

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: MR. MATTHEW L. LOHMEIER TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AIR FORCE; MR. JUSTIN P. OVERBAUGH TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY; AND MR. DANIEL L. ZIMMERMAN TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Thursday, May 1, 2025

Washington, D.C.

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2 BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AIR FORCE; MR. JUSTIN P. OVERBAUGH TO
3 BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND
4 SECURITY; AND MR. DANIEL L. ZIMMERMAN TO BE ASSISTANT
5 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

6
7 Thursday, May 1, 2025

8
9 U.S. Senate

10 Committee on Armed Services

11 Washington, D.C.

12
13 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:39 a.m. in
14 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
15 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

16 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker
17 [presiding], Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott,
18 Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen,
19 Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Duckworth, and
20 Kelly.

21 Also Present: Senator Hagerty.

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

3 Chairman Wicker: I thank our witnesses for being here.
4 We have a familiar face at the desk also, and I welcome all
5 the families of our witnesses and thank them for being here
6 this morning.

7 As I've said many times, we face an axis of aggressors
8 that deepen their cooperation every day. A new cooperative
9 engagement between our enemies strengthens every day. We
10 need qualified people who are willing to step up and serve
11 during these dangerous times.

12 Matthew Lohmeier has served our country as an active-
13 duty officer in the Air Force and Space Force. Based on his
14 experience in uniform, he's been an outspoken proponent of
15 eliminating the divisive DEI agenda that was the hallmark of
16 the Department of Defense in the earlier administration.
17 Fortunately, President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have done
18 much toward removing DEI at DOD.

19 Mr. Lohmeier's nomination for Under Secretary of the
20 Air Force represents an opportunity to evaluate closely the
21 kind of leadership we need in the Air Force and Space Force
22 at this pivotal moment. This role requires a steady,
23 unifying presence, and needs someone who can work across the
24 department to advance readiness, morale, and mission focus.
25 I look forward to hearing how Mr. Lohmeier intends to be

1 that needed presence.

2 Mr. Justin Overbaugh has been nominated to be the
3 Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for intelligence and
4 Security. In this role, he would serve as the principal
5 assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence
6 and Security, overseeing the intelligence,
7 counterintelligence, security, and law enforcement functions
8 of the DOD.

9 Mr. Overbaugh's deep experience as an Army officer in
10 the fields of intelligence and special operations make him
11 ideal for a candidate of this position. I look forward to
12 hearing his priorities for ensuring our defense intelligence
13 enterprise is best postured to provide timely and accurate
14 intelligence to our warfighters, safeguard DOD sensitive
15 information from our adversaries, and inform our
16 acquisitions and investments.

17 Mr. Daniel Zimmerman has been nominated to be the
18 Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security
19 Affairs. In this role, he would serve as the principal
20 advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the
21 lead policy advisor to all matters related to Europe, NATO,
22 and Russia.

23 Mr. Zimmerman will have responsibility for managing the
24 NATO alliance, encountering Russian aggression and malign
25 activities. His background as an intelligence officer and

1 his experience working in Congress make him an ideal
2 candidate for this position. I look forward to hearing his
3 priorities, and how he plans to revitalize the NATO
4 alliance, and develop initiatives to counter Russian
5 aggression.

6 With that, I turn to my friend and colleague, Ranking
7 Member 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. Chairman.
4 Want to recognize Mr. Lohmeier, Mr. Overbaugh, and Mr.
5 Zimmerman, and also our colleague Senator Bill Hagerty. We
6 also want to recognize the families that are here today.

7 Now, Mr. Lohmeier, you've been nominated to be the
8 Under Secretary for the Department of the Air Force. If
9 confirmed, you would run the day-to-day operations of the
10 Department of the Air Force and assist the Secretary in
11 leading the largest fleet of aircraft and space assets in
12 the world. Most importantly, you would be responsible for
13 managing the hundreds of thousands of men and women who make
14 up the Air Force and Space Force.

15 Mr. Lohmeier, I must confess, I have deep concerns
16 about your ability to represent these men and women. While
17 I appreciate your past military service, your record of
18 troubling conduct in uniform, extreme partisanship, and
19 animosity towards military members with whom you disagree
20 politically is, in my view, disqualifying to be the Under
21 Secretary.

22 We must acknowledge your record of behavior and
23 statements. In 2021, while you were an active-duty Space
24 Force Lieutenant Colonel in command of a large formation,
25 you self-published a book titled Irresistible Revolution:

1 Marxism's Goal of Conquest and The Unmaking of the American
2 Military. The book argues that Marxism is rampant within
3 the ranks and is leading to the collapse of our military and
4 our society. As you wrote, and I'll quote to be perfectly
5 clear, "The path we're on as the country leads to
6 fratricidal and genocidal warfare."

7 While still on active duty in command, you went on a
8 far-right podcast, which was known for spreading
9 misinformation and conspiracy theories to advertise your
10 book. All this was done without knowledge or approval of
11 the Department of Defense. You were immediately relieved of
12 command when your book and podcast were discovered.

13 After leaving the Space Force, you have continued to
14 write and speak extensively about Marxism in the military.
15 You appeared on dozens of podcasts and panels, and made
16 hundreds of social media posts about this specific issue.
17 As you write in your book, Irresistible Revolution, I quote
18 in one respect, "U.S. military service members are no
19 different than members of the People's Liberation Army.
20 Each is composed of humans, humans who share a common
21 nature. Because we share the same nature, what Marxist's
22 ideology does to the Chinese military service members, it
23 will do to the American."

24 Mr. Lohmeier, I've read much of your writing, and
25 frankly, I would question your interpretation of Marxism.

1 Nonetheless, I would make one point clear. I'm concerned
2 that you have a misguided opinion of American military
3 service members and their leaders. If confirmed, you would
4 lead an organization that, like the country it represents,
5 is composed of Republicans, Democrats, Independents, men and
6 women of all racist creeds and sexualities. Yet, your
7 language suggests that you regard many of these men and
8 women as adversaries to be rooted out and purged from the
9 force.

10 I would ask that you explain why service members and
11 civilians who do not share your political opinions can trust
12 that they will not be targeted under your tenure. Just as
13 importantly, I hope you'll pledge not to seek a retribution
14 against any military members or civilians with whom you have
15 disagreed and publicly criticized in the past, especially as
16 many of them would serve under you, if confirmed.

17 I hope you'll address these issues thoroughly and
18 truthfully during your testimony. The Department of the Air
19 Force faces enormous challenges in the years ahead. I'm
20 going to ask for your views and how you would address them.

21 Mr. Overbaugh, you have been nominated to be Deputy
22 Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security.
23 If confirmed, you would serve as a principal intelligence
24 advisor to the Secretary of Defense and would oversee the
25 Defense intelligence enterprise. Your experience in the

1 special operations and intelligence community should serve
2 you well in this role.

3 Among many issues you will oversee is the complicated
4 network of Defense intelligence agencies. These agencies,
5 DIA, NRO, NSA, and others continue to face challenges in
6 efficiently coordinating intelligence among themselves in
7 providing adequate resources to joint all-domain military
8 operations. Such operations require split second targeting
9 support, and I would like to know how you would ensure their
10 success.

11 Mr. Zimmerman, you have been nominated to be Assistant
12 Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. If
13 confirmed, you would be the principal advisor of the Under
14 Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Secretary of Defense
15 on international issues that relate to Europe, Russia, the
16 Middle East, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. I would
17 note your experience as a career CIA officer with expertise
18 in several of these regions.

19 If confirmed, one of your challenges will be to ensure
20 we continue to have cooperation and support from partners
21 and allies in Europe and the Middle East, and I'm deeply
22 concerned about the administration's comments and actions
23 regarding NATO and Ukraine. As the administration continues
24 to expand its campaign against the Houthis in Yemen, it
25 would be more important than ever that we have reliable

1 friends abroad to assist us in other areas. Mr. Zimmerman,
2 I would like you to know your plans of balancing U.S. long-
3 term international security objectives against short-term
4 demands.

5 Thanks, again, to our nominees. I look forward to your
6 testimonies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Ranking Member
8 Reed. And I now have the pleasure of recognizing our
9 colleague, Senator Hagerty, who I understand will be
10 introducing Mr. Zimmerman this morning. So, I now turn to
11 you, sir.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. BILL HAGERTY, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 TENNESSEE

3 Senator Hagerty: Thank you, Chairman Wicker. And I
4 want to thank you as well, Ranking Member Reed, and to all
5 my esteemed colleagues here. Thank you for holding this
6 hearing today, and importantly, to all of the very capable
7 staff that are sitting behind you. Because I hope you'll
8 look at Mr. Zimmerman and the position that he's in today,
9 and realize that he was amongst your ranks, and he's sitting
10 here today. And I hope that many of you'll take this as an
11 inspiration.

12 It's my honor today to introduce my good friend Daniel
13 Zimmerman, President Trump's nominee to be Assistant
14 Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.
15 Daniel is tailor-made for this role. For nearly two
16 decades, Daniel has served with distinction at the Central
17 Intelligence Agency, the White House, and most recently,
18 right here in the United States Senate.

19 While many of the details of his career remain
20 classified, I can share a few anecdotes that highlight his
21 experience and his expertise. Daniel has risked his life in
22 war zones, working with special operations forces out of
23 Soviet, Arab bunkers in Iraq to hunt ISIS and other
24 terrorists. He's dealt face to face with Russian energy
25 oligarchs, and traveled the world from Europe, to the Middle

1 East, to the Indo-Pacific, all on sensitive matters that are
2 related to energy and trade security. And Daniel was one of
3 the first people whom the White House hired to support the
4 historic Abraham Accords, which is one of President Trump's
5 signature achievements from his first term that is still
6 bearing fruit in the Middle East today.

7 For the last 15 months, I've had the great pleasure of
8 having Daniel on my Senate staff. He's been a detailee who
9 served with distinction. During this time, I found that his
10 tremendous leadership skills, his knowledge of global
11 issues, are matched only by his humility and his character.
12 He's been a wonderful colleague and a friend.

13 Daniel's the right person to serve as the next
14 Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security
15 Affairs, and I urge the members of this committee to move
16 quickly on his nomination. Thank you all for taking him
17 into account this morning.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Hagerty,
19 and you are free to stay, but I'm sure your schedule is
20 quite busy.

21 Senator Kaine: So, Mr. Chair, I think a number of us,
22 were hoping to cross-examine Senator Hagerty before he
23 departs.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Chairman Wicker: Five minutes each for the first

1 round.

2 [Laughter.]

3 Chairman Wicker: Only because it's a Thursday, we'll
4 skip that today. Thank you. We will now begin with opening
5 statements and we'll go in the order of Lohmeier, Overbaugh,
6 and Zimmerman.

7 Mr. Lohmeier, you are recognized for five minutes for
8 your opening statement, sir.

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1 STATEMENT OF COLONEL MATTHEW L. LOHMEIER, TO BE UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF AIR FORCE

3 Colonel Lohmeier: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking
4 Member Reed, and members of this committee for considering
5 my nomination to be Under Secretary of the Department of the
6 Air Force. I'm grateful for the opportunity, and for the
7 trust of President Trump. To the many troops, men, and
8 women, both uniformed and civilian, who have expressed
9 overwhelming support for me, thank you to those listening
10 who have served or who presently serve. You have my
11 gratitude.

12 I wish to acknowledge and thank my friends and family
13 for their support, some of whom are here today, including my
14 parents. I'd especially like to acknowledge and thank my
15 wife, Sarah, who is here. What a blessing it is for a man
16 who personally cares deeply about the Air Force core values
17 of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in
18 all we do, to live with a wife who likewise believes in and
19 embodies those values. Furthermore, she more than anyone
20 else knows that I strive to be a man of integrity, and that
21 I hope to inspire others to live in that same spirit.

22 The Under Secretary of the Air Force is by law the
23 Chief Management Officer of the Department of the Air Force.
24 My breadth of experience serving in both the Air and Space
25 Forces makes me uniquely qualified for the job at this

1 pivotal time in American history, a time in which we face
2 very serious threats to our national security.

3 Even before receiving my commission, while still a
4 cadet at the United States Air Force Academy 20 years ago, I
5 began to become aware of the threats we face when I
6 participated in a special exchange program to China that we
7 no longer have. The United States government sent a small
8 contingent of Mandarin-speaking Air Force Cadets to the
9 People's Liberation Army Air Force Academy in Changchun,
10 China. It's north of North Korea.

11 For a brief cold stint in March of 2005, I lived in the
12 dorms with the PLA cadets, attended their classes, even
13 aeronautical engineering, did PT with those cadets in the
14 snow, ate in their chow hall, and was wittingly placed on a
15 losing basketball team so that they could film our crushing
16 defeat in front of their entire cadet body, no doubt for
17 distribution in state media.

18 Most U.S. Air Force Academy cadets know what I mean
19 when I say there's no better view of the Air Force Academy
20 than in the rear-view mirror. But after spending time at
21 the Chinese Air Force Academy, returning to USFA was a
22 treat. Later, after graduating and receiving a commission
23 from the Air Force Academy, I finished pilot training and
24 became a T-38 instructor pilot where I taught future fighter
25 pilots for both the United States and our foreign mission

1 partners.

2 I then flew F-15Cs out of Kadena Airbase in Okinawa,
3 Japan. That assignment served as yet another reminder to me
4 of the threat posed by the PRC to our allies and our
5 strategic partners, as well as to our own economic
6 prosperity, and military interests at home and abroad. I am
7 keenly aware of that threat, and I understand the need for
8 ready Air and Space Forces well trained and equipped to meet
9 the China challenge to deter any aggression, and if needed,
10 to defeat that aggression.

11 Following my time in the cockpit, I transferred to what
12 was then Air Force Space Command, and provided strategic and
13 theater missile warning for the United States and our
14 allies. When the Space Force was subsequently created, I
15 was entrusted with command of that same mission leading a
16 combined operation of U.S. and allied partners in control of
17 our nation's \$18 billion space-based missile warning
18 architecture.

19 I share that background to make this point. I speak
20 the language of both the Air Force and the Space Force. I
21 am air-minded and space-minded. I understand the necessity
22 of United States superiority in both of those war fighting
23 domains. Space, in particular, is a strategic domain. It
24 is a theater where we pursue many objectives, and where the
25 United States must prevail. Space is necessarily also an

1 operational domain because our ability to access and use
2 space is a vital national interest.

3 Despite my background, I've been startled by just how
4 much has changed and developed technologically since I left
5 active duty just shy of four years ago. My surprise is
6 evidence of the dynamic and rapidly evolving threat
7 environment, mentioned here several weeks ago by Dr. Troy
8 Meink. Combatant commanders are calling for more air and
9 space power capacity, not less. I'm persuaded that, if
10 confirmed, I must be a strong advocate for a larger and
11 better funded Department of the Air Force. Every single
12 national security option the President needs is underpinned
13 by air space power.

14 The President has nominated me for this important
15 position with the trust that I'll be a driving force behind
16 a culture of integrity in the Department of the Air Force.
17 This includes eliminating all unnecessary distractions, and
18 enabling military members to focus on their mission.

19 Secretary Hegseth has said his priorities include
20 restoring the warrior ethos, and a focus on warfighting,
21 rebuilding the military, and reestablishing deterrence. I
22 am firmly aligned with those priorities, and there are
23 unique ways in which they must be accomplished in the air
24 and space forces. If confirmed, all of my efforts will be
25 nested within that framework.

1 Thank you, and I look forward to taking your questions.

2 [The prepared statement of Colonel Lohmeier follows:]

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Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Mr. Overbaugh.

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1 STATEMENT OF COLONEL JUSTIN P. OVERBAUGH, TO BE DEPUTY
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

3 Colonel Overbaugh: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member
4 Reed, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you
5 for the chance to appear before you today, and for your
6 consideration of my nomination to be Deputy Under Secretary
7 of Defense for Intelligence and Security. I am honored and
8 grateful for this opportunity to serve our great nation.

9 I'm truly humbled by the nomination, and thankful to
10 President Trump and Secretary Hegseth for placing their
11 trust in me. Above all, I am profoundly grateful to God for
12 his countless blessings, and the unmerited grace and
13 forgiveness He so generously offers through his son Jesus
14 Christ. I'm joined today by my precious wife of 21 years,
15 Rebecca, and our four sons; Joshua, Benjamin, Gabriel, and
16 Matthias of whom we are so proud. We are also blessed to
17 have a number of family, friends, and former teammates with
18 us here today and watching online as well. Having their
19 love and support means the world to me.

20 If confirmed, I look forward to bringing over 25 years
21 of intelligence and security experience to the role. Most
22 recently, I served as director of intelligence for a special
23 operations joint task force, supporting a new U.S. Special
24 Operations Command organization focused on global
25 coordination of unique capabilities against great power

1 competitors. I collaborated extensively across the
2 intelligence community, the interagency, and with foreign
3 partners to address high priority threats.

4 Prior to that, I held leadership and staff positions in
5 human intelligence, counterintelligence, and counter-
6 terrorism. In these roles, I led both military and civilian
7 teammates in tactical and operational deployments to both
8 Afghanistan and Iraq, and strategic assignments in Europe
9 and the United States.

10 I routinely informed Pentagon and Combatant Command
11 decision-making regarding joint and multilateral sensitive
12 intelligence operations, which I also personally coordinated
13 with chiefs of station and foreign intelligence partners
14 across Europe. These operations were instrumental in
15 countering foreign influence and terror threats against the
16 United States and our partners, strengthening relationships
17 with key allies and positioning our forces to deter, and if
18 necessary, defeat our adversaries.

19 If confirmed, along with supporting the priorities of
20 Secretary Hegseth and Mr. Hansell, should he also be
21 confirmed, I will advocate for the following areas of
22 emphasis. I hope to lead the enterprise in strategic
23 assessments that shape defense requirements, ensuring they
24 are data-driven, actionable, and aligned with national
25 security priorities. I believe that we do not have the

1 resources to cover all threats simultaneously. Therefore,
2 we must be deliberate and discerning about the capabilities
3 we pursue to defend our nation and deter, or if necessary,
4 defeat our adversaries.

5 If confirmed, I would encourage the enterprise to
6 reassess established analytical frameworks, fostering
7 innovation and adaptive thinking to tackle dynamic threats.
8 I believe the warrior ethos includes the courage and mental
9 clarity required to challenge personal and institutional
10 bias, and overcome bureaucratic intransigence.

11 Finally, I would drive the enterprise to prioritize
12 actionable intelligence, providing clear insights to support
13 decision-making from the platoon leader to the President. I
14 believe intelligence professionals must be able to separate
15 signals from noise in order to be value added to the
16 warfighter.

17 Progress in these areas would improve decision support
18 and security for the enterprise and the American people.
19 This is desperately needed as I sincerely believe we face
20 some of the most daunting challenges in the history of our
21 nation.

22 Again, I thank you for your consideration, and I look
23 forward to answering your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of Colonel Overbaugh follows:]

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Chairman Wicker: Thank you, sir. Mr. Zimmerman.

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1 STATEMENT OF DANIEL L. ZIMMERMAN, TO BE ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

3 Mr. Zimmerman: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed,
4 and distinguished members of the Armed Services Committee,
5 thank you for the chance to appear before you today to be
6 considered for the role of Assistant Secretary of Defense
7 for International Security Affairs.

8 I am honored by the President's nomination and by his
9 trust. I also thank Secretary Hegseth and Under Secretary
10 Colby for their support. I'm humbled by Senator Hagerty's
11 introduction, and grateful for his leadership and example

12 Mr. Chairman, with permission, I'll briefly mention
13 some priorities that, if confirmed, I would anticipate
14 meriting my full attention from day one. The International
15 Security Affairs role spans Europe, Russia, Ukraine,
16 Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa. These theaters
17 present many issues of consequence, which must be addressed
18 judiciously and in ways that fully support the Department's
19 primary goals of securing the homeland and deterring China.

20 In my view, doing this will require cultivating strong
21 partnerships in these regions that further U.S. interests,
22 and encourage our allies urgently to embrace greater
23 responsibility and burden sharing, which is both in their
24 interest and ours.

25 Resolutely addressing with allies persistent threats to

1 our interests, such as those posed by Russia, Iran's
2 potential to develop a nuclear weapon and terrorism, and
3 countering China's ability to project military power
4 influence in these theaters. All this can and should be
5 done in a way that advances the President's and Secretary's
6 America First, peace through strength agenda.

7 If confirmed, I would draw on almost two decades of
8 national security experience, intelligence, in policy roles,
9 and in the field where I've had the privilege to work on
10 many of the same issues and regions involved in this
11 portfolio. The challenges are serious, yet familiar.

12 Mr. Chairman, if I may introduce my family. My
13 parents, David Zimmerman and Beth Zimmerman are here, to
14 whom I owe immeasurable gratitude. I would like to
15 acknowledge my sister, Tabitha Zimmerman, and three
16 brothers; Ethan Zimmerman, Luke Zimmerman, and Nic
17 Zimmerman, who along with my dad, have all served or are
18 serving in our military and along with their exemplary
19 colleagues. They hold my deepest respect.

20 My four brave children are here; Ransom Zimmerman,
21 Anchor Zimmerman, Haven Zimmerman, and Liberty Zimmerman. I
22 have asked them to behave unless I get asked a tough
23 question.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Mr. Zimmerman: Most important, my wife, Chloe

1 Zimmerman, is here, a constant friend without parallel who
2 continues to transform my life. I'm grateful for many other
3 family and friends attending or listening today. And I give
4 thanks to my great shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

5 Mr. Chairman, if confirmed to this role, I would apply
6 myself with all the humility, vigor, and excellence our
7 country expects and deserves to help preserve the
8 inestimable blessings of liberty for us and for the next
9 generation. Thank you.

10 [The prepared statement of Mr. Zimmerman follows:]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Well, thank you.

2 Thanks to all three of you, and again, welcome to the
3 family and friends. We now move to standard questions which
4 are required of all civilian nominees. And so, if you'll
5 each turn your mics on and answer audibly. Have you adhered
6 to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of
7 interest?

8 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

9 Chairman Wicker: Have you assumed any duties or taken
10 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the
11 confirmation process?

12 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

13 Chairman Wicker: Exercising our legislative and
14 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
15 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate
16 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
17 reports, records, and other information from the executive
18 branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to
19 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

20 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

21 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree to provide records,
22 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner
23 when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or
24 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult
25 with a requester regarding the basis for any good faith

1 delay or denial in providing such records?

2 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

3 Chairman Wicker: Will you ensure that your staff
4 complies with deadlines established by this committee for
5 the production of reports, records, and other information,
6 including timely responding to hearing questions for the
7 record?

8 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

9 Chairman Wicker: Will you cooperate in providing
10 witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional
11 requests?

12 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

13 Chairman Wicker: And will those witnesses and briefers
14 be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

15 [Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

16 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

17 And now, we will move to questions by individual
18 members of the committee, and I'll begin. First, for each
19 of you. Much of the funding in the Reconciliation Bill,
20 which is being put together now in the House and Senate,
21 because of our rules, has to be unspecific and will
22 technically be at the discretion of the Department of
23 Defense, though we will write recommendations for them.

24 A quick yes or no from each of you, and begin with Mr.
25 Lohmeier. Do you commit to follow unequivocally the

1 Congress's spending recommendation in Defense
2 reconciliation?

3 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Chairman.

4 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Overbaugh?

5 Colonel Overbaugh: Yes, Chairman Wicker.

6 Chairman Wicker: Mr. Zimmerman?

7 Mr. Zimmerman: Yes, Chairman.

8 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much.

9 And then let's move then to Mr. Zimmerman and your
10 prepared testimony. You mentioned burden sharing. Let's
11 talk about NATO and the first Trump term. The President
12 demanded that all NATO allies meet their burden-sharing
13 obligations. Do you think the NATO members took this
14 challenge seriously? It seems that they're reversing nearly
15 two decades of decline. Do you believe this spending marks
16 a renewed commitment on the part of our NATO allies to
17 burden sharing, Mr. Zimmerman?

18 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, thank you for the question.
19 NATO is a very important alliance that U.S. commitments
20 there are grave and serious. I do think there's general
21 consensus that the alliance has to adapt. You mentioned
22 very appropriately in your opening remarks, a threat
23 environment where our adversaries are colluding and
24 collaborating even more and more, underscoring the need for
25 strong alliances and partnerships and greater burden

1 sharing.

2 I think there is reason to be encouraged by actions
3 that some NATO members have taken to take greater ownership
4 of their security needs and be alliance partners. I think
5 the administration has identified an urgent need for that
6 process to accelerate.

7 Chairman Wicker: Okay. And one other thing, and I'm
8 glad to hear you come down strongly on behalf of our
9 participation in this very important NATO alliance. As far
10 as I know, we do not yet have a Deputy Assistant Secretary
11 of Defense for NATO. Will you commit to filling this
12 position at the earliest opportunity?

13 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, to the extent I can manage
14 that, I commit.

15 Chairman Wicker: Okay. And do you agree it would be
16 very important for that to be filled based on your earlier
17 testimony?

18 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, the NATO alliance is a very
19 important alliance.

20 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much.

21 Let me go back to Mr. Lohmeier. And let me choose my
22 words here. As the Department of the Air Force makes major
23 basing decisions, currently including platforms and mission
24 sets like F-15EX, KC-46, and space control, and very soon
25 the future CCA and the F-47 support infrastructure, many of

1 us on the committee remain concerned about the consistency,
2 fairness, and transparency of the process.

3 Mr. Lohmeier, are you aware that in the Fiscal Year
4 2025 NDAA, which was passed by the Congress and signed into
5 law by the President, we prohibited programmatic basing
6 decisions or programmatic sole source basing decisions? Are
7 you aware of that?

8 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator.

9 Chairman Wicker: And if confirmed, will you commit to
10 upholding this law?

11 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. I am committed to
12 upholding the law in every respect, if I'm confirmed.

13 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, and let me just say, how
14 you do this is going to be very important. There are
15 strategic imperatives and objective criteria that should be
16 paramount rather than political considerations.

17 And, frankly, I'm going to say this after the
18 politicization of the Space Command Headquarters basing
19 decision, do you think we've got some confidence rebuilding
20 to do, and what specifically will you do to restore
21 confidence that this is being called according to statute
22 and called by the numbers?

23 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, I think it's very important,
24 Senator, and I share your concern that we eliminate the
25 politics of the decision-making process. The service

1 secretaries and the Under Secretaries should work very
2 carefully to make data-driven decisions and decisions that
3 will most benefit the warfighter and our strategic posturing
4 around the globe.

5 And so, you have my commitment, if confirmed, that
6 we'll do our very best to make sure those decisions are
7 based on the needs of those capabilities in various
8 locations and strategy, not based on politics.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. How's your
10 Mandarin?

11 Colonel Lohmeier: Hai hao.

12 Chairman Wicker: Did you get that Madam Clerk? Thank
13 you very much. Senator Reed.

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

15 Mr. Lohmeier, you posted the following on your X
16 account on October 19th, 2024. "If we are fortunate enough
17 to see a Trump presidency once again, then there will be
18 serious consequences for those senior leaders who have
19 broken their oath, betrayed the trust of the American
20 people, and participated in the hyper-politicalization of
21 the uniformed services. And let me tell you about one such
22 officer who still serves --" Mr. Lohmeier, what did you mean
23 by serious consequences for these officers, many who are
24 still serving and would be serving in the Air Force?

25 Colonel Lohmeier: Thank you for bringing this up,

1 Senator. I share your concern for and commitment to
2 ensuring that we've got a relatively apolitical military
3 workplace. It was one of the driving motivating factors
4 prior to my separation from service in the fall of 2021 for
5 the things that I wrote and spoke about.

6 I was never publicly critical of my chain of command.
7 I was never publicly critical of my senior leaders while I
8 served in the uniform of my country. As you mentioned, that
9 post was put on X in my private capacity as a private
10 citizen in 2024. I've been out of uniform for the past four
11 years, nearly, and have rather enjoyed my ability to speak
12 freely and express a full range of the expression of my
13 ideas on platforms such as X.

14 However, I'm very committed, if confirmed, to making
15 sure that we eliminate political distractions from the
16 military workplace. Our service members and the American
17 people truly deserve the opportunity to serve in a
18 nonpartisan military workplace. And what I meant by the
19 statement was that I believe that a Trump presidency or a
20 Trump administration would take accountability very
21 seriously. We wouldn't overlook that kind of partisan
22 politicization of the military workplace that I believed we
23 had experienced in the past years.

24 Senator Reed: Do you commit then to not take any
25 action against any individual military or civilian who

1 carried out DOD policy and regulations or implemented any
2 laws enacted by Congress?

3 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, I think I heard all of the
4 question. I missed probably part of it, but the tenor was
5 that asking of me a commitment to not hold certain leaders
6 accountable who were following the law or implementing
7 policy. And in that vein, or that spirit, or in principle,
8 I'm only interested in holding people accountable who don't
9 follow the law and who don't honor their oath to the
10 Constitution, which I take very seriously.

11 Again, I'm very interested in nonpartisanship from our
12 uniform wearers in particular, and giving the right to the
13 American people to entertain their partisan arguments. But
14 I have no vindictive spirit. I'm not interested in
15 retribution, but I am interested, if confirmed, and looking
16 forward in making sure we have proper accountability and
17 high standards in the Department of the Air Force.

18 Senator Reed: Then you disavowed the statement you
19 made in October 2024, saying, if Trump takes over, there
20 will be consequences for people. And most of the
21 consequences, I assume would be targeted to people who you
22 were had differences with because of their support of the
23 policies including equity and other policies. Is that true,
24 or you were just making up all the stuff in your post in the
25 last several years?

1 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, Senator, I'd love to look at
2 the context of all of the statements that I've made, but I
3 will make just one point that as I've contemplated the path
4 to confirmation or through the confirmation process, which
5 I've taken very seriously. I very much had in mind the
6 social media presence, podcast appearances, media
7 appearances I've had for four years, and I've left every
8 last jot and tittle of that up online and available because
9 I'm very deliberate in what I choose to say.

10 I believe in what I say, and I also reserve the right
11 to be wrong about things and to change my opinion about
12 things. But I have nothing to hide. I try and speak what I
13 believe to be true, and I'm happy to be corrected about
14 things in which I'm mistaken. But in principle, what I was
15 intending to say in that post was that I believe
16 accountability matters, and that's the spirit of what I was
17 trying to get at.

18 And, if confirmed, I'd look forward to ensuring we've
19 got a culture of accountability in the Department of the Air
20 Force. That was not intended to be retroactive or
21 retribution in nature, but simply intended to communicate
22 that leaders who prioritize accountability and high
23 standards will do the American people and service members
24 service by committing to that.

25 Senator Reed: Well, I think we all want to see leaders

1 who are accountable themselves and also the highest
2 standards, but those standards have to be consistent with
3 this country and the servicemen and women who serve. And
4 they come from, as I indicated, many races, many
5 nationalities, different views, political, or otherwise.

6 And the goal is, as you indicated, is an apolitical
7 military force. Everything that I've read in your book and
8 everything else is far from apolitical. You've targeted
9 individuals that you felt had for political reasons
10 unfortunate views. And if you carry that attitude into your
11 job, you'll cause great confusion in the Air Force and great
12 animosity within the ranks, fear, et cetera.

13 So, thank you for your previous service. Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman. Or Senator Cotton, are you in charge?

15 Senator Cotton: [Presiding.] Mr. Overbaugh, I see the
16 intelligence and the security shop in the Under Secretary of
17 Defense for Policy, not just through my work on this
18 committee, but my work on the as chairman of the
19 Intelligence Committee as well. I&S should be the central
20 advocate for the DODs intelligence priorities and the
21 central orchestrator to ensure that all defense intelligence
22 agencies are meeting DOD needs. Yet, it has often seemed to
23 me that all the agencies under the I&S umbrella appear to
24 largely act on their own accord. Oftentimes, it seems a
25 little direct oversight.

1 Can you commit to working with me on this committee and
2 on the Intelligence Committee to ensure that we improve
3 I&S's enterprise governance to meet the Defense -- to make
4 sure that the Defense intelligence agencies are providing
5 the intelligence that all of our warfighters need?

6 Colonel Overbaugh: Yes, Senator. I absolutely can.

7 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

8 And do share that assessment that it seems like
9 oftentimes they're kind of all going off in their own
10 direction?

11 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, I share your concerns in
12 that regard, and what I can commit to you is, if confirmed
13 for this position, I would place an emphasis on ensuring
14 that the entire Defense, and intelligence, and security
15 enterprise remains responsive, particularly to combatant
16 commanders and the warfighters to ensure that they're well
17 positioned to deal with global threats.

18 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

19 I believe that part of the issue here is that I&S is
20 not optimally organized to meet that role of guiding the
21 Defense intelligence enterprise and advocating for Defense
22 intelligence priorities.

23 I put report language in last year's NDAA that mandated
24 a GAO review of the authorities, the roles and
25 responsibility of I&S. Can you commit to using the findings

1 of that review to inform any potential organizational
2 changes that might be made in I&S?

3 Colonel Overbaugh: Yes, Senator. And as I mentioned
4 in my open statement, I'm particularly concerned about
5 bureaucratic intransigence. And so, analyzing the structure
6 and process within the organization would be a key focus, if
7 I'm confirmed.

8 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

9 As is often the case, while boxes and lines on a chart
10 are important, they're not the only thing to consider.
11 Sometimes, it's not the most important thing that needs to
12 change. Sometimes, it is leadership and culture. I&S was
13 dual headed as the Director of Defense Intelligence and the
14 principal director or advisor to the Director of National
15 Intelligence because Congress recognized the urgent need for
16 a single proponent to ensure the broader national
17 intelligence community meets Defense requirements.

18 Yet, I don't think there's any documented processes or
19 procedures for ensuring that collaboration between I&S and
20 the ODNI, and I think the past interactions between ODNI and
21 I&S have not been adequate. Can you commit to working with
22 Mr. Hansell to make sure I&S is collaborating closely and
23 productively and constructively with the ODNI?

24 Colonel Overbaugh: I absolutely can, Senator. And
25 this is something that Mr. Hansell and I have already had an

1 opportunity to talk about. I share his passion, and I know
2 that if we're confirmed, we look very much forward to
3 working with ODNI, and Gabbard, and the rest of her team to
4 ensure that that lash up takes place.

5 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

6 And to be clear, the work that the Defense intelligence
7 agencies produce, I think it's stellar and topnotch. It's
8 often some of the best intelligence reporting I see on this
9 committee, and especially on the Intelligence Committee. We
10 want to make sure that we're providing proper guidance for
11 all those agencies underneath your orbit. And also, that
12 they're having their proper influence within the broader
13 intelligence community, especially claims on resources.

14 Mr. Lohmeier the Air Force has been underfunded for a
15 long time, especially in the last two Democratic
16 administrations. That's led to a dramatically smaller
17 fighter force than we've had at any times since World War
18 II. Yet, we need air superiority given the broad range of
19 threats we face.

20 Do you commit to working with the administration and
21 with Congress to be ensure that we increase resources going
22 forward for the Air Force and Space Force?

23 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. I commit to that.

24 Senator Cotton: And you agree that we need those
25 additional resources?

1 Colonel Lohmeier: I do agree.

2 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

3 Part of the problem we've had, too, is a shortage of
4 pilots. 1,800 pilot shortage across the total force. As of
5 Fiscal Year 2024, retention is only averaging about 40 to 50
6 percent. Do you agree that we need to focus very intently
7 on both recruiting and retaining pilots?

8 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator, and this is a problem
9 we've had for many years. It transcends administrations,
10 and I know that Air Force leaders and administrations have
11 tried to fix this problem. We try and throw money at the
12 problem sometimes, and I think that that tends, frankly, to
13 keep in those who are already probably on the fence and want
14 to stay in any way. But I talked to many pilots, they're
15 interested in fixing their quality of life and quality of
16 service concerns as well. And you have my commitment to try
17 and solve these problems.

18 Senator Cotton: The work I've done on this committee
19 with Senator King are just the same. They're always welcome
20 the money, but they don't join the Air Force, the Space
21 Force for, you know, a couple thousand dollars more a month.
22 They join it because they want to fly high-performance
23 aircraft in defense of our nation.

24 One final question. The Ebbing Air National Guard Base
25 in Arkansas is home to a growing international fighter

1 training mission. We have 48 F-35 scheduled to be located
2 at Ebbing over the next three years. The Air Force has
3 worked with Senator Boozman, and Congressman Womack, and I,
4 very well over the years to get this critical mission bedded
5 down. I assume you agree that foreign military sales
6 training remains a vital Air Force mission.

7 Colonel Lohmeier: I do, Senator,

8 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

9 And, if confirmed, we can count on you to continue to
10 ensure the Air Force supports the mission in Ebbing, and has
11 the resources necessary to train our allies?

12 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator, you have my commitment
13 that I'll work very closely with the, with Dr. Meink, if
14 he's confirmed. And also, be very transparent in my comms
15 with you about the situation in your state.

16 Senator Cotton: Thank you. Senator Shaheen.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, gentlemen, for your past
18 service to the country, and for your willingness to continue
19 to serve. And welcome to all your families.

20 On Tuesday, Secretary Hegseth announced by tweet that
21 he was ending implementation of Women, Peace & Security at
22 DOD, claiming it was a Biden era, DEI policy.

23 Unfortunately, he missed the fact that President Trump and
24 members of his current administration, including Secretary
25 Rubio, Mike Waltz, and Secretary Noem, all worked on this

1 policy in 2017, and President Trump signed it. U.S. combat
2 units began using female engagement teams during operations
3 in Iraq and Afghanistan to gather intelligence and build
4 trust with local communities.

5 Years later, because of the success of those efforts,
6 we enshrined this concept into law as part of the WPS Act.
7 Since that time, WPS has been used by the warfighters to
8 identify victims of human trafficking and joint exercises on
9 non-combatant evacuations, to provide human intelligence on
10 violent extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Shabaab, and to
11 understand the human terrain to improve kinetic and non-
12 kinetic targeting.

13 I'm very concerned that taking away these tools does
14 not make us a stronger or more lethal fighting force, and in
15 fact, it takes away some of the options we have to be
16 successful. Secretary Hegseth also claims that warfighters
17 hate it, and yet, the newly confirmed Chairman of the Joint
18 Chiefs not only told this committee about WPS's operational
19 value, but he was very clear that this is not DEI.

20 Lawfare made public in an article last night, a memo
21 from the Director of the Joint Staff providing their best
22 military advice to the Secretary, and this is a direct quote
23 from that article. Mr. Chairman, I would ask that the
24 article be introduced into the record.

25 [The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: [Presiding.] Without Objection.

2 Senator Shaheen: The article points out from that
3 memo, and I quote, "China and Russia have no equivalent of
4 WPS," and that the combatant commands 80 engagements with
5 partners over the next two years under the program, "counter
6 China by gaining access to a population China largely
7 ignores." The director continues that WPS, "prevents
8 radicalization by violent extremist organizations and
9 disrupts the smuggling of narcotics, weapons, and humans
10 into the United States."

11 Officials from every combatant command and from
12 several other military components concurred with this
13 recommendation from the Joint chiefs. And this is
14 information that's not new to this committee. Every four-
15 star combatant commander has told us about the strategic
16 advantage that WPS provides to our forward deployed forces.

17 So, Mr. Zimmerman, you're nominated to oversee regional
18 security for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the
19 Western Hemisphere. Don't you need all the tools that are
20 available to counter violent extremism in Africa and the
21 Middle East? That's a question.

22 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, thank you very much for the
23 question. The violent extremism counterterrorism problem is
24 a major concern. And if confirmed to this role, one that
25 I'll be focused on. It does require, in my view, a whole-

1 of-government type of approach. And sometimes, we can be
2 too siloed as a government.

3 In my background in the intelligence community, I've
4 had the opportunity to work with many other inter-agency
5 partners and see the value that comes from across our
6 government. And if confirmed to the role, I would of course
7 make a priority to work with all the tools and coordinate to
8 make sure all the tools are available.

9 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

10 That argues in my mind for the importance of the WPS
11 effort. Mr. Overbaugh, you're nominated to oversee
12 intelligence functions for the Department of Defense.
13 Again, if confirmed, I assume that you would like all tools
14 available to gather human intelligence on the ground,
15 especially in a conflict scenario?

16 Mr. Zimmerman: Every single one I can get, Senator.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

18 And, Mr. Lohmeier, you're nominated to be Under
19 Secretary of the Air Force. If confirmed, I assume your
20 forward deployed airmen will want to understand everything
21 they can about the human terrain before taking strikes, like
22 on Houthis targets in Yemen. Would you agree?

23 Mr. Zimmerman: I would agree with that, Senator.

24 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

25 Chairman Wicker: And thank you very much. Senator

1 Rounds.

2 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 First of all, to all of you, thank you for your offer
4 of additional service to our country. Mr. Overbaugh, how
5 would you recommend addressing the evolving threats posed by
6 near-peer adversaries in the domains of cyber artificial
7 intelligence in space? It would appear to me that right now
8 there is an overarching challenge from multiple near-peer
9 adversaries with regard not just to airline and sea, but
10 space and cyberspace. The areas that you'll be overseeing
11 include both cyberspace and real space coordinated.

12 Talk to us a little bit about how you see your role in
13 terms of coordinating our response to those adversaries.

14 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, thank you for the
15 question. We've already had a little bit of experience
16 dealing particularly with a soft space cyber triad. And
17 it's a critical effort because as we continue to push into
18 new domains to meet adversarial threats across the globe, we
19 have to stitch those domains together in a way that achieves
20 combined effects for the warfighter and in defense of the
21 American people.

22 As it relates to cyber threats that you mentioned, I am
23 concerned about the threats to our critical infrastructure,
24 the disinformation that can come through cyber threats, and
25 also zero-day exploits. And I think some of our solutions

1 in zero trust architecture, active cyber defense, private-
2 public collaboration, and offensive cyber capabilities are
3 tools that would be able to bring to bear to meet those
4 threats.

5 And space threats, the presence of ever increasingly
6 sophisticated ASAP weapons, particularly interested in
7 space-based surveillance of our enemies, as well as jamming,
8 and spoofing are of significant concern to me. And so, I
9 would look to advocate from the position that I'm being
10 nominated, resilience and redundancy in our constellations,
11 as well as ensuring complete space domain awareness and
12 encouraging commercial partnerships to ensure that we're
13 able to meet those threats effectively.

14 Senator Rounds: One of the items Senator Cotton
15 started on this line of questioning a little bit, and I want
16 to pursue a little bit more, there clearly are stove pipes,
17 some intended, some unintended, with regard to the sharing
18 of information between Title 10 and Title 50 participants.
19 But you've also added another item in which is also
20 critical, and that is the private sector as well, which adds
21 additional challenges.

22 Could you talk about what your role is in terms of
23 making sure that appropriate information is shared and that
24 we make the most out of the information that we do gather?

25 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, I believe that the defense

1 intelligence and security enterprise has a role in ensuring
2 that we identify the threats accurately so that both public
3 and private entities can work effectively to design
4 solutions to deal with those threats as opposed to coming up
5 with solutions that don't match up with the threats that we
6 face.

7 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

8 Mr. Zimmerman, look, I've got just one real quick
9 question for you, and that is basically right now, we've got
10 the possibility if we have one of our near-peer adversaries
11 confronting us in one theater, there's a very, very high
12 probability that we'll have a second near-peer adversary
13 confronting us in another theater.

14 How do you see your role in terms of coordinating with
15 our partners to make sure that we have the best advantages
16 to be able to deal with two threats in two different
17 theaters?

18 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, I appreciate the opportunity
19 to talk about this just for a moment. I think the threat
20 that you have articulated is one that requires utmost
21 attention and underscores the relevance of this
22 administration's emphasis on partnering with allies, and for
23 them to take greater ownership and take seriously their need
24 to boost Defense spending.

25 If confirmed to the role, one of the principal aspects

1 of the job, as I understand it, is to manage Defense
2 relations in the area of responsibility. And so, if
3 confirmed, I would do all I can to partner effectively with
4 allies and partners to ensure that their security
5 capabilities are at a level where we can have the right
6 posture to address the threat you're describing. So,
7 partnerships are extremely important, and if confirmed to
8 the role, I would take that seriously.

9 Senator Rounds: Thank you.

10 Mr. Lohmeier, the B-21 Raider coming online shortly,
11 probably one of the best and finest of the major projects
12 out there on time, on budget. Currently, we're coordinated
13 to have about 100 of them in. Clearly, that's not going to
14 be enough. Would you seriously consider any requests out
15 there to increase the number of B-21s that could be acquired
16 by the Air Force as the needs arise?

17 Colonel Lohmeier: And, Senator, this issue is also
18 very important to me. One of my priorities is going to be
19 modernizing the nuclear enterprise. And, of course, the B-
20 21 is an important piece to that, and I understand that 100
21 B-21 program of record discussion to be rather maybe a
22 floor. And I'm very open to discussing more.

23 Senator Rounds: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Senator Hirono.

25 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 I want to ask each of you to respond very quickly to
2 the following two initial questions that I ask of all of the
3 nominees on any of the committees on which I sit. This goes
4 to fitness to serve, and we'll start with Mr. Lohmeier.
5 Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted
6 request for sexual favors, or committed any verbal or
7 physical harassment, or assault of a sexual nature?

8 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

9 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
10 entered into a settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

11 [Witnesses answer in the negative.]

12 Senator Hirono: Before I get to my questions for Mr.
13 Lohmeier, let me be clear. Mr. Lohmeier, you were fired,
14 removed from command for going on a partisan podcast and
15 pushing political conspiracy theories while in uniform.
16 Since leaving active duty, you have spread divisive, harmful
17 views on race, equality, LGBTQ rights, and talked openly
18 about seeking retribution against those you perceived did
19 you wrong. Exactly the kinds of comments that undermine the
20 unity and professionalism of that our military depends on.

21 And as if that wasn't bad enough, you're also a January
22 6th conspiracy theorist, calling it, "a government-led false
23 flag and hoax at the Capitol." I have deep concerns about
24 your nomination to be Under Secretary of the Air Force, and
25 just as much concern about what this nomination says to the

1 members of our military.

2 I'm very glad that Senator Shaheen asked of questions
3 relating to -- by the way, that this is a comment to all of
4 you about the importance of WPS, and I'm glad that she
5 pointed out that this is a very useful tool that neither
6 Russia nor China have to combat extremism. And to me, you
7 know, this is yet another example of the obsession that this
8 administration has against a whole swath of programs and
9 efforts that this administration deems DEI.

10 So, I'll get to my questions. Mr. Lohmeier, I hope you
11 can answer these questions yes or no? Do you believe that
12 January 6th attack on the Capitol, it was, "a government-led
13 false flag operation"?

14 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, let me begin by
15 respectfully saying that I believe you've mischaracterized
16 me and my views. Now --

17 Senator Hirono: Excuse me --

18 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes.

19 Senator Hirono: -- could you just respond to whether
20 or not you believe that that January 6th attack was a
21 government-led false flag operation? If you no longer
22 believe that, just tell me.

23 Colonel Lohmeier: I have never said exactly what
24 you've just attributed to me, but I will answer your
25 question, Senator. I believe that it's evident that there

1 were, in fact, undercover government agents at the Capitol
2 on January 6th, but I have not said exactly what you've
3 said. I'm always careful the way I characterize things.

4 Senator Hirono: Excuse me, my time is running out.
5 You deny saying it. Do you believe the January 6th attack
6 on the Capitol was a hoax?

7 Colonel Lohmeier: I've never used the word hoax, I
8 believe, to characterize the event. But what I have just
9 stated, I do believe, which is that there were most
10 certainly --

11 Senator Hirono: So, excuse me, again, you deny saying
12 that. Oh, are you planning to reprise against, I know that
13 Senator Reed asked you some questions, but I want to
14 actually name names. Are you planning to reprise against
15 General Whiting, Major General Pepper, Colonel Fran, or any
16 other active military service member for perceived slights
17 against you?

18 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, as I've said previously in
19 the hearing, I'm very focused on moving forward in the
20 future, and making sure that I hold people accountable for
21 their --

22 Senator Hirono: Actually, that's why I'm asking you
23 the question. So, let me ask you this. If confirmed, will
24 you recuse yourself from initiating or being involved in any
25 administrative or personnel actions involving General

1 Whiting, General Pepper, and Colonel Fran, yes or no?

2 Colonel Lohmeier: I know two of the --

3 Senator Hirono: Will you recuse yourself?

4 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, I know two of the
5 individuals you've mentioned. One of them is a combatant
6 commander who I presume has the trust and respect of the
7 President of the United States, and --

8 Senator Hirono: Could you just respond to my question,
9 please? I know you're taking up my time.

10 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, I --

11 Senator Hirono: Will you recuse yourself against in
12 any actions that relate to these people that I just
13 mentioned?

14 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, what I will commit to is
15 that I will treat all people fairly according to the law,
16 and I'll try and do my job to the best of my duty, if I'm
17 confirmed.

18 Senator Hirono: That is totally not reassuring. Thank
19 you, Mr. Chairman. I do have other questions for this
20 nominee, for the record.

21 [The information referred to follows:]

22 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: We'll have other rounds. Mr.
2 Lohmeier, you were beginning to say what you do believe
3 about January the 6th. So, go ahead and finish that thought
4 if you --

5 Colonel Lohmeier: Thank you, Senator. What I was
6 saying is that I believe there were many Americans who were
7 gathered that day as a part of a protest, and I also think
8 it's been politically fraught for many years, and it
9 continues to be brought up because there's so much
10 uncertainty about what was really going on. Totally outside
11 of my lane as a nominee for the Under Secretary of the Air
12 Force. And if confirmed, it's my job is to organize
13 training and equip forces to provide the combatant
14 commanders and the Air and Space Forces, and that's what I'd
15 be focused on.

16 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Senator Hirono, in light of my
17 intervention, do you have any follow-up question at this
18 point?

19 Senator Hirono: No, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Wicker: Oh, okay. Thank you very much.

21 Senator Hirono: My only comment is that his refusal to
22 answer very clearly the questions does not reassure me at
23 all that he is qualified to take this position.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, ma'am. Senator Ernst.

25 Senator Ernst: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and

1 thanks to all of our witnesses for being here today, and for
2 continuing your service to these great United States of
3 America.

4 I do want to start -- Mr. Lohmeier, we'll start and
5 talk about an issue that is extremely important to me and to
6 all of Iowa, and that is about our Air National Guard
7 Refueling Wing, located in Sioux City, Iowa. When the
8 National Guard's 185th Air refueling wing in Sioux City was
9 converted from the F-16 fighters to the KC-135 tankers back
10 in 2003, the Air Force said it would upgrade the airfield at
11 the Iowa National Guard Facility. Again, this is 22 years
12 ago. This is an important issue. It is one I have pushed
13 with the Air Force for a number of years now. So, this line
14 of questioning should be no surprise.

15 Because the tankers require -- they do have heavier
16 airframes, they have greater fuel loads that they will be
17 delivering. The runway is unable to hold that load. Okay?
18 So, this is critical importance. Unfortunately, the Air
19 Force and the National Guard never followed through on their
20 promise to upgrade that runway. They failed in their
21 commitment to complete the runway upgrade.

22 So, I am additionally concerned with this failure,
23 because now we have a conversion of the 135s to the KC-46s,
24 and the 185th Air refueling Squadron could potentially lose
25 its mission because of the failure to upgrade this runway.

1 It will directly impact the retention of the immense talent
2 of these guardsmen in Sioux City. And this is completely
3 unacceptable, and the Air Force must live up to its
4 commitment as of 22 years ago.

5 So, Mr. Lohmeier, is the Air National Guard a vital
6 component of the Air Force?

7 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. It is.

8 Senator Ernst: Is it essential that the Air National
9 Guard has the infrastructure and resources necessary to
10 execute its missions effectively?

11 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes. Every time the Guard comes up,
12 Senator, I often reflect on the fact that when I was an F-15
13 fighter pilot, I never even knew what unit happened to be
14 providing fuel to me on the tanker in front of me. There's
15 such a seamless integration between our active-duty reserve
16 and guard personnel. And so, I think this is a very
17 important issue.

18 Senator Ernst: Absolutely, and I appreciate that. If
19 confirmed, do I have your commitment unequivocally, that you
20 will fully fund the runway upgrade at the Iowa National
21 Guard facility in Sioux City, and ensure it's at the top of
22 the Air National Guard MILCON priorities for the fiscal year
23 26 NDAA?

24 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, Senator, like you, I don't
25 like it when people make commitments and can't keep them. I

1 think it's important to the trust of the American people,
2 and it's important for the Air Force to keep its
3 commitments. So, I'm familiar with the history that you've
4 laid out.

5 And unlike perhaps those that have gone before, I'll
6 commit a little bit differently to you, that I'll be very
7 transparent in my communications with you. I'll take this
8 particular issue very seriously, and I want to make sure
9 that if I make commitments to you or to the American people,
10 that I'll be able to follow through, or the Department of
11 the Air Force will be able to follow through. That is, so
12 I'll take that very seriously.

13 Senator Ernst: That is disappointing, though, Mr.
14 Lohmeier. I think I heard a commitment to Senator Cotton
15 about his home state priority. I am asking for a commitment
16 for my home state priority. The very mission of this unit
17 relies upon an upgrade of its runway. So, this is very
18 problematic for me. I have been bringing this up with the
19 Air Force for years now.

20 I'm asking that a commitment be honored for our Iowa
21 Air National Guard and the community that supports this
22 National Guard Unit. So, given the lack of commitment
23 around this project and its direct impact on the 185th's
24 ability to perform its mission, I want to make sure we're
25 not putting the cart before the horse.

1 So, again, Mr. Lohmeier, I'll give you a second chance
2 here. Can I at least have your commitment that you will
3 work with the Secretary of the Air Force to pause any
4 discussion on changing the 185th Air Refueling Wing's
5 mission set?

6 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, yes, you have my commitment
7 that I will, if confirmed, work very closely with Dr. Meink,
8 if he's confirmed, to carefully make data-driven decisions
9 and consider all variables. I don't think these are
10 decisions that should ever be taken lightly. I certainly
11 don't like that we can't follow through with commitments
12 that we've made.

13 So, I make the same commitment to you that I've made to
14 Senator Cotton, or that I'd be willing to make with any
15 Senator in this room, that I'll weigh each matter in a
16 nonpolitical manner, try and make the best decisions for the
17 Force. And of course, I'm very interested, Senator, as you
18 suggested, in honoring the commitments that the Department
19 of the Air Force has made in the past where that's feasible.
20 And I'd look forward to learning more about that.

21 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Lohmeier.

22 And I want to be clear. This isn't just about the
23 runway. It's about whether our Air National Guard is
24 treated as an equal partner, as you stated earlier,
25 international defense, or as an afterthought. And,

1 unfortunately, they have been treated as an afterthought.
2 The Iowa's 185th has served with honor, and they absolutely
3 deserve infrastructure that matches their operational
4 demands. I'm going to continue to press on this, and I hope
5 that I have resolution in the near future. We need to make
6 sure these commitments are honored. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 Chairman Wicker: Senator Kaine.

8 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And to the
9 witnesses, congratulations for your nominations.

10 There's a beautiful phrase in the New Testament in both
11 the Gospels of Luke and Matthew that goes something like
12 this; From the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks. And
13 Mr. Lohmeier, I want to ask you about your very active mouth
14 and what it reveals about your heart, your tweeting.

15 And I'll just give you a few examples. August 9th,
16 2024, "The left lies about nearly everything it does, and
17 tens of millions of Americans believe the lies." So,
18 trashing the left and calling tens of millions of Americans,
19 dupes. August 2nd, 2024, "If today, you're wondering why
20 the left and Mit Romney seem to have entirely lost any
21 semblance of a moral compass, Vladimir Lenin provides you
22 the answer." April 1st, 2023, "Of all that is good and
23 decent, the left is the real oppressor."

24 But the one I want to ask you about is the one that
25 Senator Hirono asked you about, and she read you an excerpt.

1 I'll read the whole thing. A tweet from August 9th, 2024,
2 "Picked this up in my basic exchange at Buckley Air Force
3 Base, several weeks after J6. This is what the Biden/Harris
4 administration ushered in after a government-led false flag
5 and hoax at the Capitol. They immediately demonized the men
6 and women in uniform. Then they purge conservatives and
7 Christians with their shot mandates. Brilliant planning,
8 actually."

9 Tell me what the phrase that you wrote, "government-led
10 false flag and hoax at the Capitol." What does that mean
11 with reference to January 6th?

12 Colonel Lohmeier: Thanks for bringing this up again,
13 Senator. I like the verses that you've read. I agree that
14 it matters a great deal that we try and speak truthfully.
15 I'll remind you, respectfully, that the comments that I made
16 that you've just shared, were shared on my X account, I
17 presume, while I was a private citizen in this country in
18 2024. I'd been out of uniform for three years. And in
19 fact, with absolutely no intention of returning to public
20 service, I was quite enjoying private life and being able to
21 criticize people as I wish.

22 Senator Kaine: So, they were a sincere reflection of
23 what you had in your heart at the time?

24 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, in as much as those statements
25 were properly contextualized, and I can't speak to the

1 context from which you've read. I always do try and speak
2 honestly, and again, reserve the right to be wrong about any
3 of my views. That is --

4 Senator Kaine: But how about just the phrase. With
5 respect to January 6th, what does your phrase, a government-
6 led false flag and hoax at the Capitol.

7 Colonel Lohmeier: Let me share, too, that I while I do
8 recognize the other quotes that you've read, I don't recall
9 having written those words that you've just read about
10 January 6th. And so that could be partly a memory problem.
11 It could be that I retweeted something and that quote has
12 been pulled, but I don't recall using that phrase.

13 What I do believe is that private citizens in this
14 country can have the right to express their views as mean or
15 as wrong as they might be, and that the men and women in
16 uniform defend the right of the private citizen to speak
17 those views. And that my concern while I was in uniform was
18 in fact that the kind of partisan rhetoric that I had used,
19 that you've just quoted from, for example, was actually
20 being inserted into the military workplace in a way that
21 divides troops.

22 And so, I was trying to hold our military, cultural,
23 and workplace environment accountable to a standard of
24 nonpartisanship, as I've indicated, so that we could thrive
25 in unity and not division. Now, private citizens have the

1 right to say this.

2 Senator Kaine: I completely agree. Private citizens
3 have the right to say and believe whatever they want. This
4 is a hearing about your qualifications for the position.
5 The qualifications are essentially, in my view, a mixture of
6 three things; background, character, and judgment. It's
7 about judgment. I don't want to confirm somebody into the
8 Pentagon who would fall for a conspiracy theory that a
9 fourth grader would find incredible.

10 If I searched your social media, and I saw you praising
11 the Great Pumpkin over and over again, you would have the
12 right to have that view. But I wouldn't want somebody who
13 believed in the Great Pumpkin to be in the position that
14 you're nominated for. And so, if I'm thinking about people
15 in the military. I know Virginia has an awful lot of people
16 in the military. One of my kids is in the military. There
17 are people in the military who are left, right, center, and
18 maybe even more who are completely disinterested in
19 politics. And we got crazy.

20 But how would somebody who's in the left, or considers
21 themselves in the left serving in the Air Force, when you say
22 the left lies about nearly everything it does, of all that
23 is good and decent, the left is the real oppressor. How
24 would any person who identifies that way feel any confidence
25 that you as a leader would have their back?

1 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. I think it's a great
2 question. It's one I actually share your concern for and
3 care greatly about. Let me just share briefly in a 10-
4 second answer. That at the time that I departed from active
5 duty, I had young men and women in uniform of all racial or
6 ethnic backgrounds, certainly different political
7 backgrounds coming to me privately, sending me notes and
8 saying, "Sir, I never knew what your political worldview
9 was. I don't understand completely why you've chosen to now
10 take a stand for these issues or write about what you did,
11 but I respect you as a leader." And, if confirmed, I'd be
12 happy to come back --

13 Senator Kaine: My time has run over, but I'll just --
14 in yielding back to the, to the chairman. I don't know
15 where you were on January 6th. Most of us were here. A lot
16 of us had a friend, a guy named Howie Liebengood, who was a
17 Capitol Police Officer who died as a result of January 6th,
18 whose widow Serena is one of my constituents.

19 When I hear somebody, anybody talk about what happened
20 here as a false flag or a hoax, it's insulting to those of
21 us who were here. And it's particularly insulting to those
22 who lost loved ones that day. I yield back.

23 Senator Scott: [Presiding.] Senator Sullivan.

24 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Mr. Lohmeier, I'm going to cover kind of the topics

1 that you and I talked about in my office a couple days ago.
2 First of all, I like to ask nominees, maybe I'll ask all of
3 you. Billy Mitchell was testifying in front of the -- I
4 think it was Senate Armed Services Committee, the father of
5 the U.S. Air Force in the mid 1930s. He was talking about a
6 certain place in the world. He called it the most strategic
7 place on the planet, and whoever controlled that place would
8 control the world. Mr. Lohmeier, I'll start with you. As
9 an Air Force guy, you know where Billy Mitchell was talking
10 about?

11 Colonel Lohmeier: I do, Senator.

12 Senator Sullivan: What place was he talking about?

13 Colonel Lohmeier: It was the State of Alaska.

14 Senator Sullivan: Great. Can I get that confirmation
15 from the two other witnesses?

16 Colonel Overbaugh: Yes, Senator, you can.

17 Mr. Zimmerman: Yes, Senator.

18 Senator Sullivan: Most strategic place in the world.
19 Great. Good. You guys are starting out really well here.
20 Thank you. And our adversaries, also see it as quite
21 strategic.

22 [Slide Presentation.]

23 Senator Sullivan: This is a depiction of the Russian
24 and Chinese incursions into our ADIZ and into our EEZ in the
25 last two and a half years. I'm going to flip that over and

1 show you the numbers. It's like several.

2 That's in the last two and a half years. Pretty
3 remarkable. Doesn't make a lot of news in the Lower 48, our
4 airspace, northern airspace. And the green, the green ones
5 are depictions of joint strategic bomber task forces and
6 joint U.S. -- or I'm sorry, Russia, Chinese naval incursion.
7 So, they're doing joint ops in the Northern Pacific and
8 Alaska. Just a couple -- two weeks ago.

9 So, Mr. Lohmeier, I want -- you're a former F-15 pilot.
10 Can you put the other slide up? When you do an intercept
11 mission, say from Alaska, how tough are those missions? Our
12 guys do them all the time. Every one of those incursions,
13 we intercepted them with F-22s, F-16s, F-35. How tough of a
14 mission if you're flying from JBER or Eielson Air Force Base
15 out to the ADIZ here, is that a tough mission?

16 Colonel Lohmeier: Yeah, Senator. The seat in the F-15
17 and even in our newest fighters, isn't comfortable when
18 you're spending hours in there hitting the tanker multiple
19 times.

20 Senator Sullivan: So, you're hitting a tanker probably
21 four or five times just to go do the intercept. Correct?

22 Colonel Lohmeier: Correct.

23 Senator Sullivan: And sometimes, in the middle of the
24 night, in February, you're doing an intercept up there. If
25 you're in a single engine F-16 intercepting Russian Bear

1 Bombers in the middle of the night in February, and you got
2 to punch out, you lose an engine, how likely are you going
3 to survive in that --

4 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, those are incredibly high-
5 risk missions. And we've got great men and women who put
6 their necks on the line every day doing just exactly what
7 you've described. And especially if you're having to punch
8 out in that environment, you're not in a good position.

9 Senator Sullivan: No. So, what the NORTHCOM Commander
10 and the INDOPACOM Commander and even the CNO of the Navy has
11 said we need more infrastructure up here to support these
12 missions because they keep saying we're going to -- the
13 Russians and Chinese are going to keep doing this even more.
14 So, would you work with me and this committee on those
15 goals? We're looking at Adak as a Navy Base with two 8,000-
16 foot airstrips. We're looking at a hangar up at Utqiagvik,
17 that's Barrow, to be able to station search and rescue
18 operations, or Galena, that was a former Air Force Base.

19 Would you work with me and this committee on looking at
20 that kind of infrastructure that can support the men and
21 women in Alaska who are literally on the front lines of
22 great power competition doing these kinds of missions. You
23 know, just a couple weeks ago, hard missions. Our military
24 up in Alaska do such a great job. But can you support me in
25 this committee in working on those infrastructure projects

1 that the two combatant commanders in this region INDOPACOM
2 and NORTHCOM have testified that they need?

3 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. I share your interest
4 in this area. This is in many respects a cornerstone of our
5 projection of power into the Indo-Pacific Theater. And you
6 have my commitment to work very closely with you on what the
7 Secretary and I are trying to do from a basing perspective,
8 an infrastructure perspective in the Department of the Air
9 Force, if confirmed.

10 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask one final question. The
11 secretary nominee in his testimony also committed to me, the
12 Air Force has committed to me and this committee for about
13 eight or nine years now to get more tankers up at Eielson.
14 The last Secretary of the Air Force did, the previous
15 Secretary of the Air Force did, Democrats, Republicans.

16 Can you commit to me, as the Secretary just did, to
17 work to get the four KC-135s that they've been promising
18 these brave men and women who need tanking capacity to go do
19 these intercepts, real-world missions. Number two, can you
20 work with me and commit to me to getting those four KC-135s
21 up to Eielson?

22 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, if confirmed, I commit to
23 you that I will work to ensure that the commitments that Dr.
24 Meink has made are fulfilled.

25 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you very much. Thank

1 you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Chairman Wicker. [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator
3 Sullivan. Senator Blumenthal.

4 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Mr. Lohmeier, the role of Under Secretary of Air Force
6 is not a platform for ideology or grievance. It's a
7 demanding leadership position that's responsible for
8 overseeing a budget, personnel, institutional integrity. It
9 requires a strategic vision, and really importantly,
10 managerial experience. That is to say, hands-on experience
11 managing a major organization.

12 I'm at a loss to see what in your background qualifies
13 you to lead or actually run the Air Force when you've never
14 led an organization that approaches this one at anything
15 like the scale and scope of what you would be expected to
16 do, if you're confirmed.

17 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, thanks for the opportunity
18 to address that. As I mentioned in my opening statement,
19 I've spent time in both the Air Force and the Space Force.
20 I was trusted to be an aircraft commander on the \$50 million
21 F-15 Eagle air superiority fighter, and then later was
22 placed in command of our \$18 billion space-based
23 architecture a decade ago. And in fact, that was my first
24 foray into working with program managers, acquisition
25 experts.

1 Senator Blumenthal: Well, what is the largest number
2 of people under your direct responsibility that you've --

3 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, at the time that I finished
4 my career, I was a squadron commander, and we had just over
5 100 people in our unit.

6 Senator Blumenthal: 100?

7 Colonel Lohmeier: That's right.

8 Senator Blumenthal: And how many will you be
9 responsible for if you are confirmed?

10 Colonel Lohmeier: The Department of the Air Force is
11 approximately 700,000 active-duty guard, reserve, and
12 civilian personnel.

13 Senator Blumenthal: So, 100 versus 700,000. How long
14 were you in charge of that squadron?

15 Colonel Lohmeier: I was a squadron commander for one
16 year, Senator.

17 Senator Blumenthal: One year. Is that the standard
18 length of time?

19 Colonel Lohmeier: It is not.

20 Senator Blumenthal: Why was it shorter?

21 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, it was cut short when I was
22 relieved of my command for publishing a book that's been
23 mentioned in this hearing that was advocating for a return
24 to an apolitical military workplace instead of dividing
25 troops along political ideological lines.

1 Senator Blumenthal: So, this is very strikingly
2 reminiscent of what we've heard before in these confirmation
3 hearings, seemingly for the Secretary of Defense who, also
4 in effect, was relieved of his responsibility when he was
5 running a veterans organization, and in effect, ran it into
6 the ground, which should have been a warning for all of us,
7 as it was for me and others on the committee, about lack of
8 managerial experience being potentially a really grave
9 pitfall. And I'm very fearful that we are going to see the
10 same in others in the Department of Defense. There's no
11 room for managerial misguidance or mistakes.

12 Again, let me ask you, what in your experience
13 qualifies you for this job?

14 Colonel Lohmeier: Thank you. I agree with you and
15 share your concern. We have no room in the -- at this
16 critical time with the threats that we face for our service,
17 secretaries and our under secretaries, to mismanage, to
18 break the law, to not take the priorities of an
19 administration appropriately seriously.

20 And, in fact, we need real leaders in place to make
21 hard decisions about budgets and acquisition processes,
22 major defense programs. We need them to make hard decisions
23 about the nuclear modernization efforts that we have
24 underway. And, if confirmed, I'll take that very seriously.
25 I'm a fast learner, and I'll surround myself with experts,

1 including Dr. Meink, if he's confirmed, to try and solve
2 those problems for the Department of Air Force.

3 Senator Blumenthal: Would you use Signal to --

4 Colonel Lohmeier: I do use Signal, Senator?

5 Senator Blumenthal: To talk to others in the
6 Department of Defense or the National Security establishment
7 about the plans for pilots in the Air Force to do military
8 missions?

9 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, one of the things I've
10 become quite good at over my 15-and-a-half-year career in
11 the Air Force and Space Force is understanding very well
12 that there are sensitive and classified materials that
13 should only be discussed in appropriate platforms. And we
14 have appropriate platforms and mediums for those
15 communications.

16 Senator Blumenthal: So, the answer is no?

17 Colonel Lohmeier: Signal is an unclassified messaging
18 app just like other apps, although it's end-to-end
19 encrypted. And so, if confirmed, that's something you need
20 to take very seriously in those roles. Yes, Senator,

21 Senator Blumenthal: Is your answer no?

22 Colonel Lohmeier: My answer is that I would --

23 Senator Blumenthal: Would you use Signal?

24 Colonel Lohmeier: I'll abide by the law, and I'll make
25 sure that any sensitive or classified communications are

1 accomplished on the appropriate mediums.

2 Senator Blumenthal: This is a yes or no answer.

3 You would not use Signal, I assume from your answer,
4 yes or no?

5 Colonel Lohmeier: I will use Signal for private
6 discussions that are unclassified with friends or colleagues
7 as I always have.

8 Senator Blumenthal: So, you would not use it to
9 discuss missions that pilots in the Air Force? You're going
10 to be --

11 Colonel Lohmeier: Correct.

12 Senator Blumenthal: -- the Under Secretary of the Air
13 Force, if --

14 Senator Blumenthal: -- you're confirmed --

15 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes. Easy commitment, Senator.

16 Senator Blumenthal: -- would be flying in hostile
17 territory, such as those pilots were when the Secretary of
18 Defense used Signal on two occasion to communicate about
19 those highly sensitive, confidential, potentially dangerous
20 missions, putting pilots at risk. You wouldn't do it.
21 Correct?

22 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, you have my commitment. I
23 will not use Signal to discuss those things.

24 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
25 Chairman.

1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Scott.

2 Senator Scott: Thank you, Chairman.

3 Well, first off, congratulations on your nominations.
4 Your jobs are going to be exciting. It's going to be an --
5 it's an exciting time to be part of building and making sure
6 we have a great military. So, you guys are -- you're all
7 three going to do a great job.

8 So, I just I didn't know I was supposed to come and ask
9 for a military base in my state, but I've got one that's
10 important, Homestead. But anyway, I just got back from
11 Europe, and this has been consistent for -- since I've been
12 up here. As I talk to allies, they complain. They complain
13 about two things. That they are trying to buy our
14 equipment. They complain about the, I guess, foreign
15 military sales process to get approval from the government.
16 Then, they complain about they can't get the equipment
17 quickly because our defense contractors are not on time.

18 So, Mr. Zimmerman, can you talk about what you think we
19 can do, and what you plan on doing to make it easier to make
20 a decision? Because I just -- we were just in Denmark,
21 Finland, and Estonia, the two that we had the conversation
22 with, all three of them, but a lot of it they don't
23 understand when they are ally and they can't get an answer.

24 I'm a business guy. What frustrates me about the
25 government is just give me a stupid answer. Because if you

1 tell them no, that they can go to Israel, they can go to
2 South Korea, they can go to other places and buy some of the
3 equipment they need. But if it's just a black hole, that
4 doesn't make any sense.

5 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator from my understanding from the
6 issue, I think I share your frustration and understand why
7 allies have thoughts about the process. If confirmed to the
8 role, I understand that the way in which I would be
9 connected to the FMS process is an advising role, and
10 particularly looking at prioritization in both with our
11 European allies.

12 And here we are in a situation dealing with an
13 underinvestment in the defense industrial base over the last
14 several years that has limited the supply of what they need.
15 So, that's a challenge, but I would give my best advice, if
16 confirmed, to the Secretary and Under Secretary about how to
17 prioritize allied security needs through the FMS system.

18 Senator Scott: So, you might not be involved in this,
19 but it's my understanding that with our defense contractors,
20 we pay for them to develop a product, and then they own the
21 IP for that product. Is that true, or do you know?

22 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, I don't know the answer to
23 that. I would like to get back to you about that.

24 Senator Scott: Does that make sense? Just off the top
25 of your head? Did that make much sense? If we for it, if

1 our government pays for it with our taxpayer dollars, they
2 own the IP?

3 Mr. Zimmerman: It sounds like if true, it might be one
4 of the challenges in the program.

5 Senator Scott: So, what do you think we can do to get
6 our defense contractors to fulfill the obligations that
7 they've committed to? Because we hear this all from our
8 allies all over the world; that our defense contractors are
9 not meeting, not just with their commitments to us on time,
10 but commitments to our allies for equipment that they need
11 to make sure they can defend, which is exactly what
12 President Trump wants them to do, be able to defend
13 themselves first.

14 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, it's a great question, and if
15 confirmed, I would do all that I could within the scope of
16 the ISA portfolio and how it touches on FMS to ensure that
17 the process is as painless and seamless as possible. It is
18 very important for our allies and for the administration's
19 goal of burden sharing to have an efficient FMS process.

20 Senator Scott: Okay. Thanks. You-all three are going
21 to do a great job. Thanks, Chairman.

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator
23 King is next, and he is graciously yielded to Senator Kelly.
24 So, Senator Kelly, you're recognized.

25 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Thank you, Senator King. Mr. Lohmeier, you recently
2 made a post that seemed to indicate Russia was justified in
3 its invasion of Ukraine because Russia feared NATO
4 expansion. This isn't just untrue. It's also the exact
5 kind of misinformation that Russia pushed to justify them
6 rolling troops and tanks across the border into Ukraine and
7 bombing Ukrainian cities.

8 So, Mr. Lohmeier, I want to be very direct here. In
9 your opinion, was Russia justified in its invasion of
10 Ukraine?

11 Colonel Lohmeier: Thanks, Senator Kelly, for taking
12 the time to meet with me a week and a half ago. In answer
13 to your question, I'll say as directly back as I can as
14 well, and in respect, I don't believe I used the word
15 justified in my post. However, I am a bit of a historian.
16 I like context, and what I've always said publicly is that
17 all heads of state have to make determinations for their own
18 security. And so, when I say something like that, whether
19 it's with Vladimir Putin or any head of state, I'm saying
20 that they are entitled to make those decisions whether we
21 agree with them or not.

22 Now, it's a bit outside of the lane of the Under
23 Secretary of the Air Force, of course, whose role as the
24 chief management officer will be to organize training and
25 equip forces for the fight in -- for any given

1 administration to meet combat and commander needs?

2 Senator Kelly: Well, I'll give you that. That the
3 post did not say that. But you did post an article by John
4 Mearsheimer that said why the Ukraine crisis is the West's
5 fault. You did not say that was your opinion. So, I'm
6 going to ask you the question, again. In your opinion, was
7 Russia justified in its invasion of Ukraine?

8 Colonel Lohmeier: For context, which always, of
9 course, Senator, as you aware, matters a great deal. That
10 was an article that was written by John Mearsheimer, an
11 international relations scholar, in 2014. And it was a
12 comment about Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and
13 some of the history leading up to that. It was not an
14 article that had any bearing upon what happened in the
15 decade that followed, per se, but it was an international
16 relation's academic piece that talked about the annexation
17 of Crimea.

18 And his opinion in that article, and this is a very
19 insightful article, in fact, traces through the history of
20 native expansion since it was created. It's, again, an
21 academic piece. It's something that we study at strategy --

22 Senator Kelly: Crimea was part of Ukraine. In my
23 view, still is part of Ukraine.

24 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator. And the point I just
25 make in bringing that up is that the opinion that was shared

1 in that post about that article had to do with past conflict
2 and implications for the ways in which allies interact on
3 the world stage and how that influences the decisions that
4 heads of state make. It was not in any way intended to
5 excuse the behavior of any head of state, including
6 President Putin.

7 Senator Kelly: So, now I've got two questions. So,
8 the title of the paper was, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is The
9 West Fault." Do you agree with that premise?

10 Colonel Lohmeier: It's an enticing title. Again, it
11 was pertaining to decisions that were being made a decade
12 prior to the conflict that you're asking about. It's an
13 incredibly informative academic work that is based in
14 international relations theory. I very much like the paper
15 and would still recommend to people today if they're
16 interested in understanding the conflict in the region.
17 It's a rich resource of information.

18 Senator Kelly: Do you agree that the Ukraine crisis is
19 the West's fault?

20 Colonel Lohmeier: No, because that's far too
21 simplistic. Again, global politics is a messy and
22 complicated affair. What I will say is that it's very
23 clear, a couple of years ago, Russia invaded Ukraine, and
24 Ukraine's been on the defense of trying to fight that war.
25 And, of course, it's had bipartisan support in this

1 Congress.

2 Senator Kelly: So, was Russia justified in invading
3 Ukraine?

4 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, with respect, I've not said
5 that.

6 Senator Kelly: Well, that's why I'm asking you the
7 question.

8 Colonel Lohmeier: I know you are, and I really -- the
9 reason I'm hesitating shouldn't be taken or interpreted to
10 imply and answer one way or the other. I really -- I like
11 context. I don't like yes and nos, and I don't like
12 soundbite media. I'll say that I believe that heads of
13 state retain the right to make decisions on who they'll go
14 to war with. That's not something I decide. That's not
15 something even the United States or its leaders get to
16 decide even as much as we want to weigh in on those
17 positions. I can say, though, for certainty that I'm
18 grateful --

19 Senator Kelly: But it sounds like you think it's okay
20 for one of our adversaries to invade one of our allies.

21 Colonel Lohmeier: I did not say that. What I will say
22 is that I'm grateful that there are currently efforts
23 underway by this administration to try and seek a peaceful
24 resolution of that conflict. I think it's time that it
25 ended.

1 Senator Kelly: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chairman.

3 Chairman Wicker: Senator Tuberville.

4 Senator Tuberville: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
5 you, gentlemen, for willingness to serve.

6 Mr. Zimmerman, since March 15th, CENTCOM has forces
7 that have conducted a sustained campaign targeting the
8 Houthis terrorist organization in Yemen to restore freedom
9 of navigation in American deterrence. As of April 27th,
10 CENTCOM has struck over 800 targets. These targets have
11 killed hundreds of Houthis' fighters and numerous Hootie
12 leaders, including Senior Hootie Missile and UAV officials.
13 Mr. Zimmerman, in your assessment, have U.S. operations
14 against the Houthis been a success?

15 Mr. Zimmerman: Senator, I support the administration's
16 forcible approach toward the Houthis beginning in the early
17 days of the administration with the executive order that
18 called for the elimination of the threat of the Houthis with
19 allies and designating them as a foreign terrorist
20 organization. I don't think I have access to the, to the
21 classified information that I would like to have to make an
22 assessment about the efficacy of the strikes, but I support
23 what the administration is trying to do.

24 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

25 Mr. Overbaugh, one of the organizations you'll help

1 oversee, if you are confirmed, is the Missile and Space
2 Intelligence Center, we call MSIC, which is a component of
3 DIA, and located in my state at Huntsville, Alabama. MSIC
4 provides a world-class analysis on the performance of
5 foreign weapons systems, which is critical to ensuring our
6 warfighters dominate the battlefield against our
7 adversaries.

8 Mr. Overbaugh, are you familiar with MSIC and MSIC's
9 analysis? And if so, can you talk a little bit about how
10 important this mission is?

11 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, I am familiar with MSIC,
12 and particularly their role in feeding quality intelligence
13 into other entities like DIA, to ensure that we have an
14 accurate threat picture. I think even more important is the
15 potential for MSIC to play a key role in ensuring we
16 understand the adversarial threat as it relates to ensuring
17 that our Golden Dome is as effective as it possibly can be.

18 Senator Tuberville: Have you had the opportunity to
19 visit MSIC headquarters in Huntsville?

20 Colonel Overbaugh: Huntsville, yes. MSIC, no, not
21 yet, Senator.

22 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Hope you get too soon.
23 Thank you.

24 Mr. Lohmeier, you have an absolutely outstanding,
25 unique career path as a respect to military officer. Thank

1 you for your service. You've got a breadth of experience in
2 both the Air Force and Space Force, which is very uncommon,
3 but none of those experiences were in managing large
4 budgets. Why should you be trusted now with such a heavy
5 responsibility at a time when we are taking fiscal
6 responsibility more seriously, thank goodness, than ever
7 before, and while there is a growing demand from the
8 American people that we have a clean audit of the Defense
9 Department?

10 Colonel Lohmeier: Thanks, Senator. I'm glad I get to
11 readdress this. While it's true that I don't personally
12 have extensive experience with a large budget in an
13 organization or acquisition experience, I have sound
14 judgment. I've demonstrated it throughout my life. I'm a
15 fast learner.

16 Secretary Meink, if he's confirmed, has demonstrated
17 that you can pass 16 or 17 clean audits at the National
18 Reconnaissance Office. He'll be a phenomenal leader to work
19 with on this problem in the Department of the Air Force.
20 What I can say is that we've got exceptional professionals
21 who have been trying administration after administration to
22 solve our budget problems, our acquisition problems in the
23 Department of the Air Force. And many of them have had
24 extensive acquisition and budgeting experience. But that
25 doesn't mean you're able to solve the problems well.

1 And so, if confirmed, what I can commit to this
2 committee and to the American people is that I'm interested
3 in making data-driven decisions. I'm interested in
4 exercising keen judgment, discernment about these budget
5 decisions, and coming to the right decisions that I believe
6 the American people will be grateful for and trust. And
7 doing that in concert with Secretary Meink in support of the
8 President's priorities and in support of the Secretary of
9 Defense's priorities.

10 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

11 And your knowledge will be very important moving into
12 space. You have a lot of experience in that area. We look
13 forward to working with you in that area because as we know,
14 it's going to be a much, much more important part of our
15 military in the very near future. Thank you, gentlemen.
16 Look forward to confirming you.

17 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Tuberville. I
18 would mention to members a vote is going on on the floor. I
19 think we can possibly finish this hearing before that vote
20 ends. Senator King.

21 Senator King: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

22 Mr. Lohmeier, I deeply respect your career in the Air
23 Force and the Space Force. But to follow-up on Senator
24 Tuberville's question, my concern is that the Air Force, and
25 particularly your position, is going to be responsible for

1 two-thirds of the modernization of the nuclear triad. And
2 the Sentinel piece is looking like the most consequential
3 civil works project that the Pentagon or perhaps in this
4 whole country has ever undertaken. It's already in a Nunn-
5 McCurdy breach.

6 So, I'm not satisfied with saying you're data-driven,
7 and you're going to hire good people. My concern is, I
8 mean, you're the boss, and you would be, if you're
9 confirmed. And I'm just uncomfortable. I'm not talking
10 about past tweets or books or anything else. I'm talking
11 about the future, and that is the management of probably the
12 most complex and important defense project that's ever been
13 undertaken by the Pentagon.

14 Try to reassure me. I mean, a great center fielder for
15 the Red Sox is not necessarily qualified to be general
16 manager. And your service is important, but you're talking
17 -- we're talking about these critically important
18 acquisitions projects that are intensely managerial. Try to
19 reassure me, if you can.

20 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, thank you, Senator. I agree
21 with your concern. I share your concern for the criticality
22 of the Sentinel Program, concern over the Nunn-McCurdy
23 breach that's experienced. Modernization of the nuclear
24 enterprise is, of course, a priority of mine. So, here's
25 the way in which I can try and reassure you, as I have

1 throughout the rest of the hearing.

2 I've been entrusted throughout my entire career with
3 both leadership of men and women in uniform, as well as
4 being entrusted with safeguarding and employing
5 exceptionally exquisite and expensive weapon systems, both
6 in the Air Force, in the F-15C and in the space-based
7 infrared system, the space-based missile warning
8 architecture, an \$18 billion architecture. I've worked with
9 acquirers' program managers in that process.

10 This is not a question of whether or not someone has
11 had the qualifications before to manage the Defense
12 Department, because who in their most human beings have
13 never had that experience? In fact, this is a question of
14 scale or scope, and I'll say that I've always been faithful
15 to the trust that's been committed to me, even though the
16 scale has been much smaller.

17 And I'll say, humbly, that I believe I'm up to this
18 challenge. I'm well qualified for this job. I'm air-minded
19 and space-minded, and I understand very well the threats,
20 especially that we face from our peer competitor in China.
21 And so, thank you. That's my best attempt to say, Senator.
22 I'm grateful for the opportunity, but I'm also humbled by
23 it, and very concerned about it as well. And I look
24 forward, if confirmed, to doing my utmost very best to
25 manage those very serious programs.

1 Senator King: I appreciate that.

2 Mr. Overbaugh, every time, and I like Senator Cotton, I
3 also serve on the Intelligence Committee. To me, the most
4 important quality for any intelligence official is the
5 willingness to tell the truth to the boss, even if it isn't
6 what they want to hear. Dan Coats, former DNI, said the job
7 of the intelligence community is to find the truth and tell
8 the truth.

9 Will you commit to me that you are willing to walk into
10 the Oval Office or walk into the office of the Secretary of
11 Defense and say this is the intelligence that we have about
12 this particular problem that contradicts the policy desires
13 of the President or the Secretary, or the Head of the Joint
14 Chiefs?

15 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, I can absolutely commit to
16 that. And I agree with you wholeheartedly, that seeking the
17 truth is one of the most important, if not the most
18 important components of an intelligence professional's job.

19 Senator King: And if you look back on recent history,
20 some of our real disasters have been caused by slanted, or
21 what I call, cooked intelligence. And that's to be avoided.
22 Simple question. Did Russia start the war in Ukraine by
23 invading?

24 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, it's a military fact that
25 Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022.

1 Senator King: Thank you.

2 There's one challenge about intelligence that we've
3 learned, particularly in Afghanistan, and then again in
4 Ukraine. And that is the analysis of the will to fight of a
5 population. We blew it in both cases. We overestimated the
6 Afghan's will to fight, and had the disaster of the end of
7 that war. And then, we did not -- we underestimated the
8 Ukrainian's will to fight, and all the intelligence was that
9 it would -- you know, the Russian would be in Kyiv in two
10 weeks.

11 I challenge you, and I know the Department has done
12 serious work on this, to pay attention to that because that,
13 for example, will be a factor in our policy decision about
14 Taiwan. So, it's not an easy question. It's not as easy as
15 counting tanks from a satellite, but it's nonetheless an
16 incredibly important intelligence challenge. So, I hope
17 that's something you'll pay some attention to.

18 Colonel Overbaugh: Senator, I will. And apologize, I
19 see that we're over time, but I do want to address this.
20 And I mentioned it in my opening statement about the
21 importance of evaluating and questioning the assumptions
22 that we use to make the assessments that we make, and
23 examining the frameworks to determine how much they are may
24 be influenced by personal bias or bureaucratic bias,
25 political influence, or any other type of interference,

1 which would inhibit our ability to provide our decision-
2 makers with the very best picture of adversarial threat to
3 include, which I personally think is one of the most
4 important components of enemy capability is will to fight.

5 Senator King: Thank you.

6 Find the truth and tell the truth. That's what we're
7 looking for. Mr. Zimmerman. I'll submit some questions for
8 the record.

9 [The information referred to follows:]

10 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator.

2 Senator Budd.

3 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman. And, again,
4 congratulations to each of you. Thanks for the family and
5 friends to be here today.

6 Mr. Lohmeier, are you familiar with the strategic
7 basing process?

8 Colonel Lohmeier: Somewhat, Senator.

9 Senator Budd: Okay, great.

10 Last month, the Department of Air Force transmitted its
11 plan to Congress for the sustainment and recapitalization of
12 the Air National Guard fighter fleet. Now, it was the
13 result of much analysis and careful planning. It's this
14 document right here. Have you had a chance to read this?

15 Colonel Lohmeier: I have not, Senator.

16 Senator Budd: Selfridge Air National Guard Base in
17 Michigan, is receiving 15 EXs, and that is not part of this
18 plan, which I can guess will change things for the Air
19 Force's frontline units. Not the Guard units, but the
20 frontline units. So, as an example, Seymour Johnson will
21 have to train these A-10 pilots on the platform of the F-15
22 and the mission using their F-15 Eagles. You flew the F-15,
23 correct?

24 Colonel Lohmeier: C models. Yes, Senator.

25 Senator Budd: Well, that's a large unplanned increase

1 in flying training compared to the simulator-based
2 differences training for transitioning currently qualified
3 F-15 pilots to the EX model. So, I want to paraphrase a
4 statement from the Air Force about the training capacity
5 down at Seymour Johnson.

6 "F-15 program flying training requirements will jump by
7 greater than 50 percent in Fiscal Year 2027 and 2028, and
8 currently, the Air Force has no training-coded aircraft
9 capacity to meet that requirement without reflow of combat-
10 coded F-15E. The Air Force is being forced to examine
11 drastically cutting the F-15 syllabus length to meet those
12 requirements. This creates risk on both quality and basic
13 course air crew graduates and on-combat air forces that will
14 receive aircrew with potentially subpar combat airmanship
15 skills."

16 And just to be clear, that statement was given by the
17 Air Force in February, and that's before Selfridge basing
18 decision was made. So, if confirmed, what will you do to
19 ensure that the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Base has
20 what they need to make ends meet with this additional
21 training requirement?

22 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, I'm really glad you brought
23 all of this up. You have my attention. I understood
24 everything you've said. It's of great interest. I'll say
25 that I'm very familiar with the missions being flown out of

1 Seymour Johnson. In fact, I'll just say publicly, it
2 matters a great deal to the Air Force and the American
3 people that we had over 80 drones shot down in the Middle
4 East this past year, over a six-month period, by a unit out
5 of Seymour Johnson. And we have dozens --

6 Senator Budd: They just arrived at that very moment.

7 Colonel Lohmeier: They performed potentially mass
8 casualty events and dozens of these men and women suit up
9 every day out of Seymour Johnson doing an absolutely
10 critical mission in defense of the homeland.

11 And so, you have my commitment that, if confirmed, I'll
12 look forward to working with Dr. Meink, if he's confirmed,
13 to looking at these things in a nonpartisan way, these
14 basing decisions, and the proper force structure, and bed
15 down of forces. But I'm interested in learning more from
16 you about Seymour Johnson, in particular.

17 Senator Budd: Thank you for that answer.

18 And just to be clear, if confirmed, you'll be
19 responsible for assisting the Secretary in organizing
20 training and equipping the Air Force. Correct?

21 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes. Thank you. And, in fact, as
22 we've mentioned, that's exactly what the role of the Under
23 Secretary of the Air Force is, that's our chief prerogative
24 is organizing, training, and equipping Air and Space Forces
25 to provide to our combatant commanders.

1 Senator Budd: Thank you for that.

2 So, if confirmed, I look forward to hearing the plan
3 soon on how the Air Force is going to solve this issue, and
4 at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Thank you-all, Mr.
5 Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Budd. Senator
7 Duckworth.

8 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Mr. Lohmeier, you know as well as I do from your
10 military service that upholding good order and discipline is
11 a foundation for our professional fighting force. Lethality
12 relies on a honed practice of service members following
13 lawful orders. I, myself, even though as a progressive
14 serving in the military, did not agree with President Bush's
15 decision to look for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq
16 when we should have been destroying the Taliban in
17 Afghanistan. Still volunteered to go and proud of my
18 service to this day.

19 Sometimes, service members have to serve against their
20 own personal opinions. Circumventing commanders on the
21 battlefield in real time could lead to life-or-death
22 mistakes. As former Secretary of Defense matters wrote,
23 officers must carry out a policy to the best of their
24 ability, even when they might disagree with that policy. To
25 that end, I have questions about your commitment to this

1 core principle and the troubling signals that your
2 confirmation would send to those in uniform.

3 You claim to have only written your book and gone
4 public after the Inspector General concluded that your
5 complaint had no merit. But we all know that there are
6 other channels available to service members concerned about
7 commander decisions or policy choices beyond the IG. Before
8 you chose to write your book or speak out in the media about
9 policies that concerned you, did you consider being a
10 whistleblower to your Senators or Representatives, which
11 would've been protected under Title 10, Section 1034, yes or
12 no? Did you consider?

13 Colonel Lohmeier: Yes, Senator.

14 Senator Duckworth: You did consider it? That is news
15 to us. I ask that you present this committee any
16 correspondence that you may have had with members of
17 Congress.

18 Colonel Lohmeier: Copy. I'll do that, Senator.

19 [The information referred to follows:]

20 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Duckworth: Thank you.

2 Did you file an Article 138 complaint, which under the
3 Uniform Code of Military Justice, allows service members to
4 seek redress for a wrong conducted by a commander?

5 Colonel Lohmeier: I did not, Senator.

6 Senator Duckworth: Okay. So, why did you not?

7 Colonel Lohmeier: There are many months in question,
8 the timeframe that we're talking about here, but at the time
9 that we separated after I had been relieved of my command,
10 and there was a command directed investigation about me as
11 well as the general officer that had relieved me of my
12 command, it was a traumatic period, a hard period of
13 hardship for my family and my children.

14 Senator Duckworth: No, I'm not talking about that.
15 I'm talking about when you were writing the book and you
16 were still in uniform. You chose to write -- you made the
17 decision to write the book because you said there was no
18 other way for you to address your concerns. And you said
19 that you did reach out to members of Congress, which is news
20 to me, but you did not file an Article 138 complaint prior
21 to writing your book and speaking in public.

22 Colonel Lohmeier: I understand. I misunderstood your
23 question, Senator. And my answer to your previous question,
24 you asked if I had considered reaching out to members of
25 Congress, and the answer to that question was yes.

1 Senator Duckworth: Did you do it?

2 Colonel Lohmeier: I had communication with members of
3 Congress, and I'd be happy to provide that to you. I
4 exhausted all of the means that I understood available to
5 me. I'd been counseling with the Base IG, Space Force IG,
6 Base legal, Pentagon Public Affairs, and the entire chain of
7 command to include members of the Joint Chiefs before I
8 published the book.

9 Senator Duckworth: So, nobody talked to you about
10 Article 138 complaint, which is a recourse that you could
11 have taken?

12 Colonel Lohmeier: If that was discussed specifically
13 Article 138, I don't recall the circumstances as to why I
14 chose what I did at that time regarding Article 138,
15 specifically,

16 Senator Duckworth: I'm concerned that you didn't
17 follow through on all of the recourses that were available
18 to you. You are allowed to have your personal views, but
19 there are rules governing how public service members can be
20 in opposition to lawful orders with your actions, you signal
21 to those under your command that it is okay to be
22 insubordinate. As Peter Feaver, a scholar who served in
23 George W. Bush's National Security Council has written, and
24 I quote, "Military officers who believe that the
25 policymaking process is heading in a bad direction have

1 ample recourse to advise within the chain of command if
2 their advice is not heeded. The country would not be better
3 served by senior officers provoking a civil military crisis
4 to advertise their policy differences with civilian
5 leaders."

6 You were relieved of command, not for your beliefs, but
7 for how you chose to express them on active duty while
8 holding a position of authority over others. That is not
9 persecution, that is accountability. And if as a former
10 commander you cannot recount the basic recourses available
11 to service members, how can we expect you to lead airmen and
12 guardians? You were relieved of command, not for your
13 beliefs, but for how you chose to express them on active
14 duty while holding a position of authority over others.

15 So, if it's true that you followed these steps, you
16 still decided to circumvent the chain of command while still
17 on active duty to speak up publicly without informing your
18 leadership. You could have resigned and spoken out, or
19 continued serving and kept your mouth shut, but instead, you
20 decided to continue serving and violate your professional
21 ethics. You are allowed to have those personal views. But
22 there are rules governing how service members can be in
23 opposition to lawful orders.

24 And so, I sort of feel like you broke the rules. There
25 are ways to do this, and you chose to instead circumvent

1 those rules that sets the standards for the people that you
2 are about to take charge of to continue to circumvent the
3 rules, and that is not conducive to good order and
4 discipline within the military. Do you understand that?
5 That is my concern.

6 Colonel Lohmeier: If Chairman Wicker's okay with me
7 responding, I'd be happy to.

8 Chairman Wicker: Sure. I think the question is; do
9 you understand that that's her point of view?

10 Colonel Lohmeier: I understand your view, Senator. I
11 think in value or in principle, you and I agree on many
12 things that you've said. I will reject the idea that I did
13 anything unlawful, unethical, or publicly contrary to -- I
14 never publicly criticized my chain of command. I never
15 publicly was politically partisan while acting in an
16 official capacity. And both of those allegations were the
17 reasons I was relieved of my command that I wasn't found
18 guilty of either of those things.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. And thank you, Senator
20 Duckworth. I think the distinguished ranking member has a
21 follow-up question.

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

23 Mr. Lohmeier, earlier this year, it came to my
24 attention that current serving military personnel have been
25 receiving emails, threatening them with being fired for

1 supporting the current DOD policies. One email that was
2 sent to a military officer with the subject line, "Clean
3 House," states, "With the incoming administration looking to
4 remove disloyal, corrupt, traitorous liberal officers, such
5 as yourself, we will certainly be putting your name onto the
6 list of those personnel to be removed. We know you support
7 the woke, DEI policies and will ensure you never again
8 influence anyone in the future. You and --" the redacted
9 spouse's name -- "will be lucky if you are able to correct
10 your military retirement."

11 Mr. Lohmeier, if you became aware of someone sending
12 threatening emails to currently serving officers, what would
13 you do in your capacity?

14 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, Senator, I think the way in
15 which leaders go about communicating with their troops
16 matters a great deal. Having been in command, there's no
17 way to retain the respect of your troops if you don't
18 communicate respectfully to men and women of every
19 background.

20 I don't particularly appreciate the tone in which that
21 email was written. I don't know who wrote it. I'm not
22 familiar with the background of that email, but I will say
23 once again that I share this committee's commitment to an
24 apolitical military. I don't believe witch hunts are
25 healthy in the military. I think that unity is our

1 strength. I believe that when we start to go down the path
2 of discussing partisan politics and ideology, it divides men
3 and women. That's why the American people tend to be so
4 divided. They have a full range of expression of these
5 ideas.

6 Our uniform wearers, to Senator Duckworth's point,
7 ought to be focused on their mission and not being caught up
8 in this kind of rhetoric. But if these kinds of things came
9 to my attention, then of course they deserve attention. And
10 every man and woman in uniform deserves to be treated with
11 respect.

12 Senator Reed: Do you believe it would be disqualifying
13 firing for someone on active service in the military as an
14 officer listed or civilian if they sent such an email?

15 Colonel Lohmeier: Notionally, I think the context
16 always matters, Senator, and I've expressed that I don't
17 necessarily -- I wouldn't write an email with that tone,
18 personally. I'll speak for myself. What's qualifying and
19 disqualifying at a very high level is whether or not people
20 are acting ethically and legally, upholding the oath to
21 defend and support the Constitution and following the lawful
22 orders of those that have been appointed over them to lead
23 them. And that's what every enlisted and officer, troupe
24 across every branch of the military is taught to believe in.

25 It's that, "Hey, whatever baggage I bring to my service

1 in uniform, politically, ideologically, I leave that at the
2 doorstep. I get the same ugly haircut as those next to me.
3 I wear the same uniform, bleed the same color, focus on the
4 same mission, and we care about readiness and lethality."

5 Senator Reed: Well, I too believe that context is
6 important. And if you look at the context, particularly
7 your comments since you were left the service, they created
8 an impression of someone committed to, frankly, a reprisal,
9 revenge, weeding out from the service those people who did
10 not ascribe to your thoughts. You said it in your -- in so
11 many words, in your X filings and in your book.

12 And I find it very difficult that suddenly you will
13 have this transition, this enlightenment that will disabuse
14 you of all those notions and make you someone who you claim
15 today is apolitical, not concerned about the extracurricular
16 activities of people in terms of their political positions,
17 et cetera. That's totally inconsistent what you've done
18 over the last four years. And I think you've made that
19 evident today.

20 Colonel Lohmeier: Senator, am I allowed to respond?

21 Senator Reed: Of course. That's the system here.

22 Colonel Lohmeier: I'll say briefly that I really do
23 believe -- one, I believe that everyone who's been in this
24 hearing understands that I'm authentic, and try and be true
25 in what I say. Second, I believe that every man and woman

1 that's ever worked with me would be glad to welcome me back
2 into public service.

3 Senator Reed: Does that include the people that you've
4 by name threatened to --

5 Colonel Lohmeier: I've not by name threatened anybody,
6 Senator.

7 Senator Reed: Well, you've certainly indicated your
8 displeasure with lots of people by name.

9 Colonel Lohmeier: Well, I'm displeased with the
10 cowardly behavior of many people, but I've never threatened
11 anybody. I think that we have many great men and women in
12 uniform, high and low, who all have the right to try their
13 best to serve this country faithfully. And I don't
14 necessarily agree with all the decisions they make, but I'm
15 not a vindictive person. And I think that men and women in
16 uniform will be very grateful to see me come back into
17 service, if I'm confirmed.

18 Senator Reed: Well, thank you for your testimony,
19 gentlemen. I will have questions for Mr. Overbaugh and Mr.
20 Zimmerman. Thank you very much, sir.

21 [The information referred to follows:]

22 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. This concludes
2 today's hearing. I'd like to thank our witnesses for their
3 testimony. And for the information of members, questions
4 for the record will be due to the committee within two
5 business days of the conclusion of this hearing, which is
6 right now we are adjourned.

7 [Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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