward --

1 Senator Shaheen: Mr. Hurst, can you --

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- to working with you on that.

3 Senator Shaheen: -- answer that? What was the legal
4 opinion on this? Did you ask the attorneys if the \$400
5 million could be used for the PURL program?

6 Mr. Hurst: Let's get back to you. We will take it
7 for the record, ma'am.

8 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. And what portion of the
9 funding that is committed from the Europeans under PURL is
10 being used to assist Ukraine rather than restocking our own
11 shelves? Can you answer that?

12 Secretary Hegseth: That is up to Europe. Ultimately,
13 Europe pays for any weapons that we provide, and they can
14 utilize them as they see fit, whether it is Ukraine or
15 otherwise.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

18 Chairman Wicker: There have been a number of times
19 when our witnesses have stated, both in the closed hearing
20 and up here, that they will get back to us, and we
21 certainly hope that will happen very expeditiously.

22 So thank you very much, and thank you, Senator
23 Shaheen.

24 Senator Cotton.

25 Senator Cotton: Thank you, gentlemen, for your

1 appearance today.

2 Mr. Secretary, you provided us with a chart here
3 entitled "The Arsenal of Freedom," which includes a lot of
4 sites that you visited. My favorite one is down here in
5 south Arkansas, Camden, where you and I had a chance to
6 visit just a couple months ago, highlighting the great work
7 that the people there are doing to help rebuild our Arsenal
8 of Freedom. Thank you, first off, for being there and for
9 your kind words for the workforce of the people of south
10 Arkansas.

11 Isn't it fair to say that the war in Iran, just like
12 the Ukraine war before it and still today, hasn't caused
13 any challenges with our munitions the way some of our
14 Democratic colleagues would say, but it has exposed a
15 decades-old problem of brittleness and fragility in our
16 defense industrial base before you and General Caine took
17 over and that we are trying to address right now?

18 Secretary Hegseth: In many ways, that is precisely
19 what we are trying to address. We also have a situation
20 where President Trump rebuilt our military in the first
21 term, and a lot of those munitions and a lot of those
22 capabilities were sent to Ukraine under the previous
23 administration, to the point where when we ask our
24 commanders or when we look at OPLANs, the answer often is
25 "That was sent to Ukraine." So the recognition of those

1 two things has, as the President gave us a charge from day
2 one to rebuild the Arsenal of Freedom, to fast forward, not
3 to provide a little bit more of each thing, but 2X, 3X, 4X
4 the number of exquisite munitions that we need. The
5 expenditures that we have seen under this administration,
6 we can account for them, and we ensure that other OPLANs
7 and elsewhere are well taken care of. So on the munitions
8 front, we are in really good shape, but we need to
9 accelerate, and that is exactly what we are doing.

10 Senator Cotton: And I think that is an important
11 point you make is that we are not just trying to fill a
12 hole that was created by Epic Fury or by support for
13 Ukraine. We are going to fill that and then go much beyond
14 that for our needs in the future so we are never caught
15 where we were over the last several years with these
16 worries about munitions running short. Is that right, Mr.
17 Secretary?

18 Secretary Hegseth: That is exactly right. The
19 President has charged up with not just replacing anything,
20 but filling it up, as he might say, to the tippy top and
21 make sure that the remainder of this term and future
22 Presidents have all the munitions they need for any level
23 of contingencies, especially considering the dangerous
24 world we live in.

25 Senator Cotton: I want to turn now to Operation Epic

1 Fury. It has been a smashing military success.
2 Unfortunately, we have suffered casualties to include
3 soldiers killed in the line of action. Obviously, our
4 military takes the greatest steps possible to protect our
5 troops, whether they are in action or whether they are on
6 bases in the region, no war that was antiseptic. Mr.
7 Secretary, could you explain some of the steps we have
8 taken to try to minimize to the greatest extent we can the
9 number of casualties we have taken in the Middle East?

10 Secretary Hegseth: First of all, every day we live to
11 ensure that we follow through on the legacy of those who
12 gave everything, so that is front and center for us.

13 But I can also say -- and the chairman may want to
14 weigh in -- from the beginning of looking at the
15 possibility of this contingency, setting the defense and
16 ensuring that Admiral Cooper and everyone throughout
17 CENTCOM had every possible measure they could to ensure
18 that our troops are protected and force protection was
19 maximized was the top priority. Moving assets to the
20 region, we integrated our air defenses with local Gulf
21 countries to ensure our shot doctrine was maximized,
22 whether it is ballistic missiles or on drones, flowing in
23 the most recent capabilities to ensure we can intercept
24 drones, moving troops off the X.

25 I think what people mostly don't know is that a

1 massive effort was undertaken before this conflict to move
2 as many humans off of targets to other places and maintain
3 operational security about where they might be to minimize
4 the space with which Iran could hit. We always knew
5 something getting through was a tragic possibility. But I
6 can assure you from our perspective, that was priority
7 number one, as it was Admiral Cooper's, to ensure that
8 fortification and missile defenses were right there when we
9 went on offense if we had to.

10 Senator Cotton: General Caine, do you have anything
11 to add?

12 General Caine: Well, in addition to just, again,
13 mourning our fallen from the 103rd, what I will add to the
14 Secretary's comments is after every tragic loss, commanders
15 at every echelon within our joint force are going to go
16 back and look at what was our plan and what lessons we can
17 learn from this so that we protect and defend our soldiers,
18 sailors, and other members of the joint force the next
19 time.

20 Senator Cotton: Thank you. And I know you do. And I
21 just wanted to give you the opportunity to speak to what
22 you have done to try to prevent casualties and minimize
23 them. Obviously, again, no war is antiseptic.

24 One final question. I understand you have been
25 accused of lying to the President. Mr. Hegseth, have you

1 lied to the President at all about what is happening in
2 Iran or Epic Fury?

3 Secretary Hegseth: No, I only tell the truth to the
4 President.

5 Senator Cotton: General Caine, have you lied to the
6 President about what is happening in Iran or Operation Epic
7 Fury?

8 General Caine: Never.

9 Senator Cotton: I suspected that would be your
10 answer, but since you were accused of it and deep staters
11 are leaking to the media about it as well, I just wanted to
12 give you a chance to answer on the record that, of course,
13 you have always given the President a completely accurate
14 picture of what is happening. Thank you, gentlemen.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Cotton.

16 Senator Gillibrand and then Senator Rounds.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, gentlemen, for
18 appearing before this Committee, and thank you for the
19 closed session prior to this.

20 I don't know if you fully appreciate how much the
21 American people do not support this war. It is an
22 unauthorized war. Normally, when you come to Congress, it
23 is a way for the American people to be part of that
24 discussion.

25 The American people, particularly in my State of New

1 York, are upset for a lot of reasons. First of all, this
2 war is costing so much money, over \$25 billion already,
3 estimates \$1 billion a day. And they are feeling it every
4 single day at the gas pump with higher prices for both
5 fuel, for diesel, for gasoline for their cars. They are
6 also feeling it with higher grocery costs. And they are
7 exhausted. They are truly exhausted.

8 On top of that, on top of that, they have so many
9 grave concerns about how this war is being prosecuted.
10 They read in the paper that 22 schools have been hit. They
11 read in the paper about a girls' school, hundreds getting
12 killed.

13 We have a debate going on in this country about AI, a
14 serious debate about AI, and I haven't heard yet from you
15 that you will not allow AI to make final targeting
16 determinations even when nuclear weapons are being used.
17 That is a huge issue that we need to discuss.

18 So I want to start from the top, Secretary Hegseth.
19 Why do you continue to prosecute a war that the American
20 people aren't behind?

21 Secretary Hegseth: First of all, I appreciate the
22 opportunity for that closed session where we had a
23 unsurprisingly very different discussion than we have here
24 with the cameras on. We support this --

25 Senator Gillibrand: Right, because my job is to

1 represent New Yorkers. And I can tell you, when I talk to
2 them, all across my State, they are furious, and they
3 expect me to explain to them why they are furious.

4 Secretary Hegseth: And Senator, when I talk to
5 Americans, and especially when I talk to the troops, they
6 are grateful for a President who has the courage to take on
7 this threat after 47 years of what Iran has done targeting
8 and killing Americans and what it would mean to the world
9 if Iran's nuclear ambitions were actually achieved.

10 So the question I would ask to you and to others is,
11 what is the cost of a nuclear-armed Iran? What is the cost
12 to the American people --

13 Senator Gillibrand: We know that that is a rhetorical
14 question --

15 Secretary Hegseth: -- if the world's most dangerous
16 regime --

17 Senator Gillibrand: -- that you are asking everyone.

18 Secretary Hegseth: -- has a nuclear weapon?

19 Senator Gillibrand: But the truth is, they don't want
20 war coming to this shore. And when you do a decapitation
21 operation, the likelihood is going to be exchanged in the
22 United States. There is no evidence that we are safer
23 because of this war. We did not have any evidence that
24 Iran intended to imminently attack this country in any way,
25 shape, or form. So I disagree with your assessment that we

1 were under threat. And you have not --

2 Secretary Hegseth: Do you not believe them when they
3 say, "Death to America"?

4 Senator Gillibrand: Listen, our adversaries use
5 rhetoric all the time. What I am concerned about is we are
6 not safer. And I would just like to know why you have not
7 sought the support of the American people. And three out
8 of five Americans are against this war today.

9 Secretary Hegseth: I believe we do have the support
10 of the American people. And we have briefed regularly what
11 this mission looks like and why it is critically important
12 that we undertake it. And I would remind you and this
13 group that we are two months in to an effort. And many
14 congressional Democrats, as I pointed out, want to declare
15 defeat two months in. Iraq took how many years?
16 Afghanistan took how many years? And they were nebulous
17 missions that people went along with.

18 This is different. This is a defined mission set that
19 we have had great success in pursuing against --

20 Senator Gillibrand: So you don't care --

21 Secretary Hegseth: -- a determined enemy who --

22 Senator Gillibrand: You don't care --

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- seeks nuclear weapons. And I
24 am proud --

25 Senator Gillibrand: So Mr. Hegseth --

1 Secretary Hegseth: -- of the opportunity to remind
2 the American people --

3 Senator Gillibrand: -- you don't care --

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- because they believe in it --

5 Senator Gillibrand: -- that the American people --

6 Secretary Hegseth: -- as well, that they can't have
7 it.

8 Senator Gillibrand: -- are not supporting this war.
9 You don't care whether the --

10 Secretary Hegseth: When the American people --

11 Senator Gillibrand: -- American people support this
12 war.

13 Secretary Hegseth: The American people are quite
14 smart. They understand and see through spin. They know
15 that a regime that says "Death to America," that seeks
16 nuclear weapons --

17 Senator Gillibrand: And at what cost?

18 Secretary Hegseth: -- and the ability to -- did they
19 lie about the range of their missiles?

20 Senator Gillibrand: How much more --

21 Secretary Hegseth: Because I saw a 4,000 --

22 Senator Gillibrand: How much more --

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- kilometer missile get shot
24 at --

25 Senator Gillibrand: -- will you ask the American

1 people to pay for this war?

2 Secretary Hegseth: Diego Garcia.

3 Senator Gillibrand: Right now, do you want \$1 billion
4 a day? Do you want \$2 billion a day? You are asking for
5 \$200 billion more to fund this war and to make sure we
6 have what we --

7 Secretary Hegseth: We didn't ask for \$200 billion. I
8 don't know where you got that number from, Senator. I
9 think you got it from the news, which you should be careful
10 what you read in the news.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Okay, Secretary Hegseth. Here is
12 a few more. Let's talk about how you are prosecuting the
13 war. What is your response to targeting that has resulted
14 in the destruction of schools, hospitals, civilian places?
15 Why did you cut by 90 percent the division that is supposed
16 to help you not target civilians? And do you know the
17 impact of a strategic failure at a war when you have so
18 many civilian casualties? You may have tactically
19 completed a mission well, but strategically is not meeting
20 your goals because of the harms to civilians. What is the
21 cost of that?

22 Chairman Wicker: Let's leave time for an answer.

23 Secretary Hegseth: No military, no country works
24 harder at every echelon to ensure they protect civilian
25 lives than the United States military, and that is an

1 ironclad commitment that we make, no matter how, no matter
2 what systems we use.

3 Senator Gillibrand: Then why did you cut the
4 Department by 90 percent?

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.
6 There will be other rounds of questions.

7 Senator Rounds, you are now recognized.

8 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 First of all, thank you to all of you for your service
10 to our country.

11 Let me just allow you to finish the answer a little
12 bit with regard to the Senator from New York. Does the
13 United States military ever target a civilian center?

14 Secretary Hegseth: Well, thank you, Senator. Unlike
15 our adversaries, unlike radical Islamists, unlike those
16 that target civilians or use civilians as shields, the
17 United States military never targets civilians and puts
18 constructs in place to ensure that the maximum extent
19 possible we do not harm or hit civilians.

20 Senator Rounds: Do you --

21 Secretary Hegseth: Is war a difficult place with a
22 lot of complexities? Absolutely right. But no country
23 does more and no department does more than our department.

24 Senator Rounds: Do you still have all of the
25 resources necessary to assure that every opportunity to

1 eliminate that as a threat in terms of that happening, do
2 we still have the resources available in the Department to
3 make sure that we do the best we can never to hit a
4 civilian target?

5 Secretary Hegseth: Every resource necessary at every
6 echelon is available, legal, intel, and otherwise to ensure
7 that we minimize at every extent possible civilian
8 casualties. And the suggestion was made that somehow AI
9 might be used without a human in the loop, which is a
10 classic Anthropic talking point, which is half of what we
11 talked about previously. There is a human in the loop on
12 decisions that are made. And the suggestion otherwise is
13 to suggest that somehow AI is running targeting.

14 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Right now, part of what
15 we are also talking about not just are we engaged right now
16 in terms of trying to eliminate the threat from Iran in
17 terms of being a nuclear armed country, but we have also
18 got staring with us as well the fact that we have an
19 ongoing principal threat with regard to a pacing threat
20 with China.

21 The dual capable B-21 Raider will be a critical part
22 of both our conventional and our nuclear deterrence against
23 China and Russia. As you know, the Air Force's program of
24 record includes plans to procure 100 B-21s, but many
25 national security experts and leaders, including STRATCOM

1 Commander Admiral Correll and INDOPACOM Commander Admiral
2 Paparo are calling for a greater number of B-21s. Admiral
3 Paparo testified here last week that he would favor buying
4 200 B-21s.

5 Secretary Hegseth and Chairman Caine, could you speak
6 to the progress and the importance of the B-21 program and
7 if you agree with the growing sentiment that the U.S. needs
8 to revisit the B-21 program of record and assess the
9 requirement for at least 200 B-21s to match the global
10 threat? Would you speak just to exactly what that would
11 mean and what the probability of that is?

12 Secretary Hegseth: Thank you for the question. And I
13 appreciate the fact that you are listening to and hearing
14 from combatant commanders because that is who we listen to
15 as well, who are looking at the operational plans and what
16 would be required to ensure we deter and if necessary.
17 Defeat assets like the B-21 or the F-47 are critical to
18 that. That is why we are funding them and increasing the
19 funding and where necessary would increase the allocation.
20 And I think you see a budget that reflects the reality that
21 we have to invest in more capabilities to include the B-21,
22 which is ahead of schedule, and we will be funding to the
23 tune of \$6 billion. And we believe we will require a lot
24 more over 100 in the future, but I defer to the Chairman.

25 General Caine: Yes, sir, thank you for the question.

1 Working through the JROC and the vice chiefs, I will
2 absolutely stack hands around assessing the requirement.
3 And we are glad to see B-21 on the flight path, no pun
4 intended, that it is on through operational testing.

5 On the specific numbers, the one sort of big-picture
6 strategic thing I want to say is we want to make sure as we
7 think through what does air power of the future look like
8 based on the evolving threat that we are staying well in
9 front of it. And so that is the only thing we will look at
10 in the assessment. But I am on board with assessing the
11 numbers. I want to make sure we are buying ahead of the
12 technology development curve so that we give all those
13 young warfighters out there the capabilities that we need
14 well into the future.

15 Senator Rounds: Is there any question at all that we
16 are going to need more than 100 B-21s?

17 General Caine: I want to go back -- here is how I
18 will look at it, Senator. I want to go back and look at
19 the OPLANs right now that we have to make sure that we
20 allocate those numbers. So I don't believe so, but I do
21 want to take the due diligence time if you will allow me to
22 look at that, Senator.

23 Senator Rounds: I appreciate the opportunity to visit
24 with you and to clarify --

25 General Caine: Yes, sir. Absolutely.

1 Senator Rounds: -- what that number should look like
2 in the near future.

3 General Caine: Yes, sir. Thank you.

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Rounds.

5 Senator Blumenthal.

6 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
7 you for being here today.

8 I want to talk about the costs of war. The costs of
9 war include caring for our veterans. We have had an
10 estimate from Mr. Hurst yesterday that the cost to date in
11 dollars for this war has been \$25 billion, which I believe
12 is well below the actual cost based on everything that I
13 have heard, everything available to us in various kinds of
14 settings. And I am going to ask for a more accurate
15 assessment. But we also know that about 400 service
16 members have been wounded as a result of this war. When
17 they retire, when they come home, their retirement pay will
18 be docked dollar for dollar for every disability benefit
19 dollar they receive.

20 Secretary Hegseth, I would like your commitment that
21 you will support the Major Richard Star Act that will
22 eliminate this wounded warrior tax. I am sure you are
23 familiar with it. Tens of thousands of service men and
24 women now are reduced in their retirement pay literally for
25 every dollar of disability benefits they receive.

1 Secretary Hegseth: Well, I appreciate your focus on
2 this issue. And I will tell you of the, you mentioned
3 roughly 400 that have been injured, thankfully over 90
4 percent have returned to duty. But that doesn't mean they
5 wouldn't have a residual challenge, and we are tracking
6 that at point of injury to ensure that that is noted, even
7 though they are returned to duty.

8 Senator Blumenthal: But what I would like is your
9 commitment that you will support the Major Richard Star
10 Act.

11 Secretary Hegseth: As I have said in the past to
12 other organizations, we support the Richard Star Act.

13 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. On the issue of cost,
14 Mr. Hurst, does that \$25 billion estimate include all of
15 the costs in terms of damage to our bases, the need to
16 replace planes and munitions, and the costs of injuries to
17 our servicemen and women?

18 Mr. Hurst: Senator, so for the MILCON facilities
19 replacement costs, that is probably the hardest thing to
20 estimate right now because we don't know what our future
21 posture is going to be or the future construction of those
22 bases.

23 Senator Blumenthal: Well, you owe it to us. You are
24 here to ask for appropriations.

25 Mr. Hurst: Of course.

1 Senator Blumenthal: And I would like a more accurate
2 estimate of what has been done that will require
3 replacement and renovation, as well as the other costs.
4 And I think \$25 billion is probably less than half, maybe
5 less than a quarter of the total cost of war, which is the
6 reason why the supplemental request is much higher. So I
7 think you owe it to the American people to give us the
8 straight talk about what the costs have been.

9 Mr. Secretary, I know you have characterized this war
10 as an astonishing military success, to use your words
11 yesterday. But the American people aren't buying it. And
12 I know you feel the American people are seeing through the
13 abstruse stuff that is thrown at them. But one point is
14 irrefutable, which is America never succeeds in war unless
15 the American people are behind it. And if what you are
16 seeing as success now is winning, I would hate to see what
17 losing looks like because none of the shifting and
18 contradictory objectives of the war so far have been
19 achieved.

20 Likewise, let me ask you, yesterday, the President
21 said that Ukraine has been "Militarily defeated." I assume
22 you don't agree with that assessment.

23 Secretary Hegseth: The negative nature in which you
24 characterize the incredible and historic effort in Iran is
25 part of the reason, Senator, why the American people view

1 it the way they do. It is why I looked out at our press
2 corps at the Pentagon and called them the Pharisees in the
3 press. It is because they look for every problem --

4 Senator Blumenthal: Well, I am asking you about --

5 Secretary Hegseth: You look for every problem --

6 Senator Blumenthal: -- Ukraine. Do you believe
7 Ukraine --

8 Secretary Hegseth: -- that exists and you miss --

9 Senator Blumenthal: -- has been militarily defeated?

10 Secretary Hegseth: You miss the plank.

11 Senator Blumenthal: I would submit, based on my nine
12 trips to Ukraine, that is a false narrative that the
13 President's buying --

14 Secretary Hegseth: We are two months into a
15 historic --

16 Senator Blumenthal: -- from Vladimir Putin. I hope
17 that --

18 Secretary Hegseth: -- military success in Iran --

19 Senator Blumenthal: -- you will --

20 Secretary Hegseth: -- and you want to call it a
21 defeat.

22 Senator Blumenthal: -- dispute it --

23 Secretary Hegseth: And it is defeatist Democrats like
24 you --

25 Senator Blumenthal: -- because it is the people of

1 Ukraine --

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- that cloud the mind of the
3 American people --

4 Senator Blumenthal: -- who are fighting for their
5 survival --

6 Secretary Hegseth: -- and would otherwise fully
7 support --

8 Senator Blumenthal: -- despite no help from the --

9 Secretary Hegseth: -- preventing Iran from having a
10 nuclear weapon.

11 Senator Blumenthal: -- administration, and they are
12 bravely fighting our fight. And that is the reason that I
13 am pursuing the Russian sanctions bill, which is
14 bipartisan, along with Senator Graham, and why I hope we
15 will recognize our obligation to release that \$400 million,
16 which we have appropriated.

17 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

18 Senator Ernst.

19 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you,
20 gentlemen, for being here today. I really do appreciate
21 your time to be with us.

22 Before I begin some of my questions, I do want to
23 start with something personal. And both to you, Secretary
24 Hegseth, and to the Chairman, I want to thank you both for
25 the time that you take to recognize our fallen and those

1 that have given, of course, during this administration,
2 given their all.

3 You have traveled to Dover and have been there to
4 greet those families and to welcome home the fallen. I
5 have been there with you. And Iowa has been hit in
6 particular very hard. We lost two of our Iowa National
7 Guardsmen from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry
8 Division. Secretary Hegseth, you know full well the 34th,
9 but we also lost six members from the 103rd Sustainment
10 Command Expeditionary based out of Des Moines, Iowa, during
11 this current conflict. And again, your presence there
12 meant a lot to the families. It also meant a lot to me, so
13 thank you very much for taking the time to do that.

14 Secretary Hegseth, you and I have had many discussions
15 over the course of many months now regarding general
16 officer positions. And, you know, I believe that we were
17 operating in good faith as we talked through a couple of
18 those in particular, two Iowans, General Mingus and General
19 Randy George. I was disappointed to see that their
20 retirements were hastened over what I believed had been set
21 out by you and the administration.

22 So I just want to take the time to list out some of
23 General Randy George's accomplishments as Army Chief of
24 Staff. He pulled the Army out of its worst recruiting
25 crisis since the Vietnam era, exceeding fiscal year 2024

1 recruiting goals and welcoming more than 61,000 new
2 soldiers, recruitment numbers that both you and the
3 President talk a lot about and rightfully so. He cut 5
4 percent of general officer positions, 12 positions that
5 were deemed as nonessential in the Army. And he reduced
6 the Army headquarters by 1,000 personnel.

7 He coauthored the Army Transformation Initiative,
8 which is a comprehensive response aligned with your
9 directives. And he testified here in front of Congress and
10 took a lot of heat defending that Army transformation.

11 He was suddenly let go at the beginning of April 2026.
12 General George's merits, which I firmly believe in, he
13 enlisted at the age of 17. He is a West Point graduate.
14 He had four combat deployments. He served in Desert Storm,
15 Iraq, and Afghanistan. He had 38 years of honorable
16 service. He achieved the greatest Army recruitment and
17 modernization effort in a generation. So I want to thank
18 him for his service.

19 And I would like to enter into the record, Mr. Chair,
20 the speeches that I did honoring General Randy A. George on
21 his retirement and General James J. Mingus on his
22 retirement as well.

23 Chairman Wicker: Without objection, they will be
24 admitted.

25 [The information follows:]

1 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

2 I would like to talk a little bit about the audit, Mr.
3 Secretary. I saw the video that you posted this week
4 calling on the Department to pass a clean audit, and thank
5 you for doing that. It is something that we talked about
6 during your confirmation hearing. Fiscal responsibility at
7 the Department has been a priority of mine for a very long
8 time, and I think it is time that we build on that
9 momentum. It is extremely important.

10 And that is why I am pushing for my RECEIPTS Act in
11 this year's NDAA. It is focused on improving financial
12 traceability and accountability across the Department. And
13 if you could talk a little bit more about the efforts in
14 making sure that we are being much more accountable to our
15 taxpayers. What is that effort going to entail? When will
16 we see a clean audit?

17 Secretary Hegseth: As I said, Senator, thank you for
18 your work on the audit. That has been a priority of our
19 department from day one. And we put in place goals and
20 benchmarks to get to FY28, get to '28 for a clean audit.

21 The Joint Task Force audit, which we announced, was a
22 reflection of even more capabilities we want to push
23 forward and centralize authority to make sure it happens.
24 Jay has been involved from the beginning. We also have a
25 new IG, who the new IG's focus, one of his focus points is

1 precisely this. He is prepared to work with us to ensure
2 we reach it. So I think at every level and through this
3 budget, it is a focus.

4 Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you. We look forward to
5 seeing a clean audit.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator.

8 Senator Hirono.

9 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Before I begin my questions, I would like to take a
11 moment to highlight the true costs of this war, both for
12 the military and everyday Americans, the true cost of the
13 President's illegal war with Iran. And since the start of
14 the war, 14 brave U.S. service members have been killed,
15 and more than 400 have been wounded. We burned through
16 over \$25 billion in taxpayer money with no end in sight.
17 And the fiscal year '27 budget request is a massive 42
18 percent increase from last year. Hundreds of critical
19 munitions have been expended, and deployments have been
20 extended, directly impacting service members' quality of
21 life, military readiness, and our ability to deter our
22 adversaries.

23 The relationships with our allies, some of our closest
24 allies and partners have been fractured. And the closure
25 of the Strait of Hormuz, which somehow caught the President

1 by surprise, even though he had to have been warned, is
2 directly contributing to the affordable crisis that
3 Americans are facing. Energy costs are skyrocketing with
4 the price of gas now at its highest level in almost four
5 years. Instability has driven interest rates to its
6 highest level since September of last year. The cost of
7 fertilizer is spiking, which will have a direct impact on
8 the cost of food.

9 This illegal war is driving up costs, undermining
10 readiness, and alienating our allies with neither a clear
11 rationale for starting this war nor an exit strategy. And
12 when the President was asked how long he will let this war
13 continue, he said, "Do not rush me."

14 I have a question for General Caine relating to women
15 serving in combat. And I would like to hear your best
16 military advice. Does the mere fact of women being in
17 combat armed units lower standards or readiness if they
18 meet the physical standards?

19 General Caine: Well, ma'am, the standards are set by
20 the civilians. We have examples of women leading well
21 across the joint force. I will highlight some of our
22 current commanders engaged in the fight in Epic Fury.
23 Specifically, one of our bomb squadrons were led by an
24 extraordinary female leader who is doing great work --

25 Senator Hirono: Okay. You know, I --

1 General Caine: -- but those standards are set by -- I
2 am sorry. I didn't mean to step on you.

3 Senator Hirono: I think your answer is that, in fact,
4 it does not lower standards of readiness.

5 Second question, should every service member,
6 regardless of gender, be permitted to serve in any role,
7 including the combat arms if they meet the standards
8 established? Yes or no?

9 General Caine: Is that to me, ma'am?

10 Senator Hirono: Over the last decade since combat
11 arms have been open to women, have you personally seen any
12 instance where the standard resulted in a degradation in
13 combat effectiveness?

14 General Caine: Apologies, I didn't hear your first
15 question. You know, people policies are all set by the
16 civilian leaders --

17 Senator Hirono: No, I am asking you personally --

18 General Caine: -- in the government.

19 Senator Hirono: -- in this question.

20 General Caine: Could you repeat the question again?
21 I am sorry, ma'am.

22 Senator Hirono: Over the last decade since combat
23 arms have been open to women, have you personally seen any
24 instance where the standard resulted in a degradation in
25 combat effectiveness?

1 General Caine: Again, I will highlight that the
2 standards are set by our civilian leaders. Women continue
3 to perform well across a range of MOSs and jobs --

4 Senator Hirono: Your answer is --

5 General Caine: -- and AFSCs that are out there.

6 Senator Hirono: Your answer is no. I do need to get
7 to a question for Secretary Hegseth.

8 Prior to your nomination hearing, you said women
9 shouldn't serve in combat arm units. At your confirmation
10 hearing, you reversed course, and you basically said as
11 long as the women meet the standards, they should be able
12 to serve. But recently, you ordered a review of the
13 effectiveness of women in combat roles, and I am concerned
14 you are laying the groundwork to reverse the policy
15 allowing women to serve in these units because, right now,
16 current law, if you want to change this policy, current law
17 requires you to submit a report to Congress justifying such
18 a change. So did you order the review to support a
19 potential decision to overturn the policy of having women
20 in combat roles?

21 Secretary Hegseth: We are laser-focused on standards.
22 The highest male standard for every combat arms position
23 should be the standard. And 10 years into this, we are
24 reviewing it, which is what the American people would
25 expect.

1 Also, there is nothing illegal about a war that
2 defends the American people and prevents Iran from having a
3 nuclear bomb.

4 Senator Hirono: Secretary Hegseth, you didn't answer
5 the question because the reason that you are asking for
6 this review, I think, has to do with your earlier position
7 that you don't think women should serve in combat roles.
8 So now, we have this study, and I would like to ask you,
9 will you --

10 Chairman Wicker: Senator --

11 Senator Hirono: -- reveal the study to the public, to
12 the American people? Will you make the study public?

13 Chairman Wicker: Will you make that study --

14 Senator Hirono: Yes or no?

15 Secretary Hegseth: We are doing the study for that
16 very reason, to ensure that --

17 Senator Hirono: Make the study public.

18 Secretary Hegseth: -- real science is applied to this
19 question and not social engineering --

20 Chairman Wicker: We appreciate --

21 Secretary Hegseth: -- like the previous
22 administration.

23 Chairman Wicker: We appreciate your assurance that
24 that will be made public.

25 Senator Hirono: Yeah, I think it is really

1 critical --

2 Chairman Wicker: Thank you.

3 Senator Hirono: -- that the study be made --

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, ma'am.

5 Senator Hirono: -- available to the public. Thank
6 you.

7 Chairman Wicker: Senator Scott.

8 Senator Scott: Well, first, thanks. I thank each of
9 you for being here.

10 Secretary Hegseth, can you talk about -- you have had
11 the job for a little bit. What are you most proud of, and
12 what are your biggest challenges?

13 Secretary Hegseth: Well, I appreciate the question.
14 And what I am most proud of is the incredible men and women
15 who serve in our nations in uniform and what they are
16 capable of when they are given a clear mission and
17 unleashed to do it.

18 And I think the best reflection of the success of
19 President Trump and this War Department is the historic
20 recruiting success and the historic morale amongst our
21 ranks. I would encourage every member of this Committee,
22 Democrat or Republican, go into the formations, go into the
23 Air Force formations, the Army formations, the Marine Corps
24 formations and talk to corporals, talk to sergeants, talk
25 to lieutenants, talk to captains, talk to colonels. And

1 what you will find are men and women more inspired to serve
2 in the military than they have been in a generation.

3 And you see that in the young Americans who are
4 rushing to recruiting stations at historic numbers, 30-year
5 highs across the force. We are hitting our recruiting
6 numbers halfway through the year. Why is that? Because
7 the American people look at what we are doing at the War
8 Department by getting back to basics, and they are
9 attracted to that.

10 Same with our retention rates, which are now merit-
11 based. Our best sergeants, our best leaders are staying.
12 That is exactly what we want. So we have made changes to
13 change the environment.

14 The renaming of the department to the War Department
15 is not just a name. In fact, it is restoring it to the
16 original name of the Department, set by George Washington.
17 But it is an ethos as well. That warrior ethos lives
18 inside the heart of each one of these men and women, and we
19 are unleashing it.

20 I am proud of the -- I mean, you name it, the border,
21 the missions, yes, those are all incredible demonstrations
22 of that, but it is the people and the urgency of Americans
23 to want to be a part of it that is the best affirmation,
24 Senator.

25 Senator Scott: Thank you. So we have talked about

1 the importance of not relying on Chinese drugs for our
2 military. Can you just talk about what you are doing to
3 make sure that we don't continue to rely on China for
4 anything, including our drugs?

5 Secretary Hegseth: Oh, drugs.

6 Senator Scott: Yeah.

7 Secretary Hegseth: Absolutely. We can't be dependent
8 on China on anything that is critical to our supply chain,
9 even if it is the national industrial base and not just the
10 defense industrial base. And you have been a leader on
11 that. This Committee has been a leader on that.
12 Onshoring, bringing manufacturing here, bringing critical
13 capabilities here is central to the interagency and the NSC
14 but also our department. If any critical weapon system is
15 reliant upon something China could change at a moment's
16 notice, then we have a true challenge to our ability to
17 produce for the American people.

18 And so we are finding all of those, changing them,
19 onshoring it. Reviving the defense industrial base allows
20 us to ensure we are separated from China on anything that
21 is critical.

22 Senator Scott: Thank you. Can you talk about the
23 importance of foreign military sales to our allies and our
24 partners and what you are doing to make sure that --
25 whether it is what you are doing right now in Iran or any

1 potential conflict in Asia, our partners have the best
2 assets to be able to be a great partner?

3 Secretary Hegseth: Absolutely. Foreign military
4 sales has been a huge problem for a long time because the
5 Department didn't prioritize it and organize to deliver
6 efficiently on it. So we are working with the State
7 Department. We have changed the way we do business
8 internally. The executive order, the America First Arms
9 Strategy prioritizes what we sell and to whom, a catalog
10 approach.

11 But it took us -- this Committee would be astonished
12 to know how long it took us just to get our arms around who
13 we are selling to what and by what processes, which means
14 there was no strategy behind ensuring we are sending the
15 proper demand signal to industry and delivering those
16 systems on time and under budget to those countries, which
17 you can imagine is frustrating to partners who are relying
18 on those to be able to step up and burden share.

19 So foreign military sales is critical to our own
20 defense industrial base, more customers, more customers for
21 our companies that employ more American workers to ensure
22 our allies are properly armed for the fights and they can
23 stand alongside us. So FMS is a big one for us, Senator.

24 Senator Scott: General Caine, I just want to commend
25 you and everybody in the military for what you did in

1 Venezuela and then what you have done in Iran. The
2 willingness of the American military to fight and win, do
3 you think it is changing the calculus for Beijing and
4 Moscow?

5 General Caine: Well, Senator, I know they are
6 watching, and I am incredibly proud of the joint force and
7 their ability to integrate and synchronize a range of
8 activities. And I suspect that my counterpart in China is
9 watching very closely and envious of what our joint force
10 is capable of doing if ordered to do so.

11 Senator Scott: Well, thank each of you, and thank
12 everybody that serves under you.

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Scott.

14 Senator Kaine.

15 Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 Mr. Hurst, I want you to just confirm something for me
17 about the President's submitted budget. One-point-five
18 trillion dollars is about a 40-plus percent increase from
19 FY26. Am I right that not a penny of that is to go to a
20 pay raise for the 800,000 civilians who work for the
21 Department of Defense?

22 Mr. Hurst: We have 4.2 percent of a civilian salary
23 set aside for bonuses to make sure we can recognize high
24 performers in the civilian workforce in our department.

25 Senator Kaine. But you have guaranteed pay raises for

1 the active duty in the guard and reserve component, but no
2 guaranteed raises for the civilians. Is that correct?

3 Mr. Hurst: There are guaranteed raises for the
4 military. But, you know, the last year this department has
5 given out more civilian bonuses.

6 Senator Kaine. Well, you know, if we are going to
7 increase the defense budget by that much, I would hope the
8 Committee would take a look at this.

9 Chairman Caine, man, I like the sound of that,
10 Chairman Caine. General Caine, I want to ask you a
11 question about Southern Spear. It is an operational
12 question. I know from your background that you carefully
13 act to keep military actions within the rules of war. What
14 legal justification could there possibly be that would
15 allow the U.S. military to strike boats in international
16 waters and kill the occupants of those boats without a
17 showing of evidence that there are narcotics on those
18 boats?

19 General Caine: Well, sir, as you know, our job is to
20 show the range of options, the associated risks, and then
21 take those execution orders, transmit them down to the
22 COCOMs on legally appropriate and legally backstopped
23 actions. I --

24 Senator Kaine. Could you give me a legal
25 justification --

1 General Caine: Well, sir, the execution --

2 Senator Kaine. -- that would authorize --

3 General Caine: -- order, I don't have a --

4 Senator Kaine. -- striking boats that do not have

5 evidence that they are carrying narcotics?

6 General Caine: I don't know -- I apologize. I didn't

7 mean to interrupt you. I don't have a copy of the order

8 issued to SOUTHCOM with me today. It is classified in its

9 own right, which clearly articulates, based on a variety of

10 criteria, what constitutes a valid military and legally

11 valid target in that theater.

12 I just want to say, I know and trust that our

13 commanders at Echelon are rigorously following that legal

14 opinion and those legal boundaries upon which we have been

15 issued those orders.

16 Senator Kaine. And General Caine, I would encourage,

17 again, my colleagues -- I am at a disadvantage. I have

18 seen the legal opinion, but I can't talk about it because

19 it is classified. I have seen the targeting criteria, but

20 I can't talk about them because they are classified. I

21 have seen the secret list of DTOs against whom we have

22 declared war that even they haven't been informed of, but I

23 can't talk about it because it is classified.

24 But I would urge all of my colleagues to go to the

25 SCIF and read the targeting criteria and get briefed about

1 it and then also look at all of the files of all the
2 strikes that have taken place. I have done that with the
3 first 46 strikes or so. And I think there is a profound
4 mismatch between what is occurring and the underlying
5 assumptions in the legal opinion. And I would just
6 encourage my colleagues to dig into this.

7 To Secretary Hegseth and General Caine, the War Powers
8 Resolution specifies that a war initiated by a President
9 without congressional approval must be concluded within 60
10 days. It can be extended by an additional 30 days if "The
11 President determines and certifies to Congress in writing
12 that unavoidable military necessity respecting the safety
13 of the U.S. Armed Forces requires the continued use of such
14 armed forces in the course of bringing about a prompt
15 removal of such forces."

16 We are right at the 60-day deadline. Is the President
17 intending to either seek congressional authorization for
18 the war in Iran or send us the legally required
19 certification that he needs an additional 30 days to remove
20 U.S. forces from the war?

21 Secretary Hegseth: Just briefly on the previous
22 question, we do know that these are designated terrorist
23 organizations, so we treat them like the al-Qaida of our
24 hemisphere, just as a note.

25 Senator Kaine. But that was not the question I asked.

1 I asked whether there was --

2 Secretary Hegseth: I know there is more to that
3 question. I just --

4 Senator Kaine. I asked whether there was evidence --

5 Secretary Hegseth: -- think it is important for the
6 public to understand that.

7 Senator Kaine. -- of narcotics on the --

8 Secretary Hegseth: There is no willy-nilly targeting
9 of drug boats. We know exactly who these people are
10 affiliated with.

11 Senator Kaine. I was asking about what is on the
12 boats.

13 Secretary Hegseth: On Iran, ultimately, I would defer
14 to the White House and White House counsel on that.
15 However, we are in a ceasefire right now, which our
16 understanding means the 60-day clock pauses or stops in a
17 ceasefire.

18 Senator Kaine. I --

19 Secretary Hegseth: So they are not in --

20 Senator Kaine. I do --

21 Secretary Hegseth: It is our understanding, just so
22 you know.

23 Senator Kaine. Okay. Well, I do not believe the
24 statute would support that. I think the 60 days runs maybe
25 tomorrow, and that is going to pose a really important

1 legal question for the administration. We have serious
2 constitutional concerns, and we don't want to layer those
3 with additional statutory concerns.

4 I yield back, Mr. Chair.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

6 Senator Sullivan.

7 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
8 you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

9 Mr. Secretary, I mentioned in the classified hearing
10 today, but I do think the \$1.5 trillion topline is
11 historic. It meets the needs.

12 And the other thing, as I mentioned in our earlier
13 meeting, you know, the President has done a really good job
14 of getting other allies, NATO and Asian allies, to step up,
15 meet a 5 percent GDP of defense spending. And in many
16 ways, that is what this is doing as well. So isn't that
17 important as well, in terms of our global leadership, what
18 you and the President are providing? Is that an example as
19 well?

20 Secretary Hegseth: I think the more we step up, the
21 more the world should look at the American leadership and
22 example and step up as well. We --

23 Senator Sullivan: And they are going to do that. It
24 helps.

25 Secretary Hegseth: It remains to be seen whether some

1 of our allies actually step up to their commitments, but
2 that is the hope.

3 Senator Sullivan: Let me go to an element of that
4 budget that I mentioned in the classified hearing. You
5 know, I always like to put this chart up in different
6 hearings. We have the examples. So we have a lot of our
7 adversaries, the Chinese, the Russians in my AOR, in the
8 Arctic, in the North Pacific. These are the numbers just
9 recently. ADIZ incursions, EEZ incursions by the Russians,
10 by the Chinese. By the way, the green ones are joint
11 Russian-Chinese strategic bomber task forces, joint
12 Russian-Chinese naval task forces. This is America, right?
13 This is a really important part of our national defense.

14 So I was pleased to see that one of the elements in
15 the budget was what is referred to by the Air Force as the
16 JBER Fighter Town recapitalization, given how strategically
17 important that Air Force base is. General, can you talk a
18 little bit about that recapitalization? It is for building
19 out what is a very strategic base, but old. A lot of these
20 facilities are from the 1950s. The goal in the Air Force's
21 language was to have a recapitalization to provide a new
22 state-of-the-art fighter facility capable of supporting
23 multiple platforms now and well into the future, \$6.9
24 billion total authorization, \$2.2 billion approps for this
25 year. Can you talk about the importance -- I was glad to

1 host you at JBER recently. Can you talk about the
2 importance of this --

3 General Caine: Sure.

4 Senator Sullivan: -- element of the President's
5 budget?

6 General Caine: Yes, Senator. Thank you for that.

7 And, you know, our investment up at JBER is essential to
8 modernizing the nation's ability to project power and
9 capabilities and really bolsters our effort in not only the
10 Indo-Pacific but also in the high north and the Arctic,
11 which I know is something that is passionate to you.

12 The Arctic is certainly becoming more operationally
13 and strategically valuable, and we need to be thinking
14 proactively around how we are going to set the conditions
15 for us to offer a range of options to the Secretary and the
16 President about power projection across a range of
17 capabilities. And fighters is certainly one of them in the
18 recap effort that is there.

19 You know, our ability to protect that flank as a
20 national imperative and something that we want to keep
21 focused on, and we appreciate the efforts across this
22 Committee and the rest of the Congress to help us with
23 that.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

25 Mr. Secretary, one of the things that I have been

1 talking about and I think is really important now is
2 American energy and us being energy dominant. The
3 President put a recent executive order out highlighting the
4 need to accelerate the ability to produce LNG in America.
5 We have a huge LNG project that we are getting close to
6 getting off the ground in Alaska. It would be huge for our
7 military in terms of energy for our military, huge for our
8 allies. And can I get your commitment to work with me and
9 this Committee?

10 You mentioned in your testimony the Office of
11 Strategic Capital. This, to me, is one of these projects
12 that I think would be absolutely critical for our national
13 security. We talked about this just in Admiral Paparo's
14 testimony last week. He was talking about the Alaska LNG
15 project is hugely strategic, kind of a private sector,
16 American counter to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.
17 I think it would be a great opportunity to work with the
18 Office of Strategic Capital. Can I get your commitment,
19 Mr. Secretary, to do that on this project?

20 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, very aware of that project,
21 and I think the Office of Strategic Capital is a great
22 place to look at partnering.

23 Senator Sullivan: Great. I appreciate that.

24 Finally, I am just going to ask, 47 years of war that
25 we have had with Iran. My colleagues on the other side of

1 the aisle, you know, they talk about these civilian
2 casualties. These are all horrible, horrible whenever
3 there are any civilian casualties. But just generally, do
4 our forces target civilians ever?

5 General Caine: Sir, never intentionally. And I don't
6 know in any particular case of unintentional, but we don't
7 do that.

8 Senator Sullivan: And do our --

9 General Caine: That is not core to our American
10 values --

11 Chairman Wicker: Thank you --

12 General Caine: -- or how we approach things.

13 Senator Sullivan: Do our adversaries target
14 civilians?

15 General Caine: Yes, sir.

16 Senator Sullivan: Like the Quds Force?

17 General Caine: Yes, sir.

18 Senator Sullivan: I think it is really important as
19 we keep bringing this topic up to remember who we are and
20 who our adversaries are.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

22 Senator Sullivan, do you ask unanimous consent to have
23 the two exhibits added to the record?

24 Senator Sullivan: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

25 Chairman Wicker: Without objection, that will be

1 done.

2 [The information follows:]

3 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Senator King.

2 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 We have had a lot of discussion about Iran. I would
4 like to talk about several other aspects of the budget.
5 The first is the way the budget has been constructed. Ever
6 since I have been here until last year, we have had
7 bipartisan budgets and bipartisan National Defense
8 Authorization Acts passed by majorities. I voted for all
9 of them. And all of a sudden, in this year, 25 percent of
10 the budget is essentially out of the process and will be
11 passed presumably through some kind of reconciliation,
12 which is by definition, a partisan exercise.

13 Mr. Secretary, all those items of housing or Golden
14 Dome, whatever, why aren't they in the regular budget? Why
15 do we suddenly have a two-part budget where this Committee
16 and the Congress generally has oversight and input to a
17 process where a quarter of the budget is essentially a
18 slush fund?

19 Secretary Hegseth: Well, Senator, I appreciate the
20 question. I wouldn't characterize a quarter of it as a
21 slush fund, but I recognize that we see it in totality as a
22 \$1.5 trillion budget. Multiple --

23 Senator King: But why the separation? Why the two
24 pieces? Why not just a regular --

25 Secretary Hegseth: Multiple -- as you know, there are

1 multiple dynamics that play into why there are multiple
2 vehicles, but we are fully committed with working to the
3 Committee to ensure that the right vehicles are utilized to
4 get precisely this amount, \$1.5 trillion.

5 Senator King: You didn't answer my question. Why are
6 there two pieces? For time immemorial, we have done
7 budgets here. To my knowledge, we have never used this
8 reconciliation process for a defense budget before. What
9 is going on? Why not put it into the regular budget --

10 Secretary Hegseth: My understanding of the reason for
11 the vehicles is to ensure we actually get to \$1.5 trillion,
12 which is the most important bottom line.

13 Senator King: So what you are worried about is --

14 Secretary Hegseth: The most important bottom line is
15 that top line of \$1.5 trillion to fund what we need, and we
16 think this process is the most effective way to get there,
17 Senator.

18 Senator King: Well, what you are really saying is we
19 don't want to deal with that pesky Congress and their
20 appropriation process.

21 I think this is significant, Mr. Chairman, that we are
22 basically abdicating a quarter of our responsibility in
23 terms of this budget. Let me move on.

24 One of the factors of this budget that hasn't gotten
25 any publicity is that there is zero funding for Ukraine.

1 That is correct, isn't it, Mr. Hurst?

2 Mr. Hurst: That is correct. There is no USAI funding
3 in this budget.

4 Senator King: And there was \$400 million that was
5 appropriated last year by a bipartisan, bicameral act of
6 Congress. What has become of that money? My understanding
7 is not a dollar of it has been disbursed.

8 Mr. Hurst: It was released very recently, and again,
9 we got these funds, I believe, in March, and it takes time
10 for funds to flow through the Department, but it is going
11 to get put to work very shortly. We are going to work with
12 the EUCOM commander to make sure we use these funds in the
13 most appropriate way possible.

14 Senator King: I didn't want Senator Sullivan to be
15 the only one with an exhibit. This indicates what has
16 happened to our support for Ukraine over a period of years.
17 The orange bars are U.S. support. The blue bars are
18 Europe, as you see. Europe is 99 percent in the year 2026.
19 Same thing with humanitarian and other aid to Ukraine.

20 And yet, this is, I believe, an existential struggle
21 for the future of democracy where we had an aggressive
22 country invade a neighboring country without any
23 justification whatsoever. And by the way, that invading
24 country is the major winner so far of the war in Iran.
25 They have gotten -- the estimates are \$40 to \$80 billion of

1 additional revenues from oil and the relief of sanctions as
2 a result of the war in Iran.

3 Secretary Hegseth, why are we abandoning Ukraine?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, if you would hold that
5 chart back up --

6 Senator King: Yeah.

7 Secretary Hegseth: -- I think that is a beautiful
8 chart. I think that is exactly what we want. We want
9 Europe stepping up and funding and shouldering the burden.
10 They are rich countries worth \$20 trillion versus an
11 economy of \$2 trillion. Europe can step up, Europe can
12 fund it, and they have through our PURL initiative and
13 through our European command. That is exactly what the
14 American people want to see --

15 Senator King: But do we have no --

16 Secretary Hegseth: -- is other countries stepping up
17 and funding that. If it is that important to Europe, which
18 I understand why it is and the incursion of Russia and the
19 bravery of the Ukrainians, then European countries should
20 pay for it. And that is exactly what that chart says, and
21 that is the administration policy.

22 Senator King: So we don't have any interest in what
23 happens in Ukraine. Is that what you are saying? It is
24 only the Europeans?

25 Secretary Hegseth: I am saying the threat is far

1 closer to rich and capable countries in Europe, and they
2 should step up to lead the charge --

3 Senator King: And they have --

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- and that is why that chart is a
5 good thing to see.

6 Senator King: They have stepped up, but I think the
7 American people should understand that we have stepped
8 back, in fact, stepped back to the point of abandoning.

9 Secretary Hegseth: This is a war that never would
10 have happened under President Trump, and he supports ending
11 it through a deal, and he has pursued that.

12 Senator King: So far, it hasn't happened.

13 I am out of time. I want to talk about DTOs, who
14 designates, but we will take that up later.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator King.

16 Senator Schmitt.

17 Senator Schmitt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And it is apropos that I am following my friend from
19 Maine. Missouri and Maine came into the union at the same
20 time, but we couldn't disagree more on this particular
21 point. We may have to separate here.

22 I actually think it is interesting that Ukraine just
23 came up because we have heard from my colleagues on the
24 other side discussion about the cost of the ongoing
25 American effort. There was never a discussion about the

1 \$200 billion we were sending to a foreign country that is
2 not even in NATO, never. In fact, when amendments were
3 offered for independent audits of how that money was spent,
4 there was bipartisan opposition to that kind of oversight.
5 So I find it really rich now that there is a complaint that
6 we are not spending money on Ukraine.

7 And by the way, \$30 billion for salaries for
8 bureaucrats, pensions, and social safety net programs and
9 government operations to keep the state functioning during
10 wartime, that is where American tax dollars were going, \$30
11 billion for bureaucrats in Ukraine. And we just heard a
12 speech for more money for Ukraine. Yet the \$1.5 trillion
13 for this country is being balked at.

14 I mean, I have seen Ukraine flags all over this
15 Capitol for three years. At the same time, the same people
16 call the President of the United States of this country a
17 Nazi. So forgive me if I feel like we have lost our
18 bearings a little bit.

19 So I am all for the America First agenda. I am all
20 for us realigning our priorities. I am all for the
21 national defense strategies that says our core strategic
22 interests are the homeland, the Western Hemisphere, and the
23 rising threat in China. And that means our European allies
24 should step up. If Vladimir Putin is truly some
25 existential threat and the next Hitler that is going to

1 roll through Europe, you would think -- by the way, he
2 can't take Kiev, so you can't have it both ways. He hasn't
3 made it to Kiev. But they would step up.

4 And we better start demanding that because if we want
5 to meet the challenges of the 21st century in China, our
6 priorities, our focus has to be somewhere else. It doesn't
7 mean abandonment. It just means a true partnership with
8 our European allies, who for a very, very long time have
9 not stepped up.

10 I want to ask you, Mr. Secretary, in your first year,
11 one of the things I think that is really gone towards this
12 morale and recruitment boom that we have seen through your
13 leadership and President Trump was finally taking on the
14 sort of cultural Marxism that had taken hold from the
15 highest levels of leadership from the President of the
16 United States to your predecessor, this obsession with DEI.
17 Could you just walk through maybe the worst example that
18 you saw and a way that you addressed that and how it was
19 affecting morale?

20 Secretary Hegseth: Well, thank you, Senator. First
21 of all, I want to fully associate myself with the first two
22 and a half minutes of your comments, and I appreciate that
23 perspective very much so. I would note \$30 billion for
24 bureaucrats in Ukraine is more than the bill that we have
25 talked about today for an existential and critically

1 important war to ensure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear
2 weapon. That is worth noting.

3 I haven't talked about it as much in these hearings
4 because this is a budget hearing about \$1.5 trillion that
5 is historic and significant. But underwriting the change
6 that we have seen in our department was a laser focus on
7 getting back to basics, and the key word to that is merit.
8 We had a department that was obsessed with gender,
9 ideology, and race -- diversity, equity, and inclusion. In
10 fact, the mantra you would hear dripping from the lips of
11 generals with a serious look on their face was, our
12 diversity is our strength, which is the single dumbest
13 phrase in military history. Of course, our diversity is
14 not our strength. Our unity is our strength, our shared
15 purpose, the flag we wear and the constitution we serve to
16 defend.

17 And when you clear that debris away, whether it is
18 Marxist ideologies or social engineering or political
19 correctness or quotas based on gender and diversity, you
20 get the best of the best rising up, regardless of gender,
21 regardless of race, motivated by that environment where
22 merit reigns. It is accountability, standards, lethality,
23 readiness, training, all the debris wiped away.

24 That is the secret sauce of the revival of the War
25 Department and why Americans are attracted to serving in it

1 and why those inside it, why morale is sky high. And any
2 insinuation that it is not are coming from folks who
3 haven't been in our units recently. Go visit the troops at
4 every level, and their morale is at record levels.

5 Senator Schmitt: And I want to talk about morale with
6 the 15 seconds that I have left. I want to thank you for
7 coming to St. Louis for your Arsenal of Freedom tour, where
8 the next generation aircraft, the F-47, is being built by
9 the hardworking men and women of Missouri who take a
10 tremendous amount of pride for that aircraft that is going
11 to go further, see further, go faster, have a bigger
12 payload. And I know there is another decision coming with
13 the F/A-XX, but really appreciate your leadership and
14 thanks for coming.

15 Secretary Hegseth: Thank you, Senator.

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

17 Senator King, do you wish to ask unanimous consent to
18 include your exhibit in the record?

19 Senator King: Yes, please.

20 Chairman Wicker: Without objection, that will be
21 done.

22 [The information follows:]

23 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Senator Warren.

2 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 So Americans are paying a high price for Donald
4 Trump's war with Iran. We have got 14 service members who
5 are dead, over 400 more who are wounded. Prices are rising
6 for nearly every American family. But someone is profiting
7 off Trump's war, insiders who know what is going on and who
8 place bets on that inside information.

9 On March 23, just 14 minutes before Trump unexpectedly
10 posted about "very good conversations on ending the war,"
11 traders suddenly bet \$500 million on the price of oil,
12 which, once Trump made his announcement, immediately
13 dropped. It happened again on April 7 and then again on
14 April 21, a surge in oil bets, then a Trump post, and then
15 a huge shift in oil prices in just the space of minutes.
16 It looks like insiders have been making out like bandits,
17 using secret information about the war.

18 Now, one U.S. soldier has been charged, but that was
19 for betting on capturing Maduro months ago. Not a single
20 person has been charged in the many, many, many trades over
21 the Middle East war.

22 So Secretary Hegseth, do you have any explanation for
23 these perfectly timed spikes in trading activity other than
24 insider trading?

25 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, all I can tell you is

1 that everything we have done in our department, everything
2 we have done with information in working with the White
3 House and across the interagency has been completely above
4 board.

5 Senator Warren: Well, so what does it mean? Do you
6 have any other explanation other than insider trading? Do
7 you have a story for why, just minutes before there is an
8 announcement, there is a surge in trading activity?

9 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I am more than focused on
10 doing my job and ensuring we execute properly, which
11 thankfully, under this administration, our troops have done
12 incredible things in all these missions. My job in all of
13 those moments is to make sure we are prepared. And that is
14 part of the reason why we have been so successful in these
15 raids, in these efforts, is that this joint force is
16 prepared.

17 Senator Warren: So you are saying you are not paying
18 any attention to this insider trading? Is that what you
19 are telling me, that you have paid no attention to this?
20 You haven't noticed it? You haven't done anything about
21 it?

22 Secretary Hegseth: What I am saying is we are focused
23 on our mission of executing for the American people. And
24 what happens in betting markets is not something we are
25 involved in.

1 Senator Warren: What happens in betting markets
2 doesn't matter to you, even if the information may be
3 coming from insiders in your office?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, it is not something we
5 are involved in at all. And of course, we take operational
6 security at every level very seriously. In fact, no one
7 has taken operational security more seriously than us. If
8 you look at what it required to keep secret Midnight Hammer
9 and Operation Maduro, the Absolute Resolve with Maduro, and
10 the steps we have taken, no one has been tighter about
11 ensuring --

12 Senator Warren: Have you taken any steps to deal --

13 Secretary Hegseth: -- that operational security is
14 ensured.

15 Senator Warren: -- with insider trading out of your
16 office?

17 Secretary Hegseth: We would ensure at every level
18 that --

19 Senator Warren: Okay.

20 Secretary Hegseth: -- inside information is --

21 Senator Warren: I take that as a no.

22 Secretary Hegseth: -- properly safeguarded.

23 Senator Warren: All right. Well, obviously you are
24 not.

25 I am also concerned about recent reporting on your own

1 financial dealings with regard to profiting from the war in
2 Iran. *The Financial Times* reported that your broker tried
3 to buy hundreds of shares in a BlackRock fund invested in
4 defense companies just before the war began. The law
5 clearly prohibits the Secretary --

6 Secretary Hegseth: That entire story is false, has
7 been from the beginning --

8 Senator Warren: Let me finish my --

9 Secretary Hegseth: -- and was made up out of whole
10 cloth. And anybody that looks at it sees how it was --

11 Senator Warren: The law --

12 Secretary Hegseth: -- worded from the beginning to
13 make it look like I was involved in something I had nothing
14 to do and never have.

15 Senator Warren: The law --

16 Secretary Hegseth: So any insinuation that I have
17 ever profited other than serving this nation, what I give,
18 what you give, what others give -- I am not looking for
19 money. I don't do it for money. I don't do it for profit.
20 I don't do it for stocks. And that is part of the reason
21 why I am able to be effective in this job --

22 Senator Warren: Then let me ask --

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- because no one owns me.

24 Senator Warren: -- my question --

25 Secretary Hegseth: No one owns this department.

1 Senator Warren: -- Secretary Hegseth.

2 Secretary Hegseth: No one owns this President --

3 Senator Warren: Let me ask my questions.

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- and we can execute for the
5 American people, and we do.

6 Senator Warren: The law clearly prohibits the
7 Secretary of Defense from owning stock in the 10 biggest
8 defense contractors. Other Senators and I sent you a
9 letter with detailed questions about this, and you have not
10 given us a response. So I would like to hear you say, did
11 you, through your broker at Morgan Stanley or otherwise,
12 seek to invest in any defense-related funds right before
13 Trump started the Iran war?

14 Secretary Hegseth: I will give it to you as a big,
15 fat negative.

16 Senator Warren: Then let me ask you a second
17 question. Is your broker getting your personal signoff on
18 any investment in individual stocks --

19 Secretary Hegseth: Bigger, fatter, negative.

20 Senator Warren: He is not getting your signoff before
21 he makes investments in defense stocks? Can I refer you to
22 your --

23 Secretary Hegseth: I am not making investments --

24 Senator Warren: -- ethics agreement.

25 Secretary Hegseth: -- Senator.

1 Senator Warren: I am asking, does he know that he has
2 to get your signoff before he does that?

3 Secretary Hegseth: Of course.

4 Chairman Wicker: The time of the Senator --

5 Secretary Hegseth: I don't know what you are looking
6 for --

7 Chairman Wicker: -- has expired.

8 Secretary Hegseth: -- but you ain't going to find it.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

10 Senator Warren: I would like to enter into the record
11 the ethics agreement that the Secretary of Defense has
12 signed that he will sign off personally before his broker
13 makes any attempt to buy defense stocks.

14 Chairman Wicker: Is there objection?

15 Senator Warren: Thank you.

16 Chairman Wicker: Without objection, it will be
17 admitted.

18 [The information follows:]

19 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Senator Banks.

2 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Secretary Hegseth, you are doing a great job. I have
4 been in Washington for 10 years, several Secretaries of
5 Defense, now Secretary of War. You are the best that we
6 have had since I have been in Washington. What you have
7 done to restore readiness, restore military recruitment,
8 get the Pentagon focused on warfighting is second to none.
9 And I appreciate what you and President Trump and General
10 Caine are doing very much.

11 In fact, General Caine, according to the Department's
12 2025 China Military Power Report, "China believes the next
13 revolution in military affairs will occur when military has
14 transitioned to intelligentized warfare and fully integrate
15 artificial intelligence, big data, advanced computing, and
16 other technologies into the joint force." Can you
17 describe, General, in greater detail how the PLA is using
18 AI to enhance its military capabilities?

19 General Caine: You bet, Senator. You know, they are
20 attempting to integrate AI across the range of their
21 warfighting functions, which extends to command and
22 control, information advantage, intelligence, certainly
23 kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities, and to a certain
24 extent, sustainment.

25 I will note that so are we, and in many cases, we are

1 out in front of them. I want to commend our chief digital
2 and artificial intelligence officers inside the joint force
3 at the COCOMs with the services who are also leaning very
4 far in as we march towards a digitized joint force that
5 allows us to see in command and control of force better.

6 Senator Banks: The China Military Power Report also
7 goes on to note that the Chinese AI sector remains
8 "constrained by its limited access to high-performance AI
9 chips." General Caine, how big of an advantage is it for
10 the American warfighter that America's arsenal of compute
11 is bigger than China's?

12 General Caine: Sir, it is critical to us. And, you
13 know, while I acknowledge there are all kinds of chip
14 issues in this, it is important to us to continue to scale
15 at that. And I will highlight a lot of the work going on
16 up at Fort Meade that the Committee has helped to advance
17 in the cyber capabilities, so we appreciate the help with
18 that.

19 Senator Banks: If that advantage were eroded and
20 China were able to develop more advanced AI capabilities as
21 a result, what are some of the potential consequences for
22 American warfighters?

23 General Caine: Well, sir, it could certainly put us
24 at risk, and that is why we are leaning in so hard. There
25 is always a balance between commerce and protection. I

1 acknowledge those are policy matters I think is what you
2 are starting to get towards. But on a pure military-only
3 standpoint, we would see some defense in depth eroded from
4 that.

5 Senator Banks: Secretary Hegseth, do you agree that
6 enhanced Chinese AI capabilities could put American service
7 members at risk?

8 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, we absolutely have to
9 stay ahead. The advantage that AI provides applied to any
10 number of capabilities, whether it is domain awareness,
11 targeting cycles, you name it, AI and leveraging it, and
12 that is why we have made it the forefront. I mean, it is
13 AI first with everything that we do, integrating it at
14 every potential echelon to ensure we can respond faster.
15 If we are better at that than any adversary is, it is going
16 to give us an advantage, and we have to maintain that.

17 Senator Banks: I agree. Do you agree that we should
18 do everything in our power to ensure that American service
19 members go into battle with an overwhelming and fear-
20 inducing technological advantage, particularly with AI?

21 Secretary Hegseth: Always. Overwhelming is the goal
22 in every scenario.

23 Senator Banks: Earlier this year, the Pentagon issued
24 updated guidelines that prohibit department funds from
25 supporting grants and contracts involving fundamental

1 research collaboration with blacklisted Chinese entities.
2 How important are those restrictions to safeguarding our
3 technological leadership?

4 Secretary Hegseth: Have to have them, especially when
5 you look at the power of models and all of those things.
6 You have connections to entities that could have
7 connections to your adversary, and you can have degradation
8 of your advantage.

9 Senator Banks: Again, this is where I appreciate your
10 leadership, Mr. Secretary, which has been second to none.
11 And I know that you will work with Congress to help codify
12 those restrictions and encourage taxpayer dollars to never
13 advance the capabilities of our enemies and our
14 adversaries.

15 I appreciate both of your leadership. We have come a
16 long way in a couple of years from -- I mean, the night and
17 day difference between the last administration and this
18 administration is apparent to every Hoosier that I talk to,
19 so I appreciate your leadership.

20 I yield back.

21 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Banks.

22 Senator Peters.

23 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking
24 Member.

25 Gentlemen, welcome to the Committee. I appreciate

1 this discussion.

2 I will just start off. The number one question I get
3 when I am back home from people is basically very simply,
4 when will this war end? We know the costs that the
5 American people are paying, both the higher fuel costs that
6 our farmers are paying because of fertilizer cost. We know
7 that the whole world economy is paying a great deal for
8 this war.

9 And basically, as I think that through -- and this is
10 what I want to talk to you about -- is that we all know
11 that it is a whole lot easier to go to war than it is to
12 get out of war. That is always the tough question, and we
13 have got to figure that out. And there are some folks who
14 have written quite a bit about this. One text on war by
15 Carl von Clausewitz, Mr. Secretary, I am sure you are
16 familiar with the book. I know all of the men and women in
17 uniform are. It is the most widely read, most influential
18 military strategy book in Western history, which is pretty,
19 pretty broad, and it is the core curriculum that is read in
20 all the war colleges. I read it when I was at the Navy War
21 College taking courses. It is part of what the U.S.
22 military thinks about when to go to war and then how to get
23 out of the war.

24 And one of those core principles it starts with is
25 basically war is the continuation of politics by other

1 means. Everybody knows that quote who has worn the uniform
2 and others too. Basically, it means there is two things
3 about that. It is politics to get in the war, and it is
4 politics to get out of the war. And in between, we rely on
5 the men and women in the military to carry out those
6 policies.

7 So I want to be clear, and I think I speak for all of
8 my colleagues, is that we know the military plays an
9 important part. They need to do the job, and nobody,
10 nobody questions the amazing work that our men and women in
11 the U.S. military have done and continue to do. They have
12 performed absolutely brilliantly, and we applaud all that
13 they have done. However, what we do question is the
14 politics part. It is a continuation of politics. So it is
15 our political leaders that get us into war and our
16 political leaders who have to get us out of that war, which
17 falls on you, Secretary Hegseth, and others in the
18 administration, including the President as Commander-in-
19 Chief.

20 So Secretary, are you familiar with the concept in
21 that book of center of gravity?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Sure.

23 Senator Peters: So center of gravity, as you know, it
24 is basically the hub of all the power and movement.
25 Everything depends on it. And Clausewitz will say, if you

1 don't take out the center of gravity, it is very difficult
2 to win the war. You can have tactical successes, you can
3 have military successes, but if you are not focused on
4 that, you are not going to be able to win. Basically, he
5 talks about military strikes are tactical, and tactical
6 success doesn't necessarily create the political conditions
7 necessary to get the parties to the table to negotiate and
8 get it done. So we have got to focus on that.

9 So my question for you, Mr. Secretary, what is the
10 center of gravity for Iran?

11 Secretary Hegseth: Well, the center of gravity, as
12 the President has seen it, and as I see it, and he has
13 talked about for 30 years, is their pursuit of a nuclear
14 weapon and what they could do with that in pursuit as an
15 extension of the radical ideology they have professed since
16 the beginning of their revolution. So the prophetic
17 ideology they profess, alongside the most dangerous weapon
18 in the world would be the center of gravity of the
19 rationality --

20 Senator Peters: Okay.

21 Secretary Hegseth: -- of this undertaking --

22 Senator Peters: No, I appreciate that.

23 Secretary Hegseth: -- which --

24 Senator Peters: I appreciate it.

25 Secretary Hegseth: -- you understand.

1 Senator Peters: I will ask you to elaborate more. I
2 appreciate it.

3 General Caine, you know more about Clausewitz and
4 strategy than I will ever know, including all the folks
5 behind you. What would you consider the center of gravity
6 as defined by Clausewitz in this type of war?

7 General Caine: Well, sir, you are not going to love
8 this answer, but I hope you will respect it. War is
9 politics by any other means.

10 Senator Peters: Right.

11 General Caine: And the political side of that
12 necessitates that our political leaders determine what is
13 the center of gravity associated with that. From a
14 military-only perspective, there is a variety of things
15 academically that we could look at for centers of gravity
16 from leadership to will to capabilities to intent. But I
17 will defer to our political leaders --

18 Senator Peters: Well, okay.

19 General Caine: -- to determine what that is.

20 Senator Peters: That is fine. That is fair. I don't
21 like it. You are right, but --

22 General Caine: I know. I know, sir.

23 Senator Peters: And I know you know the answer to
24 that, and you are just not telling me.

25 General Caine: Well --

1 Senator Peters: And I get why you are doing that.

2 General Caine: My inner Marshall.

3 Senator Peters: But I would say, you know, other
4 observers say that basically it is not the leader.

5 Usually, if you take out a leader, that doesn't necessarily
6 make the changes. That, in Iran's case, is probably the
7 Islamic Revolutionary Guard. That is the center of
8 gravity. They are the ones that control the country, and
9 they are very diverse to do that.

10 The Americans' center of gravity is probably our
11 economy and our ability to maintain public opinion support.
12 We already know the public isn't there. We know the impact
13 to our economy. And central to that is the leverage. I am
14 running out of time here, but the center of leverage is the
15 Strait of Hormuz. That that is the bottom line. We have
16 to open that up. We have to take that away from Iran. The
17 fact that we haven't done that yet, and we are 60 days in,
18 we are just now bringing minesweepers from the Pacific in
19 there. We have some unmanned opportunities, but we have
20 got to have the capacity to do that.

21 It was clear even if there was a plan to keep the
22 straits open, it was not going to be implemented because
23 the assets were not positioned in a place to actually open
24 the straits. If they were, we would have seen those
25 happening right now. We are not. So we are missing the

1 point here. The center of gravity is going to be bringing
2 down the government of Iran in a way that they will want to
3 have a peace treaty so we can protect our country from
4 having nuclear weapons pointed our way. But the center of
5 gravity in a lot of ways is going to be focused on what
6 happens on the straits.

7 And Mr. Secretary, we have got to see action a whole
8 lot sooner in the straits. The world community needs it.
9 We are not going to bring this war to an end until we seize
10 control of the straits in a way that opens them back up --

11 Secretary Hegseth: Which in part is why we have a
12 blockade that has been impenetrable for the Iranians
13 because they don't have a conventional navy to contest
14 it --

15 Senator Peters: Well --

16 Secretary Hegseth: -- which means we control the
17 straits.

18 Chairman Wicker: The time of Senator Peters has
19 expired.

20 Let me observe that I very much appreciate the Senator
21 from Michigan suggesting ways in which our effort in Iran
22 could be more successful. I do appreciate that.

23 And let me also observe, Senator Kaine, that civilian
24 control goes back well beyond Marshall. It goes back to
25 George Washington, who was wise enough to resign his

1 commission to the elected membership of the government at
2 that time.

3 Senator Sheehy, you are recognized.

4 Senator Sheehy: I think it is important to note that
5 the objective is not to get out of the war. The objective
6 is to win the war, not to get out of it. And I think we
7 have allowed the narrative to shift so off target here.
8 President Trump did not start this war. We did not start
9 this war. These radical, barbarian, savage clerics who
10 have started killing Americans 47 years ago in a unilateral
11 campaign of terror, murder, treason, kidnapping, torture,
12 have been murdering our countrymen all over this world
13 almost every single year, hijacking airplanes, hijacking
14 cruise liners, taking our embassies, blowing up our
15 embassies, blowing up our barracks, blowing up our ships,
16 capturing our soldiers and murdering them in brutal ways,
17 they started this war.

18 And it would be a lot easier to beat them if we didn't
19 have administrations shoveling hundreds of billions of
20 dollars into their pockets while they are actively fighting
21 our own people, while our own uniformed service members
22 have been fighting this murderous regime. And we have
23 Presidents quite literally shipping pallets of cash to pay
24 these terrorists off. It has been a disgrace. It has been
25 an embarrassment to this country for far too long.

1 But back to the point, General Caine, I have a
2 specific question for you. I think in this day and age, we
3 all know that basically every single operation that we
4 partake in, whether it is stealth bombers, whether it is a
5 blockade, our special operations forces are a fundamental
6 shaping and priority component to all those. Would you
7 agree?

8 General Caine: Yes, Senator, I would.

9 Senator Sheehy: And I think for the last about 15
10 years, the special operations community budget has been
11 largely flat, even adjusted for inflation. And yet
12 continuously, we call on those warriors to deliver the
13 impossible. And they pretty much do.

14 We were reminded just a few weeks ago, even after the
15 amazing Maduro raid when we had to rescue one of our F-15
16 crewmen, yet again, our community came up and did something
17 that probably most people thought was impossible, and they
18 did an amazing job. But we cannot continue to call on a
19 tiny fraction of our military to carry such a heavy load
20 and to have such an op tempo without the appropriate
21 resources.

22 So I would like to hear your thoughts on how we can
23 not just increase the budget but make sure we are shaping
24 their budget in a way that ensures that those warriors are
25 getting the direct support for training and sustainment,

1 but also the platforms that they need from many submarines
2 to unmanned aircraft, to manned aircraft and the platforms
3 that are very unique for their mission are furnished and
4 deployed rapidly.

5 So I would like to talk about the percentage increase
6 of SOCOM's budget, how we affect that, and how fast we can
7 do it.

8 General Caine: Well, sir, I will just highlight my
9 gratitude and appreciation for the entirety of the SOCOM
10 joint force at Echelon and the work that they do. You
11 know, I will leave the budget numbers and the increased
12 percentages to my civilian leadership, but echo, to your
13 point, the exponential return on whatever investment they
14 give. These are incredible entrepreneurial leaders at
15 every echelon who do great things as the lights dim, as I
16 say that. So hopefully, they will see that as a nod
17 towards them. But I will defer on the budget allocation
18 numbers to the comptroller, sir.

19 Secretary Hegseth: First of all, I want to second
20 completely your opening remarks, and that is certainly our
21 view as well.

22 On the SOCOM budget, I am going to say, I think we
23 need to increase what is in this budget, and I have heard
24 from multiple people about that. In fact, that if there is
25 a supplemental -- I actually just wrote a note to Jay about

1 it. I think SOCOM, given the op tempo, given their direct
2 participation in so many of these historic aspects, SOCOM
3 should be part of that supplemental as well, makes complete
4 sense. Who has been shouldering a huge part of the burden?
5 Special Operations Command. So whether it is a
6 supplemental or this budget, I fully agree, and I think we
7 need to invest more.

8 Senator Sheehy: Great. And I would ask that
9 particular care be given the era of beards and guns and
10 kicking in doors, as much fun as that was for all of us, it
11 is coming to a close, and we are going to be going back to
12 our roots as specialized commandos, whether it is undersea,
13 arctic, airborne operations. And as we all became kind of
14 one joint soft force during GWOT, quite frankly, that was
15 an easier problem to resource for, to budget for and
16 acquire for.

17 It is going to be a lot harder now when our operators
18 go back to their service corners and these platform-
19 specific technologies and training. Submersibles, aircraft
20 take years to acquire, years to specify. It is not just
21 buying more ARs and body armor and ammo and sending them
22 downrange. So I think we have to think about the SOCOM
23 budget a little differently than we have for the last 25
24 years and make sure we are programming it a way that it is
25 sustained and is protected. Thank you.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Sheehy, for that
2 insightful exchange.

3 Senator Kelly.

4 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen,
5 thank you for being here.

6 Secretary Hegseth, safe to say that our weapons like
7 SM-3s, Tomahawks, Patriot missiles have capabilities that
8 are unmatched. That is why they cost a lot, take a long
9 time to produce. Your budget requests \$31.8 billion to
10 expand production capacity for critical missile stockpiles.
11 Is that correct, 31.8?

12 Secretary Hegseth: I am looking at \$53 billion for
13 munitions acceleration over 14 critical munitions of which
14 the ones you listed are a part, so I believe more than
15 that.

16 Senator Kelly: Okay, 53.

17 Secretary Hegseth: Yes, sir.

18 Senator Kelly: More than \$20 billion more. So we
19 have been working together to grow the industrial base
20 because we are all worried about how our stockpiles would
21 hold up in a conflict against China. Since the start of
22 this war, you have made it a point to highlight the number
23 of strikes the U.S. military is carrying out, citing that
24 more than 13,000 targets had been struck as of April 8. On
25 March 2, you said, "This was a massive, overwhelming attack

1 across all domains of warfare, striking more than 1,000
2 targets in the first 24 hours." On March 10, you said,
3 "Yet again, our most intense day of strikes inside of
4 Iran." On April 6, you said, "the largest volume of
5 strikes since day one of this operation." Your department
6 has released video after video of things blowing up.

7 None of us doubt the strength of the U.S. military and
8 their ability to do hard things. I understand that better
9 than anybody. The questions we should be asking and
10 answering are, what does this cost us, and what does it
11 achieve for the American people? Many of these strikes use
12 our best weapons, and we are using a lot of them and a lot
13 of interceptors. Open-source reporting has estimated that
14 the military has used an outrageous number of Patriots. I
15 am not even going to say the numbers, but a lot of
16 Patriots, a lot of Thac rounds, JASSM-ER, Tomahawks, very
17 expensive, exquisite.

18 We can't make these munitions overnight, and it is
19 clear from your budget requests that you know that. Can
20 you tell us how many years specifically is it going to take
21 to replace these systems?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, thank you for the
23 question. I would defer to the comptroller on the amount
24 because I think it is a lot higher than 53. If you look at
25 long range fires, JASSMs, LRASMs, Tomahawks, we are looking

1 at \$238 billion.

2 Senator Kelly: Okay. A lot.

3 Secretary Hegseth: We are looking at \$40 billion for
4 hypersonic. So I actually think it is closer to \$330
5 billion in munitions. Ultimately --

6 Senator Kelly: Okay. How many years to replenish?
7 That is the question.

8 Secretary Hegseth: I think that is exactly the right
9 question too, Senator, because the time frame we were
10 existing under was unacceptable.

11 Senator Kelly: Okay. Well, tell me --

12 Secretary Hegseth: And what this budget does -- I
13 mean, months and years, fast.

14 Senator Kelly: Years.

15 Secretary Hegseth: I mean, we are building new plants
16 in real time that will --

17 Senator Kelly: So just to replace what we have
18 expended --

19 Secretary Hegseth: 2X -- I said months.

20 Senator Kelly: And then you said years.

21 Secretary Hegseth: Well, it depends on the weapons
22 system, but 2 to 3, 4X of what we have today.

23 Senator Kelly: Okay.

24 Secretary Hegseth: So yes, we are dealing with a
25 reality under the previous administration of what they sent

1 to Ukraine and what they allocated elsewhere --

2 Senator Kelly: Okay. I got it.

3 Secretary Hegseth: -- and we are rapidly --

4 Senator Kelly: So we fired years --

5 Secretary Hegseth: -- doing it quickly.

6 Senator Kelly: -- worth of munitions. And it is
7 clear these are being expended to try to achieve some
8 objectives. That was the plan. But, Mr. Secretary, this
9 war is stuck. The Strait of Hormuz is closed. The uranium
10 regime is in place. The nuclear material, still in their
11 hands. Americans are being crushed by higher costs, and it
12 is not clear to them at all what the goal of this war is.

13 So I have got about a minute, and I want to go to
14 another topic. I saw your hearing yesterday, and I am
15 going to give you one more chance to address a question
16 here. It is my understanding that the definition of no
17 quarter is that legitimate offers of surrender will be
18 refused or that detainees will be executed. Is that your
19 understanding of the definition?

20 Secretary Hegseth: Well, the only entity that would
21 kill detainees or target civilians is the Iranians, and
22 they are the ones being crushed --

23 Senator Kelly: So you --

24 Secretary Hegseth: -- is the Iranian military and
25 their military capability so --

1 Senator Kelly: The question is, do you understand --

2 Secretary Hegseth: I disagree completely with the
3 articulation --

4 Senator Kelly: No, do you understand the definition
5 that I just read you? Because that is the definition from
6 your department's *Law of War Manual*. Is that your
7 understanding? And I am going to just get to the point
8 here.

9 Secretary Hegseth: We fight to win, and we follow the
10 law, Senator.

11 Senator Kelly: Okay. So your quote was, we will keep
12 pushing, keep advancing, no quarter, no mercy for our
13 enemies. And yesterday, you did not clarify whether you
14 stand by this statement. So I am going to give you another
15 opportunity to clarify if that is what you meant. Do you
16 stand by that statement you made on March 13?

17 Secretary Hegseth: We have untied the hands of our
18 warfighters. We fight to win, and we follow the law.

19 Senator Kelly: Okay. So you are not clarifying. So
20 you stand by that statement. So you are the --

21 Secretary Hegseth: Well --

22 Senator Kelly: -- Secretary of Defense. The things
23 you say matter. And your response here right now makes it
24 clear to the American people exactly why you are not right
25 for this job.

1 Secretary Hegseth: It makes it clear to our enemies,
2 Senator.

3 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Wicker: Thank you.

5 Senator Sheehy has left the room, but it has been
6 whispered to me that I just referred to him in the last
7 exchange as Senator Schmitt. I don't know if he considered
8 that a compliment or an insult, but I do correct that for
9 the record.

10 Senator Slotkin, I think you are next.

11 Senator Slotkin. Thank you.

12 Gentlemen, you are here to ask for \$1.5 trillion, 40
13 percent more than what we gave you last year, \$1 trillion.
14 And I agree with the Chairman of this Committee that the
15 world has never been more dangerous and complicated. And
16 regardless of whether we disagree on the reasons for
17 getting into this war, I think we can all agree that we
18 want our military to come out of it safely and successfully
19 and as, you know, soon as feasible.

20 The administration has taken military action in 10
21 different places in the world in 15 months, more than any
22 President in U.S. history. I think President Trump has
23 really become a foreign policy President. And many of
24 those operations, you know, were on the news for a couple
25 of days, but then the American public didn't feel them.

1 And I think the difference with this war with Iran is that
2 the American public is feeling it in their pocketbooks.
3 Gas in Michigan is \$4.99 today, the cost of fertilizer, of
4 airline tickets, things that are real to people.

5 Secretary Hegseth, the President said that you were
6 most keen on this war. He said that you were the most
7 gung-ho about it. And I think despite us all wanting to
8 come out of this successfully, it is hard to miss that we
9 are at the stalemate, that we don't control the Strait of
10 Hormuz because shipping is not getting through. And we can
11 block what they are trying to get through, but nothing is
12 moving, and it is costing the American public. And I think
13 that is a fundamentally different moment than the rest of
14 the military action we have taken. Even in like Middle
15 East 101 class, we used to talk about and run wargames on
16 the Strait of Hormuz. It is a strategic geography that the
17 Iranians have.

18 And I think it is just concerning to me that, you
19 know, we can try and tell the American people that it is
20 going great and we are killing it, but until the Strait of
21 Hormuz is open, I don't think we can credibly say that with
22 any seriousness.

23 The question I have for you, though, is future-
24 looking, and it is our 2026 elections. The President has
25 been very clear. He said in the State of the Union that

1 essentially if his side doesn't win, then the election was
2 rigged. He said that before the 2020 election. He has
3 asked for voter rolls for 29 different States. He just
4 asked for Detroit's ballots. And we know that in 2020, he
5 wrote an executive order that he didn't sign that said to
6 the U.S. military, to the Secretary of Defense, you should
7 go and seize ballots and voting machines. A few months
8 ago, he said that he regretted that he didn't sign that
9 executive order.

10 So the U.S. military has never been deployed. You
11 incorrectly said yesterday that they were deployed during
12 different elections. Governors deployed them under their
13 authorities, but the Federal Government has never put the
14 uniformed military at our polls during World War II, right
15 after 9/11. We have never had to do that.

16 So Secretary Hegseth, if the President, who regrets
17 not signing that executive order to the then SecDef in
18 2020, asks you to seize ballots or voting machines in
19 States during the 2026 election, will you stand up for the
20 Constitution and say no, or will you salute and do his
21 bidding?

22 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I didn't get a chance to
23 answer the front part of your question, which, you know,
24 there was a lot of deferred maintenance under the Biden
25 administration --

1 Senator Slotkin. I understand. I --

2 Secretary Hegseth: -- that needed to be addressed
3 because the world was in chaos when President Trump was
4 elected.

5 Senator Slotkin. Just address the election issue,
6 please.

7 Secretary Hegseth: Well, again, that is another --

8 Senator Slotkin. It is the most important thing. It
9 is what is happening --

10 Secretary Hegseth: It is yet another gotcha
11 hypothetical, which is your specialty --

12 Senator Slotkin. It is not. We had an executive
13 order --

14 Secretary Hegseth: -- and ultimately, under the Biden
15 administration --

16 Senator Slotkin. -- from you that your predecessor
17 had to hold --

18 Secretary Hegseth: -- in 2024 --

19 Senator Slotkin. It is not a hypothetical. I refuse
20 to accept. You give that answer all the time. You and I
21 have done this dance before. Get over it, okay? In 2020,
22 he is the President, your boss, the guy you are performing
23 for right now told the journalists this year that he wished
24 he signed that executive order to your predecessor. And
25 your predecessor said publicly, thank God we didn't

1 actually go forward with it.

2 What are you going to do? You are the guy here in the
3 seat. It is not hypothetical. Tell the American people,
4 will you deploy the uniformed military to our polls to
5 collect voter rolls or machines?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Are you accusing me of performing?
7 Because you are performing for cable news right now.

8 Senator Slotkin. Dude, dude, just answer the
9 question.

10 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Secretary, we have a very --

11 Secretary Hegseth: It is a hypothetical.

12 By the way, in 2024, under the Biden administration,
13 15 States did deploy troops to polling stations.

14 Senator Slotkin. Under their Governor's authority,
15 when their Governors asked for it.

16 Secretary Hegseth: What did Joe Biden say about that?

17 Senator Slotkin. That is fundamentally -- I don't
18 think anything because he needed them for cybersecurity and
19 for COVID. Trump did it too, under Trump. But it was not
20 the Federal decision. It was those Governors of the States
21 under their authorities, okay? It has never been done in
22 our history. Please stand up for the Constitution. Do not
23 send uniformed military to our polls.

24 Chairman Wicker: Do you have a response to that
25 portion of the question, Mr. Secretary?

1 Secretary Hegseth: I have never been ordered to do
2 anything illegal, and I won't. That --

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you for --

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- goes without saying.

5 Chairman Wicker: Thank you for the answer.

6 Senator Duckworth, you are now recognized.

7 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Despite his campaign promise of no new wars, President
9 Trump has been obsessed with using the military any chance
10 he gets, from deploying troops to American cities, to
11 propping up Maduro's chosen number two in Venezuela, to an
12 endless war of boat strikes in the Caribbean Sea, and now
13 in an illegal war with Iran, where hundreds of thousands of
14 our troops are in harm's way every day with no exit
15 strategy in sight. This administration hides bad policy
16 behind the exceptional military operations and the valor of
17 our uniformed personnel.

18 I have long said Iran is a malign actor, but a
19 responsible administration would have managed this short of
20 conflict instead of starting a war of choice. There was no
21 imminent threat to the United States or our troops. The
22 military was not the most effective tool to get Iran to
23 capitulate, as we are already seeing too clearly now.

24 And using force has made Americans in the Middle East
25 less safe, while spiking costs for Americans here at home,

1 all to the tune of 14 servicemembers dead, hundreds
2 wounded, billions of taxpayer dollars, and untold costs to
3 our military readiness. This administration claims to be
4 focused on the warfighter, but President Trump told us when
5 he announced a war from his luxury resort that he expected
6 servicemembers to die.

7 Now, sadly, it is clear how unserious Trump is about
8 his role as the Commander-in-Chief. His war within Iran
9 has already reminded us how important it is to prevent a
10 war, how serious it is to ask the military to wage one
11 under poor strategic direction, how destructive a wide-
12 ranging war can be for Americans, for our servicemembers,
13 and how difficult it is to actually end one once you start
14 it. The incompetence and casual disregard for our service
15 members' professionalism and sacrifice is, in my opinion, a
16 scandal.

17 General Caine, can you tell us the status of the
18 Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' navy, the entity
19 actively closing the strait?

20 General Caine: There are -- Senator, apologies. I
21 was listening to you. I was just trying to write it down.

22 Senator Duckworth: No worries.

23 General Caine: They are mostly destroyed. CENTCOM
24 continues to watch them. They have --

25 Senator Duckworth: Not the Iranian Navy?

1 General Caine: No, no, the --

2 Senator Duckworth: The IRCG's navy?

3 General Caine: Yes, ma'am. The smaller -- I won't
4 get into any classified materials, but the smaller, fast
5 and, you know, smaller boats, Boston Whaler-sized boats,
6 there are still some out there, yes, ma'am.

7 Senator Duckworth: So this administration and the
8 Secretary of Defense has been boasting about sinking the
9 ships of the Iranian Navy, but let's call this what it is.
10 It is misdirection. They want us to focus on the
11 impressive number of large Iranian ships underwater to
12 distract from the fact that they had no plans for the
13 second navy that Iran owns that has always been a hard
14 problem to address by military force.

15 The IRCG Navy, not the Iranian Navy, has been Iran's
16 tip of the spear at the Straits of Hormuz, seizing vessels
17 and threatening to target U.S. assets. Iran has long
18 invested in this second asymmetrical navy, specifically to
19 develop capabilities that would be difficult for
20 conventional U.S. military forces to target.

21 Iran's advantage was well known to anyone paying
22 attention. I have no doubt that competent planners in the
23 Pentagon raised their concerns about a quagmire in the
24 Strait to leadership. The question is why their leadership
25 did not pay attention to this sound advice. Hubris is not

1 strategy, and in war it costs lives.

2 Even if the strait reopens, this administration has
3 created a new, less safe world by initiating and then
4 bungling this crisis and teaching Iran that it can charge
5 \$1 million a ship to transit the strait. It will take a
6 long time for the global economy to bounce back to normal
7 trade flows, and Iran has learned, again, that they can
8 charge \$1 million per ship, creating a new funding line for
9 their malicious activity against Americans for years to
10 come.

11 And in the Indo-Pacific, I don't doubt that if the
12 worst day comes, our military will step up to challenge and
13 defend Americans and our interests with military force.
14 But will they be asked to lay down their lives
15 unnecessarily just because the White House was unready and
16 incapable of preventing a crisis boiling over into a war in
17 the Indo-Pacific?

18 General Caine, do you agree that the military would
19 benefit from significant interagency planning by the
20 Department of Defense on actions short of war that can be
21 taken if a crisis occurs?

22 General Caine: Ma'am, I appreciate that question, you
23 highlighting the importance of that, and we have really
24 great relationships now on the joint staff with the
25 interagency. I think our relationship in particular -- I

1 will just pick CIA -- I think it is the best it has ever
2 been. We are really working hard to find the best of Title
3 10 capabilities plus the best of Title 50 to ensure that we
4 deliver really entrepreneurial options for our national
5 policymakers to do what you are talking about, Senator.

6 Senator Duckworth: All right. But I am concerned
7 because during the recent NDS hearing, I laid out the very
8 real ways that a crisis in just one of the dozens of
9 flashpoints in the Indo-Pacific could be devastating for
10 our service members, Americans, and our American economy.
11 But since then, this administration has only further
12 diminished DOD's ability to prepare for these crises. In
13 fact, as many as 1/3 of the assets in the Middle East
14 originally meant to be in the Indo-Pacific. This war of
15 choice is draining our military resources. We need leaders
16 who do everything they can to ensure warfighters only fight
17 when they have to, not because of one man's whims and a
18 lack of bravery among the yes men he surrounds himself
19 with.

20 I thank you for your service, General, and I continue
21 to look forward to working with you.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Duckworth.

23 Senator Rosen.

24 Senator Rosen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,
25 Ranking Member Reed. Thank you, General, for your service.

1 Before I begin my questions for Secretary Hegseth, I
2 have one brief important question for General Caine.
3 General, as you have acknowledged at your confirmation
4 hearing, service members who served at locations which
5 another U.S. Government agency deems contaminated, like the
6 Nevada Test and Training Range, should have the same
7 presumption of radiation exposure as DOE employees who
8 served alongside them. But we also must ensure that DOD
9 provides the VA with the records proving that these
10 individuals served there. So this is a problem that DOD
11 has the power to solve. I know we have discussed this.

12 So General Caine, will you commit to ensuring parity
13 for DOD personnel who served in locations that the U.S.
14 Government has already deemed contaminated, identifying
15 those who served in such locations, and providing
16 documentation of that service to the VA so that they can
17 receive the veterans' benefits that they have earned?

18 General Caine: You bet, ma'am. And, you know, since
19 our last time together on this, we have continued to chip
20 away at removing or figuring out how to get past that one
21 particular blocking in that record so that that data flows
22 normally. And I am committed trying to solve that for
23 those leaders and teammates who are out there at that site.

24 Senator Rosen. Thank you. We will look forward to
25 continuing to work with you on that.

1 So Secretary Hegseth, I want to talk a little bit
2 about AI because, of course, our service members deserve
3 every advantage we can give them. So I just want you to
4 help me understand this. In February, on the eve of
5 Operation Epic Fury, you publicly designated Anthropic as a
6 supply chain risk. However, this week, it has been
7 reported that the White House is now helping agencies get
8 around this decision to access Anthropic's technology. So
9 the administration cannot credibly make both claims
10 simultaneously.

11 So before I ask you about the inconsistency, I just
12 want you to reconfirm what it is you plan to use this
13 technology for. It has been publicly reported that the
14 decision to label Anthropic a national security risk was
15 influenced by your personal and very public contract
16 dispute with Anthropic when the company said that its
17 technology could not be used for fully autonomous weapons,
18 targeting, or mass surveillance of Americans.

19 So following up on your response to Senator Rounds
20 earlier, can you confirm whether or not there will always
21 be a human in the loop when AI is used for lethal targeting
22 decisions?

23 Secretary Hegseth: Well, first of all, on Anthropic,
24 they would not agree to our terms of service. That would
25 be like Boeing giving us airplanes and telling us who we

1 can shoot at. So they were --

2 Senator Rosen. This is not just about Anthropic,
3 though. This is about --

4 Secretary Hegseth: I just want to be clear. And also
5 Anthropic --

6 Senator Rosen. And that is fine.

7 Secretary Hegseth: -- is run by an ideological
8 lunatic who shouldn't have a --

9 Senator Rosen. So that is not my question.

10 Secretary Hegseth: -- sole --

11 Senator Rosen. My question is AI writ large.

12 Secretary Hegseth: -- decision-making over what we
13 do.

14 Senator Rosen. Writ large.

15 Secretary Hegseth: We follow the law, Senator.

16 Senator Rosen. Should AI -- will you confirm -- you
17 said this to Senator Rounds earlier, so I am just asking
18 for you to recommit --

19 Secretary Hegseth: We follow the law, but we don't
20 have to sign a different terms of agreement with --

21 Senator Rosen. That is not --

22 Secretary Hegseth: -- Anthropic.

23 Senator Rosen. This is not the question. This is not
24 about Anthropic. This is just an example. I want you to
25 confirm whether or not there will always be a human in the

1 loop when AI is used in a kill chain for lethal targeting
2 decisions. Will there always be a human in a loop, or will
3 AI make the decision?

4 Secretary Hegseth: We follow --

5 Senator Rosen. You said this to --

6 Secretary Hegseth: We follow the law, and humans make
7 decisions.

8 Senator Rosen. So you will confirm what you said to
9 Senator Rounds, that a human will always be in the loop
10 when AI is used?

11 Secretary Hegseth: Which is why --

12 Senator Rosen. You just said this.

13 Secretary Hegseth: That is part of our terms of
14 service anyway.

15 Senator Rosen. You know --

16 Secretary Hegseth: It is how we operate.

17 Senator Rosen. All I want to say is this. There is a
18 DOD directive, 3000.09, which mandates that autonomous and
19 semi-autonomous weapon systems be designed to allow
20 commanders and operators to exercise appropriate levels of
21 human judgment over use of force. That is in the DOD
22 directive.

23 Secretary Hegseth: That is why we follow the law,
24 Senator.

25 Chairman Wicker: So the answer is yes, Mr. Secretary.

1 Secretary Hegseth: The answer is we follow the law,
2 absolutely.

3 Senator Rosen. I think this is more important than
4 following the law. I think that people want to know that
5 AI isn't going to make lethal decisions, and it is
6 critically important.

7 Secretary Hegseth: AI is not making lethal decisions.

8 Senator Rosen. That is what we want to hear. We are
9 going to follow on that one.

10 I have just a few seconds left, but you keep doubling
11 down on this phrase, Mr. Secretary. You compare
12 journalists, you compare us, you compare so many to
13 Pharisees. Pharisees. It is a problematic and
14 historically weaponized term that cast Jewish communities
15 as hypocritical or morally corrupt. You doubled down again
16 and said it. Words matter. Words matter. What you choose
17 to say, how we choose to say it. How do you justify using
18 this language as Secretary of Defense? Words matter. It
19 is a historically hurtful term. Why do you continue to use
20 it? And what actions are you taking to prevent rhetoric
21 like this from permeating throughout the Department that is
22 going to target specific groups or individuals of people
23 based on their religion?

24 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, I feel like it is a
25 pretty accurate term for folks who don't see the plank in

1 their own eye and always want to see what is wrong with an
2 operation as opposed to the historic success of preventing
3 Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, so I stand by it.

4 Senator Rosen. You stand by calling people Pharisees.
5 Sir, I cannot stand for that. That is wrong. It is not
6 respectful to people. And I expect anyone who is in
7 leadership in our country to be respectful and use
8 respectful terms and not be an antisemite.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Rosen.

10 The Chair and the Ranking Member have no second round
11 questions. I am told by Senator Kelly that he would like
12 to ask a second question.

13 Senator Kelly: Yeah, Mr. Secretary, so \$1.5 trillion,
14 1.5 is a very round number. You know, if you are putting
15 together a budget, you would come up with these are the
16 problems we are trying to solve. This is the capability we
17 need. These are the systems we have to buy. And at the
18 end of the day, it would spit out a number, and it is
19 probably not \$1.5 trillion. So to me, it feels like that
20 number was just kind of pulled out of thin air.

21 I took a look recently, and it seems that the defense
22 budget of the rest of the world -- I am talking China,
23 Russia, India, every Asian country, every European country,
24 South America, everybody else is in the neighborhood it
25 looked like 1.7 to 1.8. So your request is approaching all

1 defense spending from everybody else with the exception of
2 us. That is a huge amount of money.

3 You know, when I got here, you know, just five years
4 ago, it was almost half of that. Through budget
5 reconciliation, you have received a bunch of money to buy
6 things, some of the weapon systems, you know, to resupply
7 what we need. I am just trying to understand, you know,
8 like, where is all this money going to go and if you
9 figured out ahead of time what do you want to spend this
10 on?

11 And by the way, there are systems the President wants.
12 You know, he saw last summer how effective Iron Dome and
13 David's Sling were. And because of that, the President
14 decided we are going to build our own version. We are
15 going to call it Golden Dome because the President likes
16 the color gold. We have seen that, see it in the Oval
17 Office. We are going to call it Golden Dome, and it might
18 cost somewhere between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. I
19 have heard those estimates.

20 By the way, on that problem, I know a little bit about
21 intercepting stuff in space. It is really hard. And the
22 physics on this favors the offense. There are some things
23 in that program that I think are really important that we
24 do and try to figure it out, but space-based interceptors
25 to hit multiple targets -- and by the way, it is important

1 how you size the system.

2 So I am trying to understand, Mr. Secretary, what kind
3 of detail did you guys -- did you work out like a detailed
4 plan, and at the end of the day, it came out, oh, it just
5 happens to come out to be \$1.5 trillion?

6 Secretary Hegseth: Senator, the exact amount is
7 actually \$1.535 trillion, and it was a product of a highly
8 rigorous process throughout our department, from COCOM
9 commanders to the services with our comptroller, with our
10 deputy secretary, with the chairman and myself to ensure
11 the budget reflects the realities of the world we live in
12 and the capabilities we are going to need. And that is why
13 there is \$65 billion for ship building, \$120 billion for
14 the defense industrial base, \$331 billion for munitions,
15 \$44 billion for quality of life, \$71 billion on our nuclear
16 DIB. You name it, we are investing in it.

17 And the biggest reason for it is the underinvestment
18 of the Biden administration. I mean, what they spent on
19 defense, the continuing resolutions and others, undercut
20 the buildup that the President Trump had created. So yes,
21 we are doing a lot of deferred maintenance here around the
22 world and in our department, and this budget reflects it.
23 And it is a commitment, a generational commitment to the
24 security of the American people. And if the rest of the
25 world won't spend on their defense, that is their fault.

1 The American Department of War will invest properly to
2 defend the American people --

3 Senator Kelly: I have always been --

4 Secretary Hegseth: -- and that is what this budget
5 stands for.

6 Senator Kelly: I have always been supportive of
7 defense spending in my entire time here. And after 25
8 years in the Navy, I want to make sure our folks have what
9 they need.

10 I think you should go back and take a look and see if
11 there are places where we are making investments that we
12 actually don't need. There are some systems out there. I
13 mean, we are constantly looking and trying to balance, do
14 we want, you know, F-47, which I have been supportive of,
15 B-21, also supportive. And then we want to make all these
16 other investments in really inexpensive, low-cost munitions
17 because we suddenly realize that the expensive stuff, even
18 through B-21, we can't really maybe not get close enough.
19 But the whole idea behind B-21 and F-47 is we can penetrate
20 further into the A2/AD bubble. So there is some conflict
21 there.

22 So I am just encouraging you to go back and see, you
23 know, if there are some systems where we can bring that
24 overall number down because, as I look at what the
25 Department is trying to field, you know, some of this

1 stuff, in my judgment -- and, you know, I know others might
2 have another opinion. Some of this stuff we either don't
3 need, or it is not going to work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Chairman Wicker: Senator Kelly, your time has
5 expired.

6 Let me just say, you have a great deal of expertise in
7 the area of space, and we do look forward to your
8 contribution as we mark up further legislation.

9 Senator Blumenthal, I understand you have a follow-up
10 question.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Yes. First of all, I want to
12 thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your support for the Major
13 Richard Star Act, which I think is tremendously
14 significant. I am committed to getting it done as soon as
15 possible, at least before Veterans Day, and I look forward
16 to your help in accomplishing that goal. But I want to
17 thank you for your support. I am sure the veterans of
18 America are grateful for the prospective victory there.

19 I have talked to many of the combatant commanders
20 about lessons learned from Ukraine, and I think that there
21 is unanimity on the point that there is a lot to be learned
22 not only about what the Russians are doing but what other
23 adversaries could do as well. Chairman Caine, would you
24 agree that there are lessons to be learned from Ukraine?

25 General Caine: You bet. You bet, Senator. And there

1 are lessons learned from everywhere, and that is really the
2 culture of our joint force right now is to make sure that
3 across the globe, anytime we are in contact with the enemy,
4 we are going back and determining what we can learn from
5 there.

6 But, you know, a big one, if you will allow me, a big
7 one is, you know, mass and simultaneity, which is something
8 the Secretary has taken a strong role in making sure that
9 we are doing that through drone evaluations and things like
10 that moving forward.

11 Senator Blumenthal: Following up on a question that I
12 asked earlier, my last question, the President said
13 yesterday that his view is -- after his conversation with
14 Vladimir Putin, that Ukraine has been "militarily
15 defeated." In your professional judgment, has Ukraine been
16 militarily defeated?

17 General Caine: Sir, I haven't seen the President's
18 quote, but, you know, I will go back to something I started
19 with, and that is the importance of me maintaining trust
20 with a variety of people. And, you know, a President will
21 make a wide range of comments and considerations as the
22 Commander-in-Chief, and --

23 Senator Blumenthal: You don't have to go too much
24 farther.

25 General Caine: Thank you.

1 Senator Blumenthal: I understand the point that you
2 are making, sir.

3 General Caine: Yes, sir. Thank you. I appreciate
4 it, Senator.

5 Senator Blumenthal: In my view, Ukraine has not only
6 not been militarily defeated, but the point that I was
7 trying to make in the last exchange with the Secretary,
8 there is a false narrative. Based on my last visit to
9 Ukraine, which was my ninth, my conversation not only with
10 President Zelensky, but with our own military on the
11 ground, as well as our intelligence community, in fact,
12 Ukraine arguably is winning. There is this false narrative
13 Russia is winning. Putin wants that false narrative to be
14 our official narrative.

15 I am not putting words in your mouth, and you don't
16 have to respond. I understand your reasons for not
17 responding. But the American people should know that the
18 President of the United States is undermining our security
19 because Ukraine is holding the line against Vladimir Putin,
20 who will keep going against Moldova, which I also visited
21 on my last trip, against our NATO allies. And we still
22 have an obligation under Article 5 to come to their
23 defense, just as they did after 9/11, as King Charles so
24 eloquently reminded us.

25 And my view is -- and this observation is hardly novel

1 -- that China is watching what we are doing in Ukraine.

2 Would you agree?

3 General Caine: Sir, I would agree that China is
4 watching everywhere and carefully thinking about what their
5 force posture and approach will be. And I think they are
6 learning a variety of things, to include the tenacity and
7 grit of the joint force around the things that we have been
8 ordered to do over the last year.

9 Senator Blumenthal: But if they see weakness in our
10 response to Russia and Ukraine, that will affect the
11 deterrence of their possibly moving against one of our
12 allies or partners in the Far East.

13 Let me finally ask Mr. Hurst, your estimate of \$25
14 billion, would you share with us what that estimate is
15 based on?

16 Mr. Hurst: Yeah, we can work to get you a product of
17 the details if you would like.

18 Senator Blumenthal: And finally, Mr. Secretary, is
19 there going to be a report on the bombing of the school in
20 the first day or so of the war? I know you were asked
21 about it yesterday. I am wondering whether you have a more
22 detailed response that you can share with us.

23 Secretary Hegseth: As I have said, that is under
24 investigation at 15-6. The general officer from outside
25 the chain of command has been reviewing it, and it is still

1 within the parameters of the investigation.

2 Senator Blumenthal: Will there be a preliminary
3 report in the next few weeks, or do you have a time
4 estimate?

5 Secretary Hegseth: I don't have a time estimate for
6 you, but it is right now within the parameters of the
7 length of time that normally these investigations take.

8 Senator Blumenthal: I am asking because in your final
9 response to Senator Gillibrand, you said that great care is
10 taken to avoid civilian casualties, and it would be
11 profoundly significant if that report were made available
12 in a timely way to show, in fact, the commitment to
13 avoiding civilian casualties and learning lessons from the
14 mistake made there.

15 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

16 This concludes today's hearing. I would like to thank
17 our witnesses for their testimony.

18 For the information of members, questions for the
19 record would be due to the Committee within two business
20 days of the conclusion of the hearing.

21 We are adjourned.

22 [Whereupon, at 1:54 p.m., the Committee was
23 adjourned.]

24

25