



COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

NOMINATIONS

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Washington, D.C.

Lexitas (DC)

1029 Vermont Ave, NW, 10th Floor

Washington, DC 20005

Job No. 1734283-001

1 TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: HONORABLE JULES W. HURST III
2 TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER); MR. RICHARD
3 M. O'MALLEY TO BE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR
4 ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT; DR. L. ROGER MASON, JR. TO BE
5 DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE; AND DR.
6 ERICH D. HERNANDEZ-BAQUERO TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE
7 AIR FORCE FOR SPACE ACQUISITION AND INTEGRATION
8

9 Tuesday, July 14, 2026
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11 U.S. Senate
12 Committee on Armed Services
13 Washington, D.C.
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15 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in
16 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger
17 Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

18 Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker
19 [presiding], Fischer, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer,
20 Scott, Tuberville, Budd, Banks, Sheehy, Moody, Reed,
21 Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Kelly,
22 and Slotkin.
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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM MISSISSIPPI

3 Chairman Wicker: The committee will come to order.
4 And to begin with, the Senate has lost a giant, a champion,
5 a former member of this committee, who though he went on to
6 other jurisdictions, was one of the strongest advocates for
7 American strength, and American partnerships around the
8 world, and peace through strength. And that's the late
9 Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. And so, I'd ask
10 all of us to bow our heads for a moment of silence in memory
11 of Senator Graham.

12 [Pause.]

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Mr. Ranking
14 Member and fellow members of the committee, since a quorum
15 is now present, we will ask the committee to consider a list
16 of 2,274 pending military nominations. All of these
17 nominations have been before the committee the required
18 length of time. Mr. Ranking Member, is there a motion to
19 report these 2,274 pending military nominations to the
20 Senate favorably?

21 Senator Reed: So moved.

22 Chairman Wicker: Is there a second?

23 Senator Ernst: Second.

24 Chairman Wicker: The motion has been made and
25 seconded. All in favor, say aye.

1 [Chorus of ayes.]

2 Chairman Wicker: All opposed say no.

3 [No response.]

4 Chairman Wicker: The ayes have it and the motion
5 carries.

6 Thank you all. And this executive session is now
7 adjourned.

8 And welcome to our distinguished visitors and their
9 families. I thank them for being here and for their
10 willingness to serve their country. The Honorable Jules
11 Hurst has been nominated to serve as the Pentagon's
12 comptroller and chief financial officer. If confirmed, he
13 will be responsible for working with Deputy Secretary
14 Feinberg to develop the Defense budget. He would oversee
15 financial management and lead the Department's effort to
16 achieve a clean financial statement audit by the end of
17 2028. As we work toward a total Defense topline of \$1.5
18 trillion, a figure I have strongly endorsed, we'll need an
19 adept comptroller. This person will manage a complex
20 funding approach, one that combines base discretionary
21 appropriations and mandatory reconciliation dollars.

22 I note that some members of this committee have
23 concerns with the reconciliation process. Some of those
24 concerns are normal. They've been shared by members of both
25 parties, as the party in power used reconciliation to

1 achieve party line goals. But other concerns, again, from
2 colleagues on both sides of the aisle, have been about the
3 lack of information on reconciliation from the Pentagon. I
4 acknowledge that there were problematic delays in
5 apportionment and decision making through the end of
6 calendar year 2025. However, I think there has been a
7 significant improvement in execution and information flow
8 over the past 6 months, and I credit Mr. Hurst for his work
9 on that front. We are not yet where we need to be, but we
10 are headed in the right direction. So, I think the
11 committee is going to appreciate Mr. Hurst's commitment to
12 continue providing all members of this committee with a full
13 and free flow of information.

14 Mr. O'Malley has been nominated to serve as deputy
15 under secretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment.
16 If confirmed, he will be responsible for helping the
17 Department as it implements the FORGED Act, strengthens
18 cooperation with allied and partner industrial bases, and
19 rebuilds American supply chains. The central challenge
20 facing the Pentagon is not only producing more of what we
21 already have, but also fundamentally changing the way the
22 Department acquires and sustains capabilities. The United
23 States must do so if we hope to prevail in a protracted
24 fight against a peer adversary. We must harness the
25 innovation of our private sector by moving the defense

1 acquisition strategy to a commercial first approach. I look
2 forward to hearing how Mr. O'Malley intends to drive that
3 change.

4 Dr. Eric Hernandez-Baquero has been nominated to serve
5 as the assistant secretary of the Air Force for Space
6 Acquisition and Integration. In this role, he will act as
7 an acquisition executive and as a senior architect for Space
8 systems across the Department of the Air Force. He will be
9 responsible for delivering combat-ready space systems to the
10 Joint Force, and for integrating those weapons with
11 commercial capabilities. The President's budget proposes to
12 more than double Space Force investments in the coming
13 fiscal year. Dr. Hernandez-Baquero would also be
14 responsible for stewarding the Space Force's sweeping
15 transition to a new portfolio acquisition executive
16 structure. I'm interested in how the Pentagon will continue
17 to make our national security space capabilities resilient
18 and proliferated, helping them face both kinetic and
19 electronic attacks.

20 And then Dr. Roger Mason has been nominated to serve as
21 director of the National Reconnaissance Office. In this
22 role, he will lead the acquisition, launch, and operation of
23 the Nation's space-based reconnaissance systems. These
24 systems provide critical imagery, signals, and other
25 information to the Department of Defense and to the

1 intelligence community. If confirmed, Dr. Mason would help
2 lead the office as it enters a new phase of intelligence
3 data collection.

4 The number of government and commercial satellites
5 continues to grow rapidly. Consequently, we are collecting
6 a dramatically increasing volume of data. We must use
7 artificial intelligence effectively if we hope to manage,
8 analyze, and deliver intelligence from these rapidly growing
9 data sets. The nominee will also have to balance expanding
10 commercial partnerships against the need to protect our most
11 sensitive technologies and capabilities from our
12 adversaries. So, we look forward to hearing how Dr. Mason
13 intends to meet these demands.

14 With that, I welcome our witnesses and our guests, and
15 I turn to my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Jack Reed.

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

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.
4 And before I make comments about today's hearing, I too want
5 to recognize Lindsey Graham. Lindsey was a unique
6 personality. I had the privilege of serving with him in the
7 House, and then later, he joined us in the Senate. He was
8 an articulate, relentless advocate for our Soldiers,
9 Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Guardians. Many reasons for
10 that. One, is he himself served as an Air Force officer.
11 He was the personification of a passionate patriot, and we
12 miss him a great deal.

13 Mr. Chairman, thank you again. Good morning to our
14 witnesses. Congratulations on your nominations. I'd like
15 to welcome you and your family members that are here. Mr.
16 Hurst, you are nominated to be the Secretary of Defense
17 comptroller. You have been performing the duties of this
18 position since August of last year. If confirmed, you would
19 be the first Senate-confirmed comptroller. And this
20 administration, this committee, cannot conduct meaningful
21 oversight of more than \$1 trillion of Defense budget without
22 a comptroller who is direct, forthcoming, and accountable to
23 Congress.

24 At this moment of financial issues in the Department,
25 some of the data is, let me say, unclear. Mr. Hurst, you

1 testified in April that the cost of the Iraq war had reached
2 \$31 billion, but acknowledged that figure did not include
3 battle damage, which is likely to be tens of billions of
4 dollars, and I would ask for an updated accounting today.
5 We have also received a supplemental request totaling \$87.6
6 billion, of which \$67.1 billion is for the Department of
7 Defense. But not all of the funding is directly related to
8 the operational costs of Operation Epic Fury. And I have
9 serious questions about the details of that request, and I
10 would appreciate more information.

11 Similarly, the Department's Fiscal Year 2027 budget
12 request assumed an additional \$350 billion in reconciliation
13 funding for barracks repair, and munitions, and aircraft
14 procurement, among other priorities. In my view, the
15 outlook for another reconciliation bill is very dubious.
16 Mr. Hurst, I want to know the Department's plan if that
17 funding does not materialize. I would note that last year's
18 reconciliation bill provided \$150 billion to the Department
19 of Defense and the National Nuclear Security Administration,
20 but as of earlier this month, only \$67.5 billion has been
21 obligated. This committee needs to know whether the
22 Department intends to obligate the remainder of that funding
23 before September 30, and I expect a firm commitment to
24 receive regular updates on obligation rates going forward.

25 Finally, on DHS reimbursements, since October 2025, the

1 Department of Defense has provided more than \$2 billion in
2 support to the Department of Homeland Security. However,
3 DHS has not reimbursed a dollar of that money, and the
4 impact on military training, rotations, exercises, and
5 personnel accounts is significant and growing. I would ask
6 for clearance on when you expect that reimbursement to
7 arrive and how the Department is mitigating the impacts in
8 the meantime.

9 Mr. O'Malley, you are nominated to be Deputy Under
10 Secretary of Defense for acquisition and sustainment. This
11 position has broad responsibilities for delivering timely
12 and cost-effective capabilities to our warfighters,
13 maintaining those capabilities over many decades,
14 supervising the Defense Industrial Base, and overseeing the
15 modernization of our nuclear forces. It is a demanding job
16 that requires extensive experience in the acquisition field,
17 and I'm concerned that your background primarily as an
18 intelligence officer in the Navy Reserves and in investment
19 management, does not provide adequate experience for this
20 position. I would like to explain how you plan to prepare
21 for this role.

22 The multi-year procurement negotiations currently
23 underway for key munitions are among the most consequential
24 acquisition decisions the Department faces, and I'd like to
25 understand your approach to accelerating munitions

1 production, as well as your ideas for incentivizing industry
2 to contribute more of their own resources to delivering
3 these systems in greater numbers at speed.

4 Dr. Mason, you are nominated to be the director of the
5 National Reconnaissance Office. Your background as the
6 assistant director of national intelligence for systems and
7 resource analysis should give you important familiarity with
8 NRO's mission. The NRO is at an inflection point. For most
9 of its history, the Agency's primary customers were the
10 National Security Agency and the National Geospatial
11 Intelligence Agency. That is changing. The retirement of
12 the Air Force's JSTARS aircraft has shifted the air and
13 ground moving target indication mission primarily to the
14 Space Force using proliferated satellites, and the NRO is
15 now acquiring most of those systems on the Space Force's
16 behalf.

17 This is a significant expansion of the NRO's
18 traditional role, and it raises real questions about mission
19 focus and institutional identity. I want to understand how
20 you would manage the acquisition role, while ensuring the
21 Space Force retains the command and acquisition authority
22 the law requires, and what priorities you have for NRO in
23 this rapidly evolving environment.

24 Finally, Dr. Hernandez-Baquero, you are nominated to be
25 assistant secretary of the Air Force for space acquisition

1 and integration. Your experience in optical sciences and
2 your experience at the NRO will serve you well in this role.
3 However, I want to make sure your nomination will not create
4 any perceived conflict of interest due to your previous
5 employment, which overlaps much of the same Space Force ISR
6 acquisition portfolio you would now supervise. Indeed, the
7 Space Force's ISR budget is growing from \$7 billion last
8 year to \$12 billion this year, nearly all of it in
9 reconciliation funding. That is a significant area of
10 exposure, and I want to understand how you've divested
11 yourself, and the recusal plans you have going forward.

12 In addition, I'd like to know your thoughts on this
13 committee's long-standing concern about SpaceX's near-
14 monopoly position in launch and proliferated satellite
15 constellations, and how you ensure we have competition in
16 these areas. Thank you again to our nominees, and I look
17 forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. And with that, we will
19 begin our opening statements. We'll go left to right. Mr.
20 Hurst, your opening statement, sir.

21 STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JULES W. HURST III, TO BE UNDER
22 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER)

23 Mr. Hurst: Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, and
24 distinguished members of the Armed Services Committee, let
25 me start by acknowledging the late Senator Lindsey Graham of

1 South Carolina. Senator Graham was a patriot. He devoted
2 his life to service, and was a tireless advocate for
3 America's service members and our national defense. I pray
4 that God comforts his loved ones during their time of grief.

5 It is an honor to appear before you today as President
6 Trump's nominee to be the Under Secretary of War,
7 comptroller and chief financial officer. I'm grateful to
8 the President, Secretary Hegseth, and Deputy Secretary
9 Feinberg, for their confidence and for the opportunity to
10 serve. I'm also grateful to my wife, Elizabeth, and our
11 five children, Henry, Charlotte, Victoria, Augustine, and
12 George, for their love and support. Beth has learned more
13 about the Department's personnel policies and PBPs than I
14 suspect she's ever wanted to learn, but she tells me she
15 enjoys it. She's an incredible wife and mother.

16 My family and I continue to owe the U.S. military an
17 enormous debt. My grandfather, Sugar, attended college on
18 the GI Bill after serving as a Marine NCO during the Korean
19 War. My father, Sonny, provided my sister and I a middle
20 class upbringing as an Air Force officer, and I was
21 fortunate enough to attend the College of William Mary, an
22 Army ROTC scholarship. Our military service made each of us
23 better people, better fathers, and better citizens.

24 Over the last 2 decades, I've been blessed with a great
25 variety of assignments, from the JSOC Intelligence Brigade

1 to the Office of the Speaker of the House. I've held an
2 equal variety of positions in this administration since
3 January 2025. I performed the duties of the Under Secretary
4 of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Assistant
5 Secretary for Readiness, and the Under Secretary
6 Comptroller. I now serve as the Assistant Secretary of the
7 Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. These positions are
8 united by a common thread: my desire to improve the
9 Department as an institution to better protect the American
10 people.

11 If confirmed as Under Secretary Comptroller, I will
12 focus on three main priorities. First, the Department must
13 pass a clean financial statement audit by 2028. We must
14 prove our fiscal responsibility to the American people. As
15 the comptroller, I advanced a new audit strategy, helped
16 create the Joint Task Force audit and hired an incredible
17 audit leadership team. If confirmed, I will continue this
18 work with a talented service comptrollers to drive towards a
19 clean opinion. We will focus our resources on the largest
20 vulnerabilities in our financial statements and apply
21 artificial intelligence to expedite testing as we
22 consolidate systems and apply controls.

23 Second, the Department must continue to construct
24 budgets that align with the ongoing evolutions in warfare,
25 and continue expanding our industrial base as we build

1 sixth-generation aircraft. We must also place equivalent
2 bets on affordable mass autonomous platforms, and UW space,
3 and cyber systems. The fielding, integration of manned,
4 unmanned systems, and high and low-cost platforms is
5 critical to our operational success.

6 Third, I will focus on improving financial management
7 systems and processes across the Department. The Department
8 of War manages one of the most complex financial enterprises
9 in the world. We must consolidate resource planning tools,
10 establish data standards, and create systems to see resource
11 distributions in real time to improve decision-making. If
12 confirmed, I commit to continuing a full court press to
13 achieve a clean financial statement opinion in 2028,
14 budgeting for the evolving character of warfare, and
15 modernizing our financial systems and processes.

16 Thank you for the honor of being here today. I look
17 forward to your questions.

18 [The prepared statement of Mr. Hurst follows:]
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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Mr. Hurst.
2 Mr. O'Malley, you're recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF MR. RICHARD M. O'MALLEY, TO BE DEPUTY
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT

3 Mr. O'Malley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And please
4 allow me to pass along my condolences to the family,
5 friends, and colleagues of Senator Lindsey Graham. May the
6 perpetual light shine upon him.

7 Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished
8 members of this committee, good morning, and thank you for
9 the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your
10 consideration of my nomination to serve as Deputy
11 Undersecretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment. I'm
12 deeply grateful to President Trump, Vice President Vance,
13 and Secretary Hegseth, for honoring me with this nomination.
14 I also wish to extend my profound thanks to the Honorable
15 Under Secretary Michael Duffey for his leadership, trust,
16 and support. If confirmed, it will be the privilege of a
17 lifetime to support him in a role so critical to the
18 Department's mandate to rebuild our military and revitalize
19 our Defense Industrial Base.

20 I would not be sitting before you today without the
21 unwavering support of God and my family. Many thanks to my
22 wife, Carrie, and our children Ella, Shaina, Raleigh, Jake,
23 and Grant. I grew up working on my family's tree farm in
24 Wisconsin. On that farm, I learned the value of hard work,
25 resilience, and stewardship principles that have guided my

1 career ever since. To go from planting trees in those
2 fields to sitting before this esteemed committee is a
3 testament to the exceptional promise of this country. It is
4 a trajectory that can truly only happen in America.

5 My career has been defined by a relentless focus on the
6 intersection of national security and technology. For over
7 two decades, I've served as an enlisted intelligence
8 specialist and intelligence officer in the United States
9 Navy Reserve. In that capacity, I have gained firsthand
10 knowledge of the threat confronting our service members from
11 Iraq, and Syria, to the European Command. Concurrently, as
12 a small business owner, I founded Looking Glass Investments,
13 a firm leveraging big data and machine learning to create
14 complex risk models. Leading this specialized enterprise
15 gave me a deep, practical understanding of how advanced data
16 analytics can solve intractable problems. It also taught me
17 the real-world hurdles that innovative vendors face when
18 attempting to navigate complex requirements to deliver
19 cutting edge solutions in government.

20 I've had the privilege of serving in key advisory roles
21 prior to serving in my current capacity as senior advisor to
22 the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment, which I
23 began in March of this year. I served as Special Assistant
24 to the Secretary of War. In that role, I was honored to
25 support the Secretary's nationwide Arsenal of Freedom Tour.

1 We traveled from the shipyards of our coasts to the
2 aerospace facilities and factories of our heartland. What
3 was most gratifying for me was meeting the men and women of
4 our defense industrial base, the true lifeblood of our
5 national defense, and every engagement I had the opportunity
6 to convey. Secretary Hegseth and Secretary Duffey's primary
7 charge to the Department to deliver integrated capabilities
8 to our warfighters quickly and at scale. As Secretary
9 Hegseth has established, we are on a war footing. We must
10 restore the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, and
11 reestablish deterrence.

12 We face a highly competitive strategic environment. We
13 are engaged in a high stakes competition with adversaries
14 who possess both advanced capabilities and the massive
15 industrial base required to produce them. Under President
16 Trump's leadership, we have the blueprint to meet this
17 challenge. Executive Order 14265 mandates that we modernize
18 acquisitions and spur innovation, recognizing that a robust
19 factory floor is a critical enabler of battlefield success.
20 If confirmed, I will aggressively support the ongoing
21 transition to a dynamic warfighting acquisition system,
22 ensuring we field technology at a rate that outpaces our
23 adversaries.

24 To achieve this, we must also prioritize the warfighter
25 in all defense contracting consistent with Executive Order

1 14372. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our supply
2 chains are highly resilient, and that capital is effectively
3 managed. These executive actions are essential, and their
4 impact is greatly enhanced by the legislative partnership of
5 this committee. I want to thank the chairman and the
6 Congress for your vital leadership in passing the FORGED
7 Act. The Department is already utilizing this critical
8 legislation to recapitalize our manufacturing base, secure
9 our supply chains, revitalize the defense workforce. If
10 confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this
11 committee to maximize the authorities granted by the FORGED
12 Act to continue building our industrial strength.

13 If confirmed, I pledge to work closely and
14 transparently with you. I will be fully accountable to the
15 President, the Secretary, the Congress, and the American
16 people, to resource our military arsenal with urgency and
17 precision.

18 Thank you for your time and for your consideration of
19 my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Mr. O'Malley follows:]

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22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. O'Malley.

23 Dr. Mason, you are recognized.

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1 STATEMENT OF DR. L. ROGER MASON, JR., TO BE DIRECTOR
2 OF THE NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

3 Dr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to
4 begin by expressing my sympathy to the members of this
5 committee for the loss of your friend and colleague, Senator
6 Graham. Senator Graham was a stalwart for the Defense
7 Intelligence Enterprise, and his leadership will be deeply
8 missed.

9 Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished
10 members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to
11 appear before you today to consider my nomination to be the
12 director of the National Reconnaissance Office. I want to
13 thank President Trump and Secretary Hegseth for their trust
14 and confidence in me to return to government service and
15 fulfill this important national security position.

16 Family is my bedrock, and I'm grateful beyond words for
17 their support, their sacrifice, and unconditional love.
18 First, I want to thank my parents who instilled in me the
19 importance of being accountable, the value of hard work, and
20 the promise of education. I'm most grateful to my
21 remarkable wife of 30 years, Colleen. She inspires me every
22 day and sets the example of selfless service to our family.
23 Together, we are incredibly proud of our three children,
24 John, Joseph, and Caroline, who are just now beginning their
25 own lives based on those new those same values.

1 I was born only a few miles from here in Alexandria,
2 Virginia, and have since been a lifelong resident of
3 Virginia. Growing up, my parents pressed the importance of
4 education with my sister and I, and we became first-
5 generation college graduates. For me, applying science to
6 solve hard problems was the passion for learning. This
7 drive resulted in earning a Ph.D. in engineering physics
8 from the University of Virginia, which gave me a strong base
9 to begin a career in national security.

10 In my first job after graduate school, I led teams to
11 develop and deploy remote sensors into a global system
12 linked by satellites for national security missions. Simply
13 put, I fell in love with the mission, and devoted the next
14 32 years of my career, serving it in both industry and
15 government. Over these 3 decades, I honed my leadership,
16 experience, skills, and abilities to enable me to bring the
17 right leadership at this moment in time to the National
18 Reconnaissance Office. As President of a space and
19 intelligence business, I led a multibillion-dollar
20 organization with over 4,500 employees that provided
21 advanced manufacturing products, services, and solutions for
22 every phase of space-based missions.

23 I was honored to serve as the first Assistant Director
24 of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analysis,
25 driving strategic capability investments, developing

1 intelligence requirements, and conducting independent cost
2 estimates on every major system acquisition. In that role,
3 I gained valuable insight across all intelligence missions,
4 from the strategic to the tactical, from counterterrorism to
5 foreign military combat capabilities and everything in
6 between.

7 Today marks an incredibly exciting time for space not
8 seen since the dawn of space intelligence in the 1960s. We
9 are in a space renaissance where the pace of technology
10 advancement, the speed of innovation, and the promise of the
11 future has drawn unprecedented investments from many
12 sectors. The future of space and how our Nation can use it
13 for good seems limitless. Today, the NRO embarks on a new
14 journey to fundamentally change how space-based intelligence
15 is done. The future of space, however, is also contested.
16 Adversaries are in a race to build their own capabilities,
17 including counter-space measures capable of denying our
18 Nation's critical space missions.

19 If confirmed, my priorities will focus on elevating
20 inner strengths and emphasizing three major areas. The
21 first, accelerate the next-gen space architecture that
22 integrates proliferated and exquisite capabilities to
23 produce integrated intelligence data at mission speed. The
24 second, enable NRO to push the leading edge of space
25 technology and innovate even faster. And the third, ensure

1 enterprise-wide resilience from space vehicles to the ground
2 and everything that connects the Agency.

3 These priorities will only be achieved with a vibrant,
4 mission focused workforce and critical strategic
5 partnerships. The NRO workforce is the heartbeat of the
6 organization and demands the full attention of its
7 leadership to attract, develop, grow, and retain its world
8 class talent. To deliver success, strategic partnerships
9 with the military, intelligence agencies, and our allies are
10 essential, and we must continue to work closely with an
11 expanding industrial base. All of these relationships must
12 be built with strong communications, transparent processes,
13 and a spirit of problem solving.

14 Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished
15 members of the committee, I conclude these remarks by giving
16 you my commitment that, if confirmed, I will bring the very
17 best of my energy and skills in service to the Nation to
18 lead the NRO with the strength it deserves and the future
19 vision it demands. Thank you for your time today, and I
20 look forward to answering your questions.

21 [The prepared statement of Dr. Mason follows:]

22 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Mason.

23 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero.

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1 STATEMENT OF DR. ERICH D. HERNANDEZ-BAQUERO, TO BE
2 ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR SPACE ACQUISITION
3 AND INTEGRATION

4 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Good morning, Chairman Wicker,
5 Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of this
6 committee. I want to first express my deepest sympathy to
7 all who mourned the recent passing of Senator Lindsey
8 Graham. As a fellow Air Force veteran, I am saddened to see
9 him slip the surly bonds of earth and pray his last high
10 flight brings him the joy of touching the face of God.
11 Senator Graham's lifelong dedication to the Nation sets a
12 great example for those called to serve the cause of
13 freedom.

14 I thank this committee for the opportunity to appear
15 before you to answer this call. If confirmed, I would be
16 honored to serve as the second Assistant Secretary of the
17 Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration. This
18 opportunity is only possible by the grace of God and His
19 divine providence. I humbly thank President Trump,
20 Secretary Hegseth, and Secretary Meink, for their trust and
21 confidence in me. I am eternally grateful to my family,
22 friends, and colleagues who supported me through 36 years of
23 military service in the Air Force and executive leadership
24 in the space industry. Most especially, I thank my wife,
25 Kimberly, and my sons, Curtis and Nathan, who deserve

1 recognition for their steadfast love and patriotism. It is
2 this love and patriotism that brings us here today.

3 Our Nation faces rapidly growing threats in and from
4 space. Adversaries are increasing their anti-satellite
5 capabilities, attempting to deny our freedom of action in
6 space. Additionally, adversaries seek to hold our homeland
7 at risk with advanced space-enabled weapons systems designed
8 to evade our defenses. To counter these threats, we must
9 move quickly to seize the opportunities made possible by the
10 most innovative and productive industry in the world.

11 To do so, if confirmed, I will focus on three
12 priorities: space acquisition reform, mission integration,
13 and the acquisition workforce. I am excited by the
14 acquisition reform the Department and this Congress have
15 started. If confirmed, I will further the implementation of
16 these reforms by optimizing work for speed, harnessing
17 commercial innovations, adopting new business models, and
18 focusing on mission outcomes. I have done this as a
19 military officer and as a business leader, and it works. If
20 confirmed, I will codify this approach in acquisition
21 strategies and implement change through good execution of
22 space programs, emphasizing technical expertise, sound risk
23 management, agile processes, and mission driven operational
24 support. These changes will foster a culture of excellence
25 and innovation critical to mission success.

1 In recent years, progress has been made in making space
2 acquisitions nimbler through the development of smaller
3 satellites and modular software-driven architectures. Such
4 architectures can be fielded faster and at lower unit costs,
5 but they create significant integration challenges as no
6 single system can perform the full mission. If confirmed, I
7 will drive mission integration by validating capabilities
8 end-to-end, early, and often, taking advantage of the new
9 mission aligned portfolio acquisition executives, PAEs.

10 If confirmed, I will also establish key mission threads
11 such as space enabled kill chains to close gaps, increase
12 efficiency, maximize capacity, and ensure interoperability.
13 Finally, if confirmed, I will partner with stakeholders
14 using the authority that Congress established as chair of
15 the Space Acquisition Council to ensure architectural
16 alignment across the space enterprise.

17 None of these efforts are possible without the
18 professionalism of a talented acquisition workforce. In my
19 experience, we lose talent when people are not empowered
20 with decision authority and are shackled by red tape. If
21 confirmed, I will champion initiatives to revitalize and
22 sustain a vibrant workforce. These include promoting
23 mission first culture, proactively managing careers,
24 enhancing training and education, and ensuring programs are
25 staffed with the right people in the right job.

1 Finally, if confirmed, I will personally coach and
2 mentor every PAE, modeling the behavior I expect from them.
3 In the end, the acquisition workforce needs to be recognized
4 for the essential warfighting function they perform. In
5 summary, if confirmed, I commit to advance space acquisition
6 reform, energize mission integration, and revitalize the
7 workforce, working closely with Congress to accelerate
8 delivery of innovative space capabilities to the warfighter.

9 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

10 [The prepared statement of Dr. Hernandez-Baquero
11 follows:]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Dr. Hernandez-Baquero. In
2 paying tribute to my friend Senator Lindsey Graham, you
3 quoted a few words from High Flight by John Gillespie, John
4 Gillespie Magee, Jr. That is a special poem to me and to
5 many of my fellow service veterans, and I thank you for
6 doing that, and commend that work of literature to everyone
7 listening.

8 I'll now ask you a series of standard questions this
9 committee poses to all civilian nominees, and please just
10 answer yes or no. Have you adhered to applicable laws and
11 regulations governing conflicts of interest?

12 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

13 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

14 Dr. Mason: Yes.

15 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

16 Chairman Wicker: Have you assumed any duties or taken
17 any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the
18 confirmation process?

19 Mr. Hurst: No.

20 Mr. O'Malley: No.

21 Dr. Mason: No.

22 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: No.

23 Chairman Wicker: Exercising our legislative and
24 oversight responsibilities makes it important that this
25 committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate

1 committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings,
2 reports, records, and other information from the executive
3 branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to
4 appear and testify before this committee when requested?

5 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

6 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

7 Dr. Mason: Yes.

8 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

9 Chairman Wicker: Do you agree to provide records,
10 documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner
11 when requested by this committee, and subcommittees, or
12 other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult
13 with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith
14 delay or denial in providing such records?

15 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

16 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

17 Dr. Mason: Yes.

18 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

19 Chairman Wicker: Will you -- and, you know, that is a
20 problem that I think, the distinguished ranking member and
21 members of the committee would say that we've had to face.
22 So, it's good to hear your answer in the affirmative there.
23 Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines
24 established by this committee for the production of reports,
25 records, and other information, including timely responding

1 to hearing questions for the record?

2 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

3 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

4 Dr. Mason: Yes.

5 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

6 Chairman Wicker: Will you cooperate in providing
7 witnesses and briefers in response to congressional
8 requests?

9 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

10 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

11 Dr. Mason: Yes.

12 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

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

15 Mr. Hurst: Yes.

16 Mr. O'Malley: Yes.

17 Dr. Mason: Yes.

18 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes.

19 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. And now, we
20 begin with a round of questions by members of the committee,
21 and I'll begin by asking this to you, Mr. O'Malley. The
22 last NDAA that we passed shifted a burden toward what we
23 call, "commercial first." Is that a term that is familiar
24 to you, sir?

25 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator.

1 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Well, for the benefit of the
2 Americans listening, we shifted the burden from if you're
3 going to buy commercial you had to get approval, to
4 requiring approvals if you're not going to buy commercial.
5 So, if you're going to buy commercial, you don't have to
6 have prior approval anymore. That means we made commercial
7 procurement the preferred option in contracting. However,
8 since the executive order was signed pursuant to legislation
9 passed by the Congress and signed by the President of the
10 United States, the Department has actually reduced its
11 commercial spending by nearly 1 percentage point. That's
12 going in the wrong direction, according to the statute. So,
13 how would you make sure commercial first is taken seriously,
14 and actually, is implemented according to statute?

15 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator. So, as it relates to
16 commercial first, I appreciate that data that you just
17 shared. I had not been aware of that. Certainly, not
18 heading in the right direction. We know from the
19 discussions of commercial first, that we need to work with
20 the services to accelerate the adoption of commercial first
21 solutions. There are proven commercial tools we know exist,
22 and this goes to the Secretary's emphasis on the speed of
23 relevance. Commercial first is certainly part of that.
24 There's an opportunity here to solve readiness bottlenecks,
25 introduce the Department to new and innovative companies.

1 And if confirmed, I will certainly focus on the statute and
2 the executive order to make commercial first a priority.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. And that should go
4 without saying. But let's be clear, if you're not going to
5 buy commercial items, they've got to come get approval. Do
6 you understand that?

7 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator.

8 Chairman Wicker: All right. Okay. Well, I very much
9 appreciate that. Now, Mr. Hurst, I bet you are aware that
10 that there is some dissatisfaction on the part of Congress
11 about the slow rates of obligation of funds provided for in
12 reconciliation. You are aware of frustrations and
13 complaints coming from Congress in that regard, are you not?

14 Mr. Hurst: Yes, chairman.

15 Chairman Wicker: And so, how do you propose that we
16 resolve that problem and that frustration?

17 Mr. Hurst: Well, Chairman, let me first start by
18 saying that I think that the reconciliation bill that this
19 Congress passed has been incredibly important for the
20 Department of Defense. Thank you. And when we did our
21 posture hearing with the Secretary here in May, I believe
22 our obligation rate was around \$25 billion. And from what
23 Senator Reed said, I think now we're above \$67 billion. So,
24 I think that reflects the Department's commit to accelerate
25 the obligation of these funds. And while I'm not in a

1 position of comptroller right now, and I can't give you a
2 current total, that figure alone suggests to me that the
3 Department is committed to obligating these funds.

4 Chairman Wicker: Okay. And so, do I understand your
5 position to be that the Department understands this, that
6 you are moving in the right direction, and that you're going
7 to continue to provide members of this committee and members
8 of the Congress with full and free flow of information in
9 that regard.

10 Mr. Hurst: Yes, Chairman. And before I left the
11 position of comptroller, I was working with the services to
12 create some visualization tools which would accelerate the
13 gathering of this data, which would make it easier to share
14 with Congress.

15 Chairman Wicker: Okay. And then, Dr. Mason, we're
16 running out of time, but you're going to have to, as I said
17 in my opening statement, balance expanding commercial
18 partnerships with the need for keeping sensitive
19 technologies and capabilities away from our adversaries.
20 That's a balancing act. How do you intend to meet these
21 demands?

22 Dr. Mason: Chairman Wicker, the heart of that question
23 is really in the next-gen architecture that is composed of
24 both proliferated and exquisite technology, the exquisite
25 being more reference to the national technical means that

1 you reference in that regard. We have to do both, and to do
2 both, the commercial element of that is essential. It is
3 now integrated part of the architecture. And so, as you
4 embark in that, the security to protect secrets, whether
5 those are born from how you use the commercial or the
6 exquisite capabilities are really the same. And something
7 looking from the outside in, NRO has done a remarkable job
8 over in the past, and I certainly would be committed to do
9 the same in the future.

10 Chairman Wicker: Well, thank you very much. As you as
11 the three of you know, I mentioned those matters in my
12 opening statement. The fact that I asked my questions about
13 them is it consists of a foot stomp about the importance of
14 those matters. Senator Reed.

15 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.
16 First, Secretary Hurst, I must commend your children for
17 their poise and patience, all of which is attributable to
18 your wife, I'm sure. But with that as an introduction, we
19 have had problems getting information from you and from the
20 Department of Defense. For example, in March, I asked for
21 information on the course of the operations in Iran, and my
22 staff followed up numerous times. We received a response on
23 May 11 from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs
24 that referred me to your testimony. But during those
25 hearings, you didn't provide details and said you'd get back

1 to the committees, and then your nomination intervened. So,
2 our staff have been asking consistently from this
3 information, and I don't think we're alone in being
4 frustrated. If confirmed, do you commit to respond rapidly
5 to my existing inquiries and also additional inquiries going
6 forward?

7 Mr. Hurst: Mr. Ranking Member, I'm a former
8 congressional staffer. I believe in Congress's oversight
9 role, and if confirmed, I will work with this committee to
10 provide the appropriate data and answer your RFIs.

11 Senator Reed: Yeah, I can't emphasize enough. And you
12 know, from your position, if we don't know what the is going
13 on, then we're not in a position to make judicious
14 decisions. So, it's absolutely essential. And this has
15 been a consistent hallmark, I think, of the Department not
16 giving us the information we're legally entitled to in a
17 timely fashion. So, thank you.

18 Mr. O'Malley, what do you see as the main levers that
19 DOD can use to get into industry, to invest more of its own
20 money in expanding production, and self-funded research, and
21 development?

22 Mr. O'Malley: Mr. Ranking member, as an incentive to
23 industry to increase their R&D spending, I certainly believe
24 the multi-year procurement, authority that this committee in
25 Congress has given has been very helpful and will continue

1 to be helpful. R&D, and if it's okay to say, I'd like to
2 add facilities costs as well. This has been a powerful
3 lever to drive down unit costs, expand industrial
4 capability, and work on securing our supply chains. It
5 gives the defense industrial base stability and
6 predictability so they can continue to make those
7 investments. It's a long-term demand signal for them, and
8 it also allows suppliers to make larger capital commitments
9 throughout the process.

10 Senator Reed: One other question is that there is a
11 debate about defense contractors stock buybacks,
12 particularly in situations where they're not meeting budget
13 and costs. What's your opinion on that?

14 Mr. O'Malley: Mr. Ranking Member, I certainly believe
15 that taxpayer dollars should be used to deliver combat
16 capability, not for financial engineering. And, as it
17 relates to this, the Department needs to be a tougher
18 customer. Contractors should not be prioritizing stock
19 buybacks or bonuses. And this is an accountability question
20 and we need to get up, get after that up front. The
21 President expects capability delivered to the warfighter,
22 fast and at better cost, and if confirmed, this will
23 certainly be a priority.

24 Senator Reed: Thank you. Dr. Mason, we're in a
25 transition, as you indicated in your testimony. The JSTARS

1 used to be the most significant air and ground moving target
2 indicator system we have. Now that's moving into space.
3 Space Force has operational command and control, but NRO is
4 doing a great deal in terms of acquisition of the space, the
5 satellites, et cetera. Are you worried that NRO might
6 become too operationally focused on near-term Space Force
7 requirements?

8 Dr. Mason: Ranking Member Reed, first of all, thank
9 you for taking the time to visit. I appreciate that very
10 much. Let me start by saying that the relationship, the
11 coordination between the United States Space Force and the
12 NRO is essential. It's the cornerstone for space dominance
13 for the Nation. At the same time, the roles and
14 responsibilities are quite clear. Space Force organize,
15 train, and equip. NRO provides space-based intelligence for
16 the IC as well as the warfighter. When I look at from the
17 outside in, what has occurred in terms of the moving target
18 indicator, first ground, then airborne, I view it as
19 actually a lesson in good government in terms of the GMT,
20 the ground AMTI. That was a case where the Department took
21 some existing technology that was being developed by the
22 NRO, and then instead of starting a brand-new program,
23 adapted that technology, which would have been far cheaper
24 and we certainly got on orbit a lot quicker. AMTI, as I
25 understand it, take us to the next step that's actually

1 being procured by the Space Force on a recent announcement
2 they made. So, to me, this is a good progression of good
3 government decision in terms of taking strengths and moving
4 them into areas where they should be done by the military.

5 Senator Reed: Thank you. My time is expired, Dr.
6 Hernandez-Baquero, thank you, and I look forward to working
7 with you. And also, if there are questions, I will just
8 submit them for the record. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. I do anticipate there'll
10 be a number of questions for the record. Senator Fischer.

11 Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
12 all of you for being here today, and for your willingness to
13 continue to serve your country if confirmed in these new
14 nominations. Dr. Mason, are there opportunities for
15 increased collaboration between intelligence and military
16 space programs? And if so, can you tell us one or two that
17 you may have thought of?

18 Dr. Mason: Certainly. First of all, Senator Fischer,
19 I also thank you for the time we spent. I appreciate you
20 making that. I found it very valuable. Yes, Senator, I
21 think the coordination and collaboration between the
22 warfighter and the intelligence community is essential, and
23 it makes us only stronger. To give you an example, in terms
24 of a space-based program that was done in coordination with
25 the Space Force and the NRO that's public, a program called

1 Silent Barker, which is really for space situational
2 awareness. And again, it follows the same pattern as the
3 moving target indicator, starting with some strengths that
4 the NRO had in terms of developing these types of
5 spacecrafts. And instead of developing a whole new system,
6 applying resources that were very clear, which were coming
7 from the Department versus which was coming from the
8 National Intelligence Program, and then using those
9 resources to great effect to produce a system that arguably,
10 you know, is going to serve the Nation in that regard. So,
11 to me, that's a good example of good government.

12 Senator Fischer: I think it's extremely important,
13 that that work continue with Space Force to ensure that we
14 have that smooth transition of these new capabilities to our
15 warfighters. So, thank you for that.

16 Over the last decade, we've had a pretty big revolution
17 in commercial space imagery capabilities, and NRO has been
18 able to take advantage of that through various contracts.
19 It's been especially helpful to our combatant commanders. I
20 understand NRO has finite resources, but I would caution
21 against deprioritizing these programs in future budget
22 requests. If confirmed, will you commit to working with me
23 and this committee on addressing this issue?

24 Dr. Mason: Yes, Senator, I will.

25 Senator Fischer: Thank you. We spoke about that some

1 in our conversation in my office, and I think it's extremely
2 important that we address it in the future.

3 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero, I appreciated your influence on
4 acquisition reform in your opening statement, but
5 transformative reforms require more than updating the
6 statutes and regulations that govern the Department's
7 acquisition processes. The underlying acquisition culture
8 needs to change as well, so that contracting officers are
9 encouraged to really use those new authorities that they've
10 been given. Which acquisition programs concern you the most
11 as you look at that from a cost schedule or even a technical
12 risk perspective?

13 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Senator, thank you for that.
14 And absolutely, I 100 percent agree with you that we cannot
15 just rely on statutes and policy documents to really change
16 the culture. We need the people to exercise a new way of
17 doing business every day. Which is why I'm excited about
18 the reorganization around the portfolio acquisition
19 executives, where they will now be resourced with cross-
20 functional teams and have authority over those teams to
21 employ the right contract strategies across all programs.

22 I'm mostly concerned about our legacy acquisitions that
23 have been ongoing for a number of years. And if confirmed,
24 one of the first things I'll do is review the progress,
25 what's remaining to be done in those legacy acquisitions.

1 Those are the ones that are going to be encumbered the most
2 because they weren't born with the new digital engineering
3 techniques. They weren't born with the intent to integrate
4 into these hybrid architectures. And so, that would be the
5 area that I would be most concerned about.

6 Senator Fischer: Yeah. There's, I think, a lot of
7 room to improve that accountability in those major
8 acquisition programs. So, I hope that we will see some
9 improvement in the delays that we experience. Although I am
10 a proponent of also taking managed risks, I'd say in order
11 that we can move faster, we have to move faster.

12 Mr. Hurst, I also appreciated our discussion last month
13 on the Department's path to achieve a clean audit by the
14 statutory deadline of 2028. I was encouraged by your
15 remarks. I tend to think you're overly optimistic with
16 them. We haven't seen a lot of improvement there, but I
17 think you might be the guy to get it. Are there areas in
18 which congressional action is needed to strengthen those
19 efforts by the Department to get that audit done?

20 Mr. Hurst: Well, Senator, thank you for the question.
21 I'm optimistic because with the problem this big, you have
22 to be that's the only way you're going to get after it. The
23 thing we need most is we need to change our accounting rules
24 to reflect the Department of War's mission. We have Fortune
25 500 accounting standards for a warfighting organization.

1 And I'll give you a quick example. As part of our audit, we
2 have to validate the value of all of our assets on our books
3 to include things like the USS Constitution, a 200-year-old
4 warship in Massachusetts, and we have to account for every
5 single modification we made to that vessel in the valuation
6 and prove that to our auditors if they decide to sample
7 that. That's simply not helpful for our warfighting
8 mission. We need to know where our equipment is, its
9 condition, a general statement of its value. But having to
10 do the same kind of estimate we would for any kind of other,
11 you know, Fortune 500 company evaluation is not very
12 helpful, and Congress could help us with that.

13 Senator Fischer: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman Wicker: A very good initial answer to that
15 problem. Thank you very much to both of you. Senator
16 Shaheen, you are recognized.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good
18 morning. Congratulations to each of you on your
19 nominations, and thank you for your willingness to continue
20 to serve the country.

21 Secretary Hurst, yesterday President Trump announced
22 that he wanted to put a 20 percent fee on cargo going
23 through the Strait of Hormuz, and he gave us his rationale
24 that we need help if we're going to police operations in the
25 Strait, that we need help paying for the cost of those

1 operations. Now, the estimates that I've seen so far
2 suggest that that would result in a \$15 increase on a barrel
3 of oil, and that's after yesterday's highest jump in gas
4 prices in 6 years in the United States.

5 Last month, Secretary Rubio was asked about this, and
6 he said that such fees would violate international law.
7 We've heard both the Vice President and Secretary Hegseth,
8 who also confirmed that this was not something that we were
9 considering or should be doing. So, what is the position of
10 the Department on tolling commercial vehicles through the
11 vessels through the Strait of Hormuz?

12 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I appreciate the question, but it
13 just falls well outside my expertise or knowledge. So, we
14 can take that for the record for the Department, but I can't
15 give you an answer today.

16 Senator Shaheen: Well, given that the issue that cited
17 there is the cost of the operations in Iran, it seems to me
18 that that's something that you ought to be intimately
19 involved with if you're confirmed for this position, because
20 it's going to have a huge impact, not just on the amount of
21 money that we're paying, but also on how we're being viewed
22 by the rest of the world. As Secretary Rubio has said, this
23 would be a violation of international law. So, I hope if
24 you're confirmed that, you will find out what the Department
25 is thinking about this issue. Do I have a commitment that

1 you will do that?

2 Mr. Hurst: Yes, ma'am. If confirmed, I will dig into
3 this issue.

4 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Mr. O'Malley, if
5 confirmed, you'll oversee the office responsible for
6 installations and environment, including PFAs remediation.
7 The Fiscal Year 2026 NDAA required the Department to provide
8 alternative water in communities around military bases, with
9 contamination above State and Federal maximum contaminant
10 levels for PFAs. But I'm hearing from residents in New
11 Hampshire that a year after this was put into effect, it has
12 still not been implemented for the former Pease Air Force
13 Base despite the fact that the Air Force has, I think most
14 people would agree, been very supportive of cleaning up PFAs
15 in the Portsmouth area around Pease. And, so it's
16 disappointing to see that they are not going along with
17 what's been determined to be practice.

18 So, if confirmed, will you commit to continuing DOD's
19 existing practice of conducting PFAs cleanup at military
20 installations and communities affected by DOD releases of
21 PFAs, and check into this issue why our residents in New
22 Hampshire are not having their water being dealt with?

23 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator I will.

24 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Also, for you, Mr.
25 O'Malley. I recently came back from the NATO Summit with a

1 number -- Senator Rounds and a number of members of the
2 Senate. And while at that summit, the President announced
3 that he would look into an agreement with Ukraine on data
4 sharing for drone procurement. As you know, we have a lot
5 of lessons that we can learn from the Ukrainians with
6 respect to drone technology. The delegation at the summit
7 in Ankara heard that this agreement is currently being held
8 up by the Pentagon. So, if confirmed, will you commit to
9 looking into this, and reporting back to this committee
10 about what the holdup is, and when it's going to move
11 forward?

12 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator, I will.

13 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Dr. Mason, the NDAA
14 passed out of this committee includes a provision to require
15 intelligence sharing with the Ukrainian armed forces in
16 Russian occupied territories. It builds on last year's
17 provision that required notifications of any stop to this
18 intelligence sharing. Can you talk about why this continued
19 intelligence sharing with the Ukrainian armed forces is
20 important, and why it would be helpful for us to continue
21 this effort?

22 Dr. Mason: Senator Shaheen, in terms of the scope and
23 the mission of the NRO, the focus that I would have, if
24 confirmed, is ensuring that the data collected is accurate,
25 and relevant, and timely in terms of information sharing

1 with either allies or other nations. The NRO director has
2 to rely on agencies like the functional manager of a -- in
3 this case, if it's imagery. And so, I would commit to
4 taking that on board to make sure that we supply the NRO
5 know what's needed in terms of satisfying those requirements
6 from a probability standpoint. I will also say that from a
7 commercial standpoint, this is one of the benefits of
8 commercial imagery that it's easily more easily shareable to
9 satisfy a number of intelligence missions as well as our
10 partners.

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

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator
13 Rounds, you are recognized.

14 Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let
15 me just thank all of you for your service to our country.
16 Mr. O'Malley, I'm going to ask you a question that I
17 normally wouldn't ask except for the fact that I think it's
18 been brought up, that specifically it's technical in nature,
19 but it's one that I think we want to bring attention to.
20 The Portable Intermittent Fault Detector, or PIFD. This is
21 an aircraft wiring tester, achieved authority to operate on
22 the F-35 program in 2020. Over the last 6 years, the Ed has
23 been used only to respond to action requests and have
24 resolved over 90 aircraft wiring problems, including
25 returning grounded aircraft to operational status.

1 According to the Department of War and GAO data, the
2 PIFD has increased readiness by more than 50 percent on
3 every aircraft wiring system that has been applied to. A
4 GAO report identified that three out of four F-35s are not
5 mission capable. As it pertains to the F-35 aircraft
6 wiring, intermittent faults and no fault found tests,
7 results are of significant concern to this committee due to
8 there being three variants of this aircraft with 47
9 different wiring configurations.

10 If confirmed, will you work with me and the committee
11 to determine why the PIFD has not been fully adopted and
12 industrialized as a standard piece of support equipment
13 across the F-35 program, and to establish a deadline for the
14 adoption and deployment of the PIFD to F-35 maintainers to
15 improve the readiness and sustainability of this critical
16 weapons platform, and to facilitate its deployment. Like I
17 say, technical in nature, but pretty important.

18 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator. And thank you for meeting
19 with me to discuss 3D printing in the South Dakota School of
20 Mines. I appreciate our time. If confirmed, I would
21 welcome the opportunity to work with you on this issue, and
22 this committee, and the Joint Program Office to examine
23 specific engineering funding and bureaucratic barriers that
24 have limited PIFD across the F-35 program.

25 Senator Rounds: This has been recommended not just by

1 the committee, but by the Pentagon in general. It needs to
2 be implemented. The supplemental sent to Congress includes
3 much needed funding to replenish munitions and cover
4 operational costs. It does not include a request for
5 military construction funds. While the Department should
6 review its CENTCOM footprint and possibly re-posture for the
7 current threat, I am concerned that not seeking military
8 construction in the supplemental will drive the cost of
9 rebuilding CENTCOM infrastructure and presence in the future
10 base budget requests that will already be crowded with
11 military construction requirements to support the bed down
12 of the B-21, the F-47, Sentinel, and other emerging weapon
13 systems.

14 For Mr. Hurst, I understand the battle assessments take
15 time, as well as figuring out what our partners will pay for
16 and what we will pay for. But what are your thoughts on
17 emergency appropriations that provide time for a regional
18 posture review and funds to rebuild our presence, balanced
19 with reporting and consultation with the Congress before the
20 Department moves out?

21 Mr. Hurst: Senator, let me come back to you after I've
22 given that some thought. You know, this conflict could
23 greatly change our posture in the region, and I think that's
24 something that has to be taken into account. But if you
25 don't mind, I'll come back to you later on.

1 Senator Rounds: That's fair. Well, matter of fact, if
2 you'd like, I'll put it into a question for the record for
3 you.

4 [The information referred to follows:]

5 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: Let's do that.

2 Senator Rounds: All right. Thank you. Mr. Hurst, can
3 you discuss some of the internal bureaucratic hurdles that
4 prevent the Department from rapidly allocating and executing
5 congressionally-appropriated funds? Are there any resources
6 or authorities Congress could provide that would help
7 mitigate those issues? And lastly, in 2025, the Department
8 advocated flexible funding for all software programs. Mr.
9 Hurst, do you still believe the Department needs this
10 flexible authority for software and similar digital tools
11 and systems?

12 Mr. Hurst: Senator Rounds, I really enjoyed talking
13 about this issue with you and your office. So, as many of
14 you know, it takes us a very long time to get funds from
15 appropriation to the actual executing program office or
16 unit. Sometimes, that's 2 or 3 months inside the
17 Department. The main reason for that is we don't have a
18 centralized electronic funds disbursement system. In fact,
19 when comptroller initially gets an apportionment from OMB,
20 we get that via PDF, and then we provide a PDF to the
21 services. That's obviously not acceptable in the 21st
22 century. And so, before I left performing the duties of
23 comptroller, I put together a Tiger Team to get after this
24 issue. I would like to see us get funds dispersed across
25 the Department within 1 or 2 weeks at the most, and we'll be

1 working towards that.

2 Sir, you mentioned funding flexibility. The PPB
3 Commission has been very clear on that. The Department
4 probably needs more flexibility in a lot of areas, including
5 software. But in order to do that properly, we have to make
6 sure we have the appropriate mechanisms to communicate and
7 be transparent with Congress. And so, that's a conversation
8 I'd like to continue to have with you if confirmed.

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

10 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator
11 Gillibrand.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Secretary Hurst, thank you for your service. You have
14 an incredible career, and I want to thank you and your
15 family for continuing to dedicate your time and talent to
16 the defense of this country. It's a significant
17 undertaking. You have a very important job as comptroller.
18 Your job fundamentally is going to be about transparency and
19 accountability. And one of the burdens I think of this job
20 you're going to have right now is that the American people
21 are very concerned about the lack of transparency and
22 accountability when it comes to this war.

23 From their perspective, it's an unauthorized, illegal,
24 unwanted war. The amount of spending is astronomical. I
25 think you've just recently given us the \$67 billion number.

1 If they had a choice, they'd rather \$67 billion fund
2 Medicaid and their health care. They'd rather have \$67
3 billion fund to get the cost of groceries down, to get the
4 cost of fuel down. And with the constant problems in the
5 Strait of Hormuz, and the continuing and escalating of this
6 war, people are very distressed about the cost of fueling
7 their cars, fueling their homes, the cost of diesel for
8 truck drivers, and the cost it's having on everything
9 because of that increase. So, transparency is something
10 that we care very much about.

11 And in your budget, it is not clear, especially for the
12 supplemental, what is creating these enormous costs. You're
13 asking for an additional \$350 billion, which to New Yorkers
14 is going to seem like a slush fund to them. So, it's
15 unclear are these costs to pay for the destruction because
16 of the war to our bases and operations abroad. Is this cost
17 because of the increase in costs to our Navy ships because
18 they were extended at sea? Are these costs because of
19 wasteful domestic deployments of DOD personnel?

20 Mr. Hurst: Senator, again, thanks for the question.
21 The \$67 billion supplemental. I wasn't involved in the
22 generation of that because I'm not in the position of
23 comptroller. But let me say this. The Department needs a
24 generational investment. It's a defense, right? The
25 Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the first one was

1 commissioned in 1985, 40 years ago. It's still the mainstay
2 of our surface fleet. The Air Force is planning to fly the
3 KC-135 until potentially the 2070s. We have to update our
4 platforms. We have to buy affordable mass. We have to
5 procure autonomous warfare platforms and integrate them into
6 the force.

7 Senator Gillibrand: Let's talk about autonomous
8 platforms. I know that you've authored, at least articles
9 or books, I'm not sure, on AI as well as autonomous systems.
10 And I'm highly concerned about the bombing of a school in
11 Iran, a girls' school. That bombing has been deeply
12 upsetting to New Yorkers. One hundred and twenty children
13 were killed, and we still don't have a report on that.
14 Again, transparency and accountability. It is essential
15 that this department give this Congress the report of how
16 that target was selected, why more recent data and
17 information showing that it was clearly a girls' school and
18 no longer part of the military base that was next door.
19 Have you been given the report on how that targeting was
20 made and whether AI systems were used?

21 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I have not seen that report. I
22 regret the loss of any civilian life in any conflict.

23 Senator Gillibrand: I'm also deeply concerned that as
24 we wrote this last NDAA, there was pushback by the
25 Department on making sure that there's a human in the loop.

1 The language that they agreed to was appropriate human
2 oversight. That is obviously not the same thing as human in
3 the loop. And so, when we are choosing targets, I
4 understand when it comes to defense, having autonomous quick
5 systems to protect men and women on the battlefield, protect
6 our assets, protect our infrastructure is essential in
7 having AI-enhanced capabilities to defend is extremely
8 important. But I'm highly concerned that before we push
9 send on a missile that is going to target perhaps a girls'
10 school, because the targeting was done so poorly and the
11 analysis wasn't done accurately that we have a human in the
12 loop. What is your view on that?

13 Mr. Hurst: Well, Senator, I would say I think it's
14 very important for the Department to engage with the
15 committee and talk about how it's using AI. And I think,
16 you know, as someone who worked on Project Maven and was a
17 targeting officer in his career, I think AI has the
18 potential to actually improve the safety for civilians in
19 warfare. It's all about how we implement it, but we owe you
20 that conversation.

21 Senator Gillibrand: Absolutely. And we are waiting
22 for that report. And Mr. Chairman, for the record, I hope
23 we receive that report soon.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator
25 Gillibrand. Senator Ernst.

1 Senator Ernst: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 And I want to start by saying thank you, Mr. Chairman,
3 and to our ranking member as well, for recognizing our dear
4 colleague, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. I've
5 looked across the dais and that incredible gentleman was a
6 friend, I think, to all of us on this committee. And he
7 most certainly was a friend to our Department of War. So,
8 thank you for that, and thank you for remembering him.

9 I won't be able to get to all of you today, but I do
10 hope that all of you are committed to delivering results,
11 and specifically, faster fielding of capabilities for our
12 warfighter as we go through this next fiscal year.
13 Budgeting is important, our space capabilities, and
14 absolutely, Mr. Hurst, we're going to focus very heavily on
15 clear accountability for the taxpayers and the warfighters,
16 so I will start with you, Secretary.

17 The Fiscal Year 2027 budget request was actually built
18 before we started engaging in Epic Fury, before we had an
19 oil blockade on Cuba. So, we have these additional issues
20 that are pressing upon our department, and yet, we're trying
21 to manage those ongoing operations with the new operations
22 that we have in the Middle East and the Caribbean. So, with
23 the ongoing operations, we're doing modernization, we're
24 developing munitions, we're, you know, replenishing systems
25 that have been destroyed. So, Secretary, is the Fiscal Year

1 2027 budget sufficient to cover these demands? Very simple.

2 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I believe the Fiscal Year 2027
3 budget request from the Department of War is sufficient to
4 cover those demands.

5 Senator Ernst: Thank you. And is money currently
6 being shifted from other priorities? Are we managing that
7 money and taking from one area to cover down on some of
8 those additional operations?

9 Mr. Hurst: Senator, again, I'm avoided presuming
10 confirmation, so I'm not involved in the fiscal management
11 of the Department at this time. But I would say
12 historically, whenever there are contingency operations, the
13 Department makes tradeoffs within its current year budget.

14 Senator Ernst: So, I would argue that as we're moving
15 forward, most certainly, I'm sure money has been shifted and
16 we need to replenish where we can. So, I do hope that this
17 committee and others in the Senate are able to come
18 together, and find a way forward to reinforce our Department
19 of War.

20 Moving on to the audit, it's been brought up a number
21 of times. The Department is committed by the year 2028 to
22 complete a clean audit, and we found a lot of material
23 weaknesses in the Fiscal Year 2025 audit. I think there
24 were 26 of those weaknesses identified, and we still have
25 taxpayers being asked to fund \$1.5 trillion for the defense

1 of our Nation. So, what specifically -- and this is coming
2 from an old auditor. I started my elected career as an
3 auditor, mind you, for a very small rural county in Iowa,
4 but as an auditor. So, what specifically has changed in
5 your approach to completing a clean audit, and what
6 milestones do you assess you can meet at the 1-year mark?

7 Mr. Hurst: Senator, the fundamental change in our
8 approach is this. Previously, we were pursuing over 25
9 different opinions to get to the DOW audit. We were boiling
10 the ocean slowly. Now, what we're doing is pursuing a DOW
11 consolidated audit. We're raising our materiality, and
12 we're focused on the biggest liabilities in our balance
13 sheet. We're going to focus our resources against those.
14 The other thing we're doing that's compelling is we're
15 hiring an IPA. The IG is hiring an IPA to run the audit,
16 and this IPA is going to have access to advanced tools and
17 AI systems that will help them incorporate the data, look at
18 it faster than the IG staff can.

19 We're also doing that on our side. We're applying
20 artificial intelligence. The Marine Corps, which has had a
21 clean opinion for 3 years in a row, has many material
22 weaknesses left. They got their opinion by substantive
23 testing. We can do the same thing inside DOW with the use
24 of artificial intelligence and the leveraging of resources.

25 Senator Ernst: No, I appreciate that, and I look

1 forward to working with you over the next 6 months in my
2 remaining time here to make sure that you are achieving that
3 clean audit.

4 I do want to recognize as well you do bring up the USS
5 Constitution, and that's an interesting argument that maybe
6 we need to have. It is still an active naval vessel. So,
7 it does belong to the Navy, and it does have to be accounted
8 for. But at the same time, you bring up an interesting
9 point where it's not really focusing on an active mission
10 for our warfighters. And perhaps as we identify issue areas
11 such as the USS Constitution -- and I'm not saying please, I
12 know the Navy is just going to come after me for this -- but
13 perhaps in the future, we need to have those conversations
14 about what remains in the inventory of the United States
15 Department of War, or what maybe gets shifted to other
16 entities like the Smithsonian, where it could be supported
17 by Federal dollars and private donors. Again, the Navy will
18 come after me for this, but it is an interesting
19 conversation. I'm not supporting or not supporting, but
20 certainly, you do bring up an interesting point. We want to
21 make sure that our taxpayer dollars are going specifically
22 for the warfighter. So, thank you-all very much. Thank
23 you, Mr. Chair.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Ernst. I wonder
25 to what extent that is a -- rather rare example or --

1 Senator Gillibrand: It's rare.

2 Chairman Wicker: -- something that is writ large, but
3 I appreciate your input in that regard, and thank you for
4 your service. Senator Hirono is next.

5 Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 I ask for the following two questions of all nominees
7 before any of the committees on which I sit to ensure the
8 fitness to serve. So, I'd like the responses starting from
9 Mr. Hurst and then we'll go down the line. Since you became
10 a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for
11 sexual favors, or committed any verbal or physical
12 harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

13 Mr. Hurst: No.

14 Mr. O'Malley: No.

15 Dr. Mason: No.

16 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: No.

17 Senator Hirono: Have you ever faced discipline or
18 entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

19 Mr. Hurst: No.

20 Mr. O'Malley: No.

21 Dr. Mason: No.

22 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: No.

23 Senator Hirono: This is for Mr. Hurst. In April, you
24 testified that Operation Epic Fury, better known as the war
25 in Iran, had cost approximately \$29 billion, largely driven

1 by munitions operations and maintenance expenditures. More
2 recently, independent assessments suggest the true cost is
3 already over \$100 billion when damaged aircraft, bases, and
4 other war-related expenses are fully accounted for. What is
5 the Department's current estimate of the total cost of
6 Operation Epic Fury, including the other expenses I
7 mentioned?

8 Mr. Hurst: Senator, during my testimony before this
9 committee, I conveyed the estimate compiled by the military
10 officers of the Joint Staff and the civilian comptroller
11 workforce unmodified. I don't have an updated estimate,
12 ma'am, because I haven't been in the position of
13 comptroller. But if confirmed, I'm happy to work with you
14 to get that answer.

15 Senator Hirono: Well, all indications are that there
16 are no -- there's no end in sight of the cost of this war,
17 and I think that this committee and the American people need
18 to be apprised on a regular basis what is happening with
19 this war, because prices keep going up with all of the other
20 items that our families have to pay for.

21 And I'd ask you, how do you expect that these costs are
22 being absorbed by the services, and how are you assessing or
23 how will you assess the impact that these this additional
24 spending has had on readiness? At some point, the cost of
25 this war is going to impact readiness, i.e., we have ships

1 in the Middle East, they've been there for months. When
2 they -- they need to be -- they need to be prepared. They
3 need to -- our shipyards have to have to ready them for the
4 next deployment. So, how is all of this going to happen?
5 Are you going to be responsible for coordinating some of
6 this?

7 Mr. Hurst: Senator, if confirmed, I would be
8 responsible for helping the services solve current year
9 execution problems. Again, I don't know what the current
10 state is because I'm not performing the duties of
11 comptroller, but if confirmed, I'd be happy to help work to
12 get those answers for you.

13 Senator Hirono: I hope that, Mr. Chairman, that as we
14 go along, that all of our nominees who are not currently in
15 their positions, or if they are there in an acting position,
16 that they can be called back to our committee so they can
17 give us the appropriate information that we are requesting.
18 It is very frustrating to ask them what the costs are, et
19 cetera, and the response is that we're not there yet, and so
20 we can't tell you.

21 So, in your opening statement, Mr. Hurst, you mentioned
22 that your first priority is to, "approve the fiscal
23 responsibility of the Department to the American people."
24 Fiscal responsibility. At the same time, the DOD obligated
25 more than \$2 billion in non-reimbursed funds and over \$2

1 billion in reimbursable funds, which still hasn't been paid
2 from the Department of Homeland Security. And so, as part
3 of fiscal responsibility, do you intend to get this money
4 back from DHS, and do you anticipate giving more money,
5 reimbursable or not, to DHS because they have their own huge
6 pot of money that this Congress just appropriated without
7 any guardrails on their activity and they are in the process
8 of killing more people. Did you get the money back? Do you
9 intend to get the money back from DHS?

10 Mr. Hurst: Senator, when I was performing the duties
11 of the comptroller, I signed a memorandum of agreement with
12 DHS for reimbursement, and I held several meetings with DHS
13 leadership about reimbursement. If confirmed, I will
14 continue to pursue reimbursement for the Department.

15 Senator Hirono: Do you know if they reimbursed the
16 billions that the DOD already provided to DHS.

17 Mr. Hurst: In my current position of Assistant
18 Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, I
19 don't know.

20 Senator Hirono: Again, Mr. Chairman, this is pretty
21 frustrating. So, this goes to the question I was asking you
22 about ship maintenance, and I should ask Mr. O'Malley. You
23 know what? I'm going to -- obviously, I'm going to need to
24 submit this question for the record, but I have concerns
25 about ship maintenance as our ships are deployed for much

1 longer deployments, especially in the Middle East.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator. And your comment
4 is noted. I would remind you that it is improper for any
5 nominee to assume any duties, or take any actions that would
6 appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process.
7 And so, that's a question that we always ask and we very
8 much mean it. So, there is a balance there and I can
9 appreciate your opinion in that regard. We now move to
10 Senator Scott.

11 Senator Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 First off, thank each of you for being willing to
13 serve. Congratulations on your nominations. So, Secretary
14 Hurst, let me start with you. I just -- my question for you
15 is going to be about what Senator Ernst brought up. How do
16 we get these audits done? It doesn't -- it makes no sense.
17 I mean, I'm a business guy. I couldn't raise a dime if I
18 couldn't do audits. So, do you feel comfortable that it's
19 going to get done?

20 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I'm confident we can do it. I
21 have a lot of faith in the comptroller workforce and service
22 comptrollers. It is a tremendous effort. It will take a
23 new approach.

24 Senator Scott: Okay. Thanks. Mr. O'Malley, the
25 government of Communist China has decided to be our enemy.

1 What I've never understood, I've been up here seven and a
2 half years, is why our military continues to be dependent on
3 Communist China for anything. When I came up here, we're
4 buying our drones from them. Even today, we're still we
5 still buy computers and all sorts of TVs, all sorts of stuff
6 that we use. We're completely dependent on them for generic
7 drugs which they could stop giving to us at any moment. So,
8 what's your strategy to stop buying all this stuff from
9 Communist China, who we're spending a lot of this money in
10 the military because they want to be our enemy, and then
11 we're buying stuff from them. Makes no sense to me. And it
12 doesn't seem like it's happened. The change is happening
13 very fast.

14 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator, China is clearly an
15 adversary. As it relates to the supply chain, we need to do
16 a better job of illuminating the supply chain, and
17 systematically identifying, targeting, and decoupling from
18 China. I think we need to continue to deploy the advanced
19 supply chain tools that we've been working with to gain, you
20 know, multi-tier visibility with no choke points. And of
21 course, we also need to reshore these capabilities as
22 quickly as possible. And it will certainly be a focus if
23 confirmed.

24 Senator Scott: So, is it going to happen? I mean,
25 everybody -- you know, in the last 7 or 8 years, everybody

1 comes up and says, yeah, we're going to do this, but is
2 somebody going to do it? So, it's not happening, I mean, as
3 far as I can tell.

4 Mr. O'Malley: So, the Department recently released the
5 1260H list about the technology of Chinese military,
6 identifying, isolating, adversarial military influence.
7 That strikes me as a first -- a good first step and
8 continuing to emphasize decoupling from China.

9 Senator Scott: So, Dr. Hernandez-Baquero, the Space
10 Coast is a big deal in Florida, right? I think it's
11 probably we've got the best commercial space capabilities in
12 the best skilled workforce probably in the world for space
13 launch there. Can you talk about why this is important to
14 the Department of War?

15 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes, Senator. Hailing from the
16 great State of Florida, and having spent my time at the
17 Space Coast, I absolutely agree with you. It's essential.
18 Our launch capacity is the best in the world, and we need to
19 continue to maintain it and increase it. We need more
20 capacity from our launch facilities in order to fill out the
21 hybrid architectures. We're generating and developing more
22 satellites than ever. That's seen in the proliferated
23 architectures that we're deploying, and that puts a lot of
24 demand on the spaceports. So, it's absolutely essential
25 that we maintain and we grow that capacity.

1 Senator Scott: Great.

2 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: And if confirmed, I will work
3 with department stakeholders to ensure that we do that.

4 Senator Scott: All right. I thank each of you for
5 your commitment.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Scott.
7 Senator King.

8 Senator King: Mr. Hurst, I'm unpersuaded by your
9 professions of ignorance about the cost of the war. You
10 were the acting comptroller and chief financial officer of
11 the Department of Defense since until May 20. That's about
12 7 weeks ago. And to sit here today and say: well, I don't
13 really know and I'm not in the position. Come on. You had
14 to know this question was going to come up at this hearing
15 today. How much has the Iran war cost the American people?

16 Mr. Hurst: Senator King, I will give you the same
17 answer I gave you during the posture hearing. That it was
18 \$29 billion at the time I left the position. If confirmed,
19 I'm going to work with --

20 Senator King: Does that \$29 billion include damage to
21 facilities and assets in the region?

22 Mr. Hurst: No, Senator. That estimate did not include
23 military construction. Again, we don't know what the
24 posture is going to be. There are lessons learned from
25 military construction from this conflict. I would say one

1 of these is that the United States needs to invest more in
2 hardened and deeply buried facilities, particularly in these
3 kinds of areas, but it doesn't reflect MILCON.

4 Senator King: So, that's not part of the estimate.
5 The estimate that you gave of \$29 billion was simply --
6 essentially munitions and expenditures in direct result of
7 the conflict.

8 Mr. Hurst: Senator, yeah, I would characterize that
9 estimate as largely munitions. From memory, it was over \$20
10 billion munitions, and the most the rest of that was
11 operational cost, whether that's fuel --

12 Senator King: In preparing for this hearing, you
13 didn't do any -- you didn't ask any questions about updating
14 that number.

15 Mr. Hurst: I felt it would be inappropriate to do so,
16 because that's not in my current role in the Department.

17 Senator King: Well, I think it's very frustrating to
18 the American people that we can't get a straight answer on
19 what this war is costing, not to mention what it's costing
20 and has cost the American people at the at the gas pump and
21 in other costs.

22 Mr. O'Malley, on acquisition, one thing that I think is
23 important today, more than perhaps in the past, is buying
24 the intellectual property when we buy a platform so that we
25 can maintain and build parts. Every depot, every aircraft

1 hangar, every ship should have a 3D printer. We shouldn't
2 have to go back to the manufacturer. Do you agree?

3 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator, I do agree that obtaining
4 the intellectual property up front should be a focus of the
5 Department as we're negotiating agreements. I do think
6 there's a balance here. We need to let industry know that
7 we have the ability to protect their IP after it's
8 transferred to us. But I will -- I'm thinking about what
9 the CNO testified recently, where he said that the inability
10 to perform organic repairs due to lack of technical data is
11 inexcusable. I certainly support that, and I think
12 intellectual property is.

13 Senator King: I appreciate that. And to reiterate the
14 point, right to repair is an important part of our
15 responsibility and something that we should ensure that this
16 is an enormous cost center. And also, in a time of
17 conflict, it's a time issue, is it not?

18 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator. When I first started the
19 Department, I sat next to a military assistant who told me a
20 story about being on a FOB in Afghanistan and having to wait
21 5 days to have his equipment repaired. They had to bring a
22 contractor in to get it done. I was very surprised by that.
23 Certainly, not acceptable, and, if confirmed, it will
24 certainly be a focus of mine.

25 Senator King: Well, I hope that this is a serious

1 commitment, because both in terms of time and cost, the
2 American people cannot afford long delays in this kind of
3 situation. Thank you. I do have that commitment, do I not?

4 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator. I absolutely commit to
5 working with you on it.

6 Senator King: Thank you. Mr. Hernandez -- or Dr.
7 Hernandez-Baquero, a big part of the cost of Iron Dome is
8 going to be in your domain. Do you have any estimates, or
9 have you looked at Iron Dome and at what the cost
10 projections are, because we have estimates from the
11 administration of \$125 billion to \$185 billion? CBO
12 recently said over \$1 trillion. What's this going to cost
13 us?

14 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Senator King, I have not been
15 briefed on the details of the Golden Dome project at the
16 moment.

17 Senator King: I said Iron Dome, didn't I? Golden
18 Dome.

19 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Yes, Senator. But the -- it
20 was started as that. And so, I appreciate that the system
21 is complex, but I -- and I have not been briefed on the
22 details, but I do know that the administration and that the
23 program manager on that effort is laser-focused on ensuring
24 that we do that affordably, and if confirmed, I will work
25 closely with the program manager to ensure that the space

1 elements of that architecture are scalable and can be
2 delivered in an affordable cost.

3 Senator King: Thank you. And, Mr. O'Malley, I'm out
4 of time, but perhaps I'll follow-up with a question on this.
5 I'm very concerned about the administration's continuing
6 pressure toward building warships abroad. I think that's a
7 terrible idea, both from a national security point of view
8 and an industrial base point of view, American workers'
9 point of view. Are you aware of this push by OMB to build
10 warships in South Korea and Japan?

11 Mr. O'Malley: Senator, I'm not aware of that,
12 specifically, but it's certainly something that I'll take
13 for the record and happy to respond with.

14 [The information referred to follows:]

15 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator King: Well, I hope you will, because it's very
2 disturbing and wrongheaded in my view, and I think it's an
3 insult to American workers. So, I would appreciate it if
4 you would follow-up on that. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman.

6 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Hurst. Should you be
7 confirmed, and if a member of this committee or a member of
8 this Congress called you up and asked you for some
9 information about the cost of the current operation in and
10 around Iran and the Strait of Hormuz, you would readily
11 speak to that member of Congress and supply that
12 information, would you not?

13 Mr. Hurst: Chairman, absolutely. On this or any other
14 issue, I will be transparent with Congress.

15 Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much. And I
16 believe Senator Banks is next in line.

17 Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Secretary Hurst, the One Big Beautiful bill provided
19 funding to critical industrial base areas such as solid
20 rocket motor production. Some of this funding remains
21 unobligated as of today. Why have those funds not been
22 obligated?

23 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I'd have to get back with the
24 Department and find out exactly what funds are unobligated
25 from those lines, but I commit to doing that and I'll take

1 that for the record.

2 [The information referred to follows:]

3 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Banks: I appreciate that. No idea? Can you
2 speculate at all, or? I appreciate you getting back with us
3 and working with us on it.

4 Mr. Hurst: I don't know where that is in the
5 contracting process, Senator.

6 Senator Banks: Okay. All industrial-based funding
7 through IBAS and Title III must go through the Economic
8 Defense Unit for deal team involvement for negotiating
9 equity. What can be done to expedite that process,
10 especially for solid rocket fuel production?

11 Mr. Hurst: Senator, it's a little bit outside of my
12 lane, but I can take that for the record and find out what
13 the current policies are in the Department for that kind of
14 acquisition.

15 [The information referred to follows:]

16 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Senator Banks: Okay. I look forward to that. I
2 appreciate that. Also, Mr. Hurst, if confirmed, you'll play
3 an important role in the potential Reconciliation 3.0. Last
4 year, the Reconciliation Bill secured \$170 million for a
5 Navy radar depot, but the money instead went to the Army.
6 How will you ensure that the Department follows
7 congressional intent for future reconciliation bills,
8 certainly, better than the last one?

9 Mr. Hurst: Senator Banks, I think we can make some
10 improvements in our process and communication regarding
11 reconciliation spending. Part of that is developing better
12 tools inside the Department so we can quickly gather
13 information and share it with Congress, and if confirmed,
14 I've committed to doing that.

15 Senator Banks: Any ideas on how we can do that better?

16 Mr. Hurst: I think the biggest thing is making sure we
17 have the software in place and visualization tools to track
18 things in real time so we can share adjustments to spend
19 plans with Congress.

20 Senator Banks: Okay. I look forward to you submitting
21 your questions to the first couple of your answers to the
22 first couple of questions for the record. I'll look for
23 those answers. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

24 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Thank you very much. And
25 I do believe we have Senator Kelly next.

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Mr. Hurst, the administration -- I want to follow-up on
3 Senator King's question about Golden Dome. So, it's made it
4 a priority. It is a significant investment in limited
5 resources that we have. So, before Congress commits
6 taxpayers to what could become the most expensive defense
7 program in our Nation's history, we need some confidence
8 that the system is going to deliver the capability that's
9 been promised. And to me right now, it's clear that it
10 won't. The most ambitious elements of Golden Dome is the
11 space-based interceptor layer, and that is going to face
12 significant technical challenges. The cost, the physics,
13 the likely reliability, in my view, do not support a full-
14 scale space-based intercept architecture. This means that
15 we could spend more than \$1 trillion and end up with a
16 system that's not going to work, and it's not going to
17 improve -- meaningfully, improve our security.

18 So, Mr. Hurst, what analysis gives you confidence that
19 Golden Dome is a responsible use of taxpayer dollars rather
20 than an extraordinarily expensive system that's not going to
21 achieve the stated objectives?

22 Mr. Hurst: Well, Senator Kelly, I appreciate your
23 background in this area. I would say I have confidence in
24 this because I trust the program manager, General Guetlein,
25 to make these kinds of determinations and change course

1 inside the program, if necessary, to achieve an outcome at
2 the appropriate cost for the taxpayer. This is a better
3 issue to be held in a classified session. But if you
4 haven't gotten a brief from him, sir, I'd recommend it.
5 It's compelling.

6 Senator Kelly: I've gotten multiple briefs from him.
7 Have you seen an analysis, a technical analysis that has
8 convinced you that this is achievable, or you just trust
9 that he tells you we can do this?

10 Mr. Hurst: I believe it's possible to have a space-
11 based interceptor capability. I think --

12 Senator Kelly: Based on what?

13 Mr. Hurst: -- I think the big determination there is
14 what will the cost per unit be, whether or not it's a
15 fieldable capability that produces the kind of result we
16 want.

17 Senator Kelly: Do you understand that defeating a
18 system with countermeasures and decoys is cheaper than
19 interceptors?

20 Mr. Hurst: I'm familiar with some of the dynamics of
21 an engagement in a space environment.

22 Senator Kelly: Yeah. And so, that becomes a math
23 problem, like an economics math problem is that the
24 adversary's ability to defeat the system is less expensive
25 than our cost to build the system.

1 Mr. Hurst: It will depend on how the technology turns
2 out, but I think there's an opportunity to avoid that exact
3 engagement scenario in a manner that makes the system more
4 effective.

5 Senator Kelly: How do we do that?

6 Mr. Hurst: I think, again, that'd be a better
7 classified session.

8 Senator Kelly: But you know how we do that?

9 Mr. Hurst: I haven't had a brief on that. And, if
10 that's still what General Guetlein is thinking is, I think
11 it's a possibility that we should be interested in investing
12 in the research and development dollars to procure.

13 Senator Kelly: Well, let's say, if the Department
14 cannot demonstrate that Golden Dome will provide the level
15 of protection that the administration publicly states it
16 will, I mean, why would why would Congress be asked to
17 commit more than \$1 trillion over the life cycle before
18 these questions have all been answered? Because I'm not
19 convinced they've been answered.

20 Mr. Hurst: Senator Kelly, I haven't heard that cost
21 estimate of \$1 trillion. I've heard --

22 Senator Kelly: It's from the CBO.

23 Mr. Hurst: Is that what we're saying? Well, I think
24 the Department's cost estimate at the time that I was
25 comptroller was \$185 billion for the entire system. And the

1 most compelling parts of Golden Dome for me are the
2 situational awareness aspects, which will pay dividends for
3 the Department outside of just missile defense.

4 Senator Kelly: I agree with that. So, there are
5 things in the program that make sense: detecting launches,
6 even some other approaches to this. The space-based
7 interceptor part is really, really hard, and the physics
8 clearly favors the offense. So, we could go down this road,
9 spend hundreds of billions of dollars, and not get any
10 return on that investment. And missile defense is, you
11 know, too important to pursue this just based on aspiration
12 alone, so I want to make sure that we have a system that is
13 technically achievable, strategically sound, and represents
14 the best use of limited resources. And so, the Department
15 should be able to demonstrate not only what the Golden Dome
16 will cost, but that it can realistically deliver on this
17 promise of missile defense, and I have not seen any
18 convincing evidence of that to date.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Chairman Wicker: Thank you. Thank you very much,
21 Senator Sullivan.

22 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to
23 thank the witnesses and their families for your, commitment
24 to service. It's not always easy, and it can be really hard
25 on the families. So, it's great to see all the families

1 supporting our nominees today.

2 I want to mention a couple of my colleagues on the
3 other side of the aisle. First, Senator Kelly, I was with
4 some of the defense tech companies that are working on
5 missile defense and Golden Dome, and I think it'd be great
6 for you, and Senator King, Senator Kaine, all you guys,
7 girls, to meet with some of them as well. I think there's a
8 lot of innovation happening, and I know they'd welcome the
9 opportunity to brief you guys, bringing down costs,
10 increasing technological capabilities, and I think it's an
11 exciting time in our missile defense world.

12 Also on the supplemental, I really want to encourage my
13 Democrat colleagues not to just reject that. A little bit
14 of history lessons. Some of you were here, some of you
15 weren't. But when Biden was President, when Schumer was the
16 Majority Leader, the White House brought up a Ukraine
17 supplemental, and a lot of us worked on it. We improved it,
18 we made it better, and then we voted for it. And this is
19 for Senator Kelly and others when he's leaving.

20 You know, during the NDAA markup, there was a lot of
21 discussion about munitions. People want to talk about
22 munitions. And so, this is a munitions supplemental, and I
23 really -- it would be really disappointing if my Democrat
24 colleagues say out of hand: we're going to reject the
25 supplemental. We didn't do that when Biden was President

1 and Schumer was Majority Leader, and it would be really
2 disappointing if you guys did that, and if you guys voted
3 against cloture on the NDAA today.

4 There's a lot of politics going on, but usually, the
5 politics that are encompassing the country don't usually
6 kind of come to the Armed Services Committee. And if the
7 NDAA is rejected today, if the supplemental is rejected, I
8 think my colleagues on the other side of the aisle know that
9 that'll be just for politics. And usually, we try -- the
10 serious Senators on this committee try to forego politics
11 and focus on national security, and I hope when it comes to
12 supplemental, when it comes to getting on the NDAA today,
13 that they do the right thing and that would be voting for
14 these things, or at least considering them. I know Minority
15 Leader Schumer doesn't care about national defense, but you
16 guys do, and I think that's important.

17 So, let me --

18 Senator King: If the war was authorized, Senator --

19 Senator Sullivan: Let me --

20 Senator King: If the war had been authorized it would
21 be a different discussion.

22 Senator Sullivan: Let me -- let me -- was the Ukraine
23 war authorized?

24 Chairman Wicker: The gentleman -- the Senator from
25 Alaska has the floor.

1 Senator Sullivan: Yeah. I think you know I'm on to
2 something that's correct, and I hope you guys just don't
3 reject it out of hand because you're being told to by your
4 far-left leadership, which isn't serious about national
5 security and never has been.

6 So, let me turn to Mr. O'Malley and Mr. Hurst. One of
7 the things that I've been trying to do, again, bipartisan in
8 this committee, is lead the efforts on multiyear procurement
9 opportunities that can help us on our Defense Industrial
10 Base, that can help us bring down the costs. Can you talk
11 more about the utility that comes from multi-year
12 procurement capabilities in the Pentagon and encourage
13 services to use it? Some have, some haven't, and I think
14 it's a tool that's important. Either of you can take that.

15 Mr. O'Malley: Thank you, Senator. Yes, multi-year
16 procurement is a powerful lever to drive down unit costs to
17 expand industrial capability, capacity and to secure our
18 supply chains. This long-term demand signal is important
19 for industry. It gives the Defense Industrial Base
20 predictability and stability, and it allows the suppliers to
21 make larger capital investments.

22 Senator Sullivan: And do you -- do we see all the
23 services utilizing this to its full capability?

24 Mr. O'Malley: Senator, the services are working
25 through all of their programs, it's my understanding,

1 working through all their programs and working through the
2 tradeoffs on that. So, I do know that they're engaged in
3 that question.

4 Senator Sullivan: Okay. If confirmed, can you help
5 encourage them to do so. Some have done it better than
6 others.

7 Mr. O'Malley: Yes, Senator. If confirmed, I will.

8 Senator Sullivan: Great. Mr. Hernandez-Baquero, I
9 want to talk about some of the things that are going on with
10 regard to missile defense. In Alaska, we have clear Space
11 Force, the LRDR system there, Cobra Dane at Shemya, of
12 course, the ground-based missile interceptors at Fort
13 Greely. If confirmed, will you commit to working with me to
14 achieve the funding needed to bring the next generation of
15 capabilities in terms of missile defense to Alaska, where we
16 are the cornerstone of missile defense for the country right
17 now, and the Golden Dome is going to build on the components
18 in Alaska, but the components are still very important?

19 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Senator, I'm aware of how vital
20 these systems are, and if confirmed, I would look forward to
21 working with you to ensure that we have the right sensing
22 systems and response systems to protect our homeland.

23 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
24 Chairman.

25 Chairman Wicker: Senator Slotkin.

1 Senator Slotkin: Thank you, and thanks for being here.

2 You know, I think it's important to recognize that we
3 are back at war with Iran. The cease fire is dead.
4 Fourteen American citizens have been killed, uniformed
5 military, 400 injured. The Iranians now have a veto over
6 what goes through the Strait of Hormuz. Mr. Hurst, you are
7 here to get the top job as comptroller, handling the money
8 for the Department. Hugely important job. And you've heard
9 from my colleagues, and I will say for Senator Sullivan,
10 those of us who care deeply about national defense, I don't
11 think it's a big ask to try and just get the straight
12 numbers for the cost of this war. And this committee for 20
13 years, handled the cost of Iraq and Afghanistan. That's
14 part of our business. So, to ask that we just vote on
15 something and without having basic accountability -- as you
16 depart, Senator Sullivan -- I think is disingenuous. We
17 should be able to get just a very basic answer from the
18 person who wants to be the comptroller on the cost of the
19 war.

20 Now, you said you didn't prepare that answer today
21 because you didn't want to look like you had any idea what
22 was going on with the budget, so I did some back-of-the-
23 envelope math, just from what's available on the cost of the
24 war. We know that the war has already cost the taxpayers,
25 separately out of their own pockets, \$100 million: the cost

1 of gas, you know, fuel prices that have gone up, the cost of
2 airline tickets, delivery service fees, that's \$750 out of
3 every American household in the entire country since
4 February. So, that's \$100 million.

5 But then there's the second time they have to pay. You
6 know, they already paid at the office and they've got to pay
7 again with whatever the ultimate cost of this war is going
8 to be to the Department. The math that I've seen is you've
9 sent over a formal request for \$67 billion to cover down on
10 some of the costs of the war. That doesn't include any of
11 the repairs to the major damage to our bases and locations
12 in the Middle East, MILCON, as we call it. We've seen
13 reports of another \$30 billion needed for MILCON. And then,
14 since the war has restarted just this month, back of the
15 envelope is \$1 billion for July combat operations. So, by
16 my math, that's \$98 billion for the cost to the Department.
17 You can correct me if I'm getting any of those numbers
18 wrong. So, \$100 billion already that American taxpayers
19 have paid, plus a coming -- let's round it up, \$98 billion
20 to \$100 billion coming in the Departments bill, which is
21 taxpayer dollars.

22 So, we're starting to hear reports that the Department
23 is strained in paying its basic bills. They're parking
24 jets. The CNO was up here in May and said if he doesn't get
25 more money, he's going to have to cut training. We're

1 hearing that folks are having a problem with just doing
2 basic exercises. We're hearing that repairs on our bases,
3 like things that serve our families, we're only doing
4 emergency housing repairs. You were -- you don't want to
5 answer any questions for the comptroller, but you are
6 sitting in a job for the Army. Can you please say under
7 oath any things that have been postponed, cut back, or put
8 on hold because we do not have money anymore in the Army due
9 to the Iran war?

10 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I don't have a listing of specific
11 training exercises --

12 Senator Slotkin: Do you know of any? Just in
13 fairness, has anything been put on hold? Have anything been
14 -- has anything been changed in the Department because of
15 the cost of the Iran war, which it would be normal for me,
16 that would be something I would expect every family
17 understands. If you're going to spend a ton over here, you
18 got to tighten your belt. But do you know of any programs
19 that have been put on hold suspended because of the Iran
20 war?

21 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I don't have specifics, but I will
22 say this, whenever there's a contingency operation, because
23 we build our budget 2 years in advance of getting it, we
24 have to make tradeoffs inside that budget to fund current
25 operations.

1 Senator Slotkin: Sure.

2 Mr. Hurst: That's always been the way it is.

3 Senator Slotkin: Sure, but I think this is again, we
4 want to understand what those costs are. You will be the
5 comptroller in charge of the very new grants and loans that
6 the Department is putting out, and I'm very concerned about
7 just the look of corruption. We know that the President's
8 sons have gotten \$3.2 billion in contracts from the Federal
9 Government since he became President. Some of these things,
10 \$900 million commitments to Navy contracts for companies
11 associated with Don, Jr. Do you understand that even the
12 appearance of a conflict of interest makes you subject to an
13 IG report, and that you will be in charge of approving these
14 major contracts as they go out the door?

15 Mr. Hurst: Senator, the comptroller doesn't approve
16 contracts.

17 Senator Slotkin: The spending of dollars.

18 Mr. Hurst: We approve obligation of dollars, but we
19 give it to program officers to go and execute. I have great
20 faith in the Department's ability to control for any kind of
21 bias or injustice in awarding contracts. I think we do that
22 very well --

23 Senator Slotkin: So, you'll be willing to put your
24 name on some of these -- some of the biggest contracts in
25 Pentagon history are being let right now, and you're the guy

1 who has to check the switch, right, to get that money? I
2 just want to make sure we are understanding that you will be
3 responsible for putting your stamp of approval on the
4 movement of that money for contracts that could be linked
5 directly to the President's son.

6 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I want to clarify. The
7 comptroller does not award contracts for the entire
8 Department.

9 Senator Slotkin: You move the money.

10 Mr. Hurst: We give program offices money or the
11 services money. They make contract awards.

12 Senator Slotkin: You can call it a technicality. I
13 was at the Pentagon. If you don't want that money moving,
14 it doesn't move. So, I just want to be -- understanding,
15 and I know my time is up, that your name will be on that for
16 these contracts, these historic contracts that are being let
17 to the President's sons.

18 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Slotkin. We have
19 Senator Budd and then Senator Kaine.

20 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chairman.

21 Congrats to each of you on your nominations, and thanks
22 to the families as well. Secretary Hurst, it's great to see
23 you. Based on your time on projects like Project Maven,
24 what's your vision for aligning our defense budget to better
25 support the rapid scaling of AI and autonomous systems, and

1 kind of draw from your history a little bit, if you will?

2 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I think we're in this really
3 interesting pathfinding phase right now where we're not
4 ready to wholesale commit to programs of record that are
5 related to autonomous warfare. But part of the Fiscal Year
6 2027 budget request is arranged as a fund for the Defense
7 Autonomous Warfare Group, so they can do that pathfinding
8 and sprinkle that technology across the entire Department,
9 and then also start to integrate it to existing programs and
10 future programs in requirements form. But I think what
11 we're going to start seeing here in the next 5 years is a
12 rapid acceleration of this technology integration to every
13 single platform inside the Department of War.

14 Senator Budd: Thanks a lot.

15 Dr. Hernandez, good to see you as well. So, I had a
16 chance to meet recently with the next Chief of Space
17 Operations, and I learned about the investments we're
18 making, including space-based AMTI. So, what's your plan to
19 make sure that that's a success.

20 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Senator, the space-based AMTI
21 is a vital element of the architecture. It provides domain
22 awareness and it's the front end of the space-enabled kill
23 chains. If confirmed, I will have oversight over that part
24 of the portfolio, and my goal will be to, as I noted, my
25 priorities, to take advantage of the acquisition reform

1 that's underway to empower the portfolio acquisition
2 executives that are executing that program to ensure we do
3 that at speed, building out on the existing capabilities
4 that are out there that we've been able to harness working
5 with partners across the Department and across the
6 interagency. And if confirmed, I will be committing to
7 ensuring that we deliver that at speed.

8 Senator Budd: Thank you. I look forward to that.

9 Dr. Mason, it's good to see you again. I'm excited to
10 see what you're going to do at the NRO. So, with the rapid
11 proliferation of commercial space tech, how do you plan to
12 integrate those assets into NRO's operations?

13 Dr. Mason: Senator, first of all, thank you for taking
14 the time to meet. I enjoyed our discussion and got a lot
15 out of it in terms of the next-gen hybrid architecture. The
16 key there is that, to use your word, that these capabilities
17 are integrated. In the past, when we were first starting as
18 a Nation, the commercial was a bolt on. So, looking at the
19 proliferation as well as the exquisite integrated together
20 is the key.

21 I would say that in terms of the question about
22 artificial intelligence, that's going to be the means by
23 which that is done. It's not possible to do what the
24 government wants to do in terms of the hybrid architecture
25 without AI, and then doing it responsibly in a way that we

1 get great effect as a Nation, but also are mindful about
2 risk management as well.

3 Senator Budd: Great. Thank you.

4 Mr. O'Malley, congrats again on your nomination. So,
5 given your mixed background in private sector investments
6 and Navy intelligence, what are you most excited to tackle
7 first when it comes to cutting through red tape, getting
8 cutting edge capabilities into the hands of our warfighters
9 faster?

10 Mr. O'Malley: Thank you, Senator. I appreciate you
11 acknowledging the private sector background. At the company
12 that I founded, we were very much focused on taking large
13 data sets and being able to understand answers to questions
14 that maybe you didn't even think of, and it would allow us
15 to just move that much further ahead in the decision-making
16 process. That is certainly something that I'd be excited
17 about.

18 So, but if confirmed, my top priorities are the
19 Secretary's vision for acquisition transformation and into a
20 new warfighting acquisition system, rebuilding the Defense
21 Industrial Base, expanding its capacity, bringing in new and
22 innovative companies, and elevating and empowering,
23 importantly, our acquisition workforce so that we can make
24 faster, risk-informed decisions.

25 Senator Budd: Very good. Question again for you, Mr.

1 O'Malley, and Dr. Hernandez, about multi-year procurement.
2 So, there's efforts to do multi-year procurement and the
3 authorities for that on ships, aircraft, munitions. So,
4 what are your thoughts on additional acquisition programs
5 that might be beneficial for something like satellites,
6 anywhere else where we could use this multiyear authority?

7 Dr. Hernandez-Baquero: Senator, I'll start by saying
8 that earlier, there was a question around launch and the
9 capacity associated with launch, and we're putting a lot of
10 demand on our launch capacity. That would be one area that
11 I would look at to not only multi-year procurement, but just
12 any incentives that we can do to attract more businesses to
13 go into our launch, to expand our launch capacity. That's
14 consistent with how it's been done across the Department and
15 other programs. It's essentially a capacity, incentive for
16 businesses to invest in infrastructure and capital equipment
17 to do that. And then certainly, as we proliferate it, as we
18 proliferate the architectures, we have to produce more
19 satellites, those are elements that perhaps these models
20 would apply. And if confirmed, I will look at all those
21 areas to ensure that we have the right capacity to deliver,
22 and to include and to use any tool available at our
23 disposal, including multi-year procurements.

24 Senator Budd: Thank you very much. Mr. O'Malley?

25 Mr. O'Malley: Thank you, Senator. Multi-year

1 procurement is a powerful tool that the Department is
2 currently using, thanks to Congress, to send a stronger
3 demand signal to industry. I also think about the
4 transition to the program acquisition executive and the
5 service acquisition executive, giving them the authority
6 that they need to not focus on necessarily isolated
7 programs, but broader capability portfolios. And multi-year
8 procurement is certainly a tool in the toolbox, and it has
9 been utilized. It's continuing to be utilized, and we thank
10 the Congress for it.

11 Senator Budd: Thanks, Chairman.

12 Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator Budd.
13 Senator Kaine.

14 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the
15 witnesses.

16 Just a point in response to Senator Sullivan, and he
17 and I chatted as he was leaving. Not all supplementals are
18 exactly the same. And one of the issues that we're sort of
19 grappling with, and this is no surprise, I suspect, to the
20 witnesses or folks watching, with the supplemental, the
21 supplemental is on top of a presidential budget request that
22 increases the Pentagon's budget by 40 percent in 1 year.
23 And so, we're sort of grappling with the 40 percent in 1
24 year increase and then the supplemental on top of it. And I
25 think it's natural as exercising oversight to see, well, if

1 we're going to increase the Defense budget by that much, do
2 you need a supplemental, too, or can the priorities in the
3 supplemental be folded in?

4 And, Mr. Hurst, my questions to you are sort of I want
5 to do some budget math with you, and you're going to be
6 better at this than me so I want you to correct me if I get
7 anything wrong. Last year, we passed a reconciliation bill,
8 and in that reconciliation bill, we provided \$153 billion
9 for DOD. Is that right?

10 Mr. Hurst: Yes, Senator.

11 Senator Kaine: And your testimony, I think, is
12 consistent with this, that a bunch of that \$153 billion has
13 not been obligated. The records that we got from the
14 Pentagon that were current through July 2, suggests that \$68
15 billion has been obligated, but \$89 billion of it has not
16 been obligated. Does that sound generally accurate to you?

17 Mr. Hurst: Based on the number you gave, Senator, but
18 I do expect that number to continue to increase through the
19 fiscal year.

20 Senator Kaine: Well, here's what interests me. So, we
21 did a reconciliation bill last year, and \$89 billion of that
22 to DOD is still unobligated. And so, then I thought \$89
23 billion. That is a number that's remarkably similar to
24 another number. The administration has sent us a
25 supplemental request for \$87 billion. Now, not all of that

1 \$87 billion is for the DOD. \$67 billion is for the DOD.
2 Other portions of the request, for example, aid to farmers
3 who have been hurt by tariffs. Okay, but set that aside.
4 We have \$89 billion unobligated to the DOD from the
5 reconciliation bill, and the administration is asking us for
6 \$67 billion in a supplemental that they recently delivered
7 to us.

8 So, here's the question that I really want to get to,
9 and I don't know whether in your current role or in your
10 past role, were you grappling with this? Has the Pentagon
11 scrubbed the priorities that make up that \$67 billion in the
12 supplemental? So, for example, \$21 billion is munitions.
13 Have you scrubbed those priorities and then looked at the
14 unobligated \$89 billion and said, wow, we already have money
15 that we could use to do things that we think are
16 necessitated in the supplemental request? Do you know
17 whether that's been done?

18 Mr. Hurst: Senator, I think it best to be -- it would
19 be best to go do this as a QFR and make sure we give you a
20 line by line that compares what's left in the One Big
21 Beautiful Bill Act, and then the supplemental request. But
22 I would suggest to you that the \$89 billion that Congress
23 provided to us that's not obligated is likely for different
24 capabilities than what's being requested in the
25 supplemental.

1 Senator Kaine: I suspect that it is, and yet we do act
2 according to priorities. And so, you know, we're hearing
3 that the supplemental is needed. And let's just use the
4 munitions. Of the \$67 billion, \$21 billion is for munitions
5 in the supplemental. That is a dire need to replenish
6 munitions stock. It may be that there are things that were
7 in the reconciliation bill last year that are unobligated
8 priorities that are important, but aren't so urgent. And,
9 you know, that each priority, you can give it an importance
10 ranking and each priority, you can give it an urgency
11 ranking.

12 And I got to believe that some of this \$67 billion in
13 the supplemental is stuff that would match up with some of
14 the line items in the unspent unobligated money from last
15 year, and we wouldn't be doing our oversight job if we were
16 to just kind of, you know, forget about the \$89 billion that
17 still hadn't been obligated and say we got to rubber stamp
18 the \$67 billion. We ought to be looking to see whether we
19 can accomplish some of the objectives with money that is
20 already at the Department that hasn't been obligated.

21 And the last thing I'll say on this same topic is, you
22 know, we've also been told that there may need to be a
23 reconciliation bill, and you and I chatted about this in my
24 office. It's been a little complicated this year because
25 there was an appropriations request increasing by 40 percent

1 last year's appropriated amount, and there is a supplemental
2 request. And then there's also a suggestion that there
3 needs to be a reconciliation request, you know, to vote on
4 door number 2. And I don't want -- I'm not exactly sure
5 what's behind door number 1 and door number 3. We really
6 need to look at this all together.

7 So, my hope is just going back to all of you is take a
8 look at the unobligated \$89 billion, and take a look at what
9 you're asking for with the \$67 billion in supplemental
10 request and see if there's dollars you already have that
11 would enable you to accomplish objectives that have an
12 immediate urgency. Thank you very much.

13 Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator.

14 And this concludes today's hearing. I want to thank
15 our witnesses and their testimony. I want to thank all of
16 the families who are present in support of their family
17 members. For information of members, questions for the
18 record will be due to the committee within 2 business days
19 of the conclusion of this hearing, which is right now.

20 [The information referred to follows:]

21 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman Wicker: And we are adjourned.

2 [Whereupon, at 11:33 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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\$1	\$25	\$87.6	2	50:21
7:21	32:22	8:5		25
69:12	\$29	\$89	2	57:8
75:15	59:25	93:15, 21,	12:24	26
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